English literature teachers' pedagogical choices at upper secondary level:

Narratives of Mauritian teachers

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Abstract

Teacher decision-making is of particular significance in a world increasingly influenced by productivity and accountability mechanisms that simultaneously delineate and constrain teachers' roles in education. Investigating how teachers make pedagogical choices and how they account for these within their teaching contexts offers a means to explore the dynamic factors that influence the way they teach, and to identify potential relationships between subject specificities and signature pedagogies. Given that English literature is often called upon to reinvent itself in terms of its focus and relevance to contemporary learners, teachers of this subject confront the need to reconcile pedagogical objectives with overarching normalising contextual mechanisms.

While there is a rich body of literature on the processes guiding decision making, there is limited empirical research on pedagogical choices in the teaching of English literature. This study explored the pedagogical choices of eight English literature teachers at upper secondary level in the Republic of Mauritius. A qualitative approach was used to identify the different pedagogical approaches and strategies and explore the various factors influencing these choices through an interpretivist paradigm. Narrative inquiry provided deep insight into the pedagogical choices and the rationales teachers ascribe to them. The research participants were co-constructors of knowledge and their voices and experiences were foregrounded through the generation of rich, thick data. Individual interviews, classroom observations, vignette discussions, instructional resources and the researcher's log provided a nuanced perspective on the phenomenon of pedagogical choice. A grounded approach was adopted for data analysis, with the first level being the production of narratives based on the different data sources, while the second consisted of a cross-case comparative analysis of themes across the eight narratives.

The findings indicate that pedagogical choices at the level of planning, instruction and assessment are made in complex interactions amongst intrinsic, curricular, school and external influences. Furthermore, choice in the classroom marks the intersections between *teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, teacher efficacy* and *teacher agency* in relation to the demands of their profession. Pedagogical choices not only impacted on the learning context, but also revealed the *school climate and the systemic affordances or restrictions* that teachers face, as

well as their reactions. Factors such as personal beliefs about *the subject* as well as *pedagogy, subject content and pedagogical content knowledg*e, *experienc*e, a supportive *administrative system* and leadership could encourage some teachers to venture out of their comfort zone and take pedagogical "risks". Making pedagogical choices could be also construed as statements of intent, and could reveal *ideological and pedagogical positionings* which could equally be nuanced by power dynamics. These impact at different levels and moments on the pedagogical choices teachers make, bringing forth elements of hope, anxiety and risk.

The thesis proposes that pedagogical choices and stances exist within a continuum. Given these dynamic interactions, trends such as a **pedagogy of compliance**, a **pedagogy of resistance** and a **pedagogy of compromise** can be defined. The findings suggest that teachers could find themselves at different points across the continuum at different points in time and that such positionings are often negotiated through their understanding of freedoms and 'unfreedoms' in making pedagogical choices. Few studies have considered the construction of freedom of pedagogical choice and the way it is experienced by teachers and used for a variety of purposes. This study thus contributes to a deeper understanding of how pedagogical choices are made in the classroom and the active role teachers play in the process. Given these findings, it is important for teachers to become more mindful of the conditions under which they make specific pedagogical choices, and the way these become part of their repertoire of pedagogical moves.

Key words: pedagogical choice, decision making, freedom, narrative inquiry, English literature teaching, secondary education

Declaration

I, Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree declare that,

(i) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii) This thesis does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

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Signed:……

Dedication

For my daughter,

Darshika

Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the support of my supervisor, *Prof. Michael Samuel*, who tirelessly guided and encouraged me throughout the whole journey and reminded me, more than once, of the importance of completing the thesis over any perfectionist dream of a faultless draft! I am also deeply grateful to my second supervisor, *Dr Pascal Nadal*, whose wise comments and advice have often made me think harder upon what I was trying to convey through this work. I also thank the administration and staff of the Mauritius Institute of Education and the University of KwaZulu Natal for the support and resources provided to me during the course of this study.

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I started on this journey along with fellow colleagues, intending to complete it within the shortest amount of time, but that journey was not without surprises and unforeseen circumstances. But then, what is life without at least some upheavals? A special thought to my cohort friends with whom I started this journey and who provided much food for thought in our early years as cohort.

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List of abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
B.Ed	Bachelor of Education
BEC (now SEDEC)	Bureau d'Education Catholique (now, Le Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique)
CAIE	Cambridge Assessment International Education
CK	Content knowledge
CPE (now PSAC)	Certificate of Primary Education (*now*, Primary School Achievement Certificate)
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
EL	Educator's Licence
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign language
GP	General Paper
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
KM	Kreol Morisien
LTM	Literature Teaching Methodology
L1	First language
L2	Second Language
MES	Mauritius Examinations Syndicate
MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education
MOEHR	Ministry of Education and Human Resources
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCF-S	National Curriculum Framework-Secondary
PCK	Pedagogical content knowledge
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PK	Pedagogical knowledge
PSSA (now PSEA)	Private Secondary Schools Authority (now, Private Secondary Education Authority)
SC	School Certificate
TDM	Teacher Decision Making
TPC	Teacher Pedagogical Choice
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

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PROLOGUE: Where I began

This work originates from, and intersects with, personal and professional concerns and experiences, which have led me to engage in deeper reflection about the choices we, educators, make in our teaching. I include myself in this collective, precisely because my position as teacher educator is what led me to reflecting about pedagogical choices in the literature classroom. This activated further introspection of my own stance towards teaching English literature both as an educator and teacher educator. Even though this research does not self-consciously aim to engage in research about the researcher, or seek to find knowledge, or 'a truth', "out there", I must acknowledge that researching influences on pedagogical choices has led me inevitably to myself and my own pedagogical choices. Unavoidably, also, the choice I made to explore and produce narratives alongside educators with personal and professional interests in literatures in English awoke my own reminiscences and experiences of literature as student, teacher and teacher educator, and beyond the academic sphere, the lover of literature and books in me. Thus, an exploration of pedagogical choices in the English literature classroom is also intricately linked with the person I am, the knowledge and experiences I had, and the personal and academic goals I set to find out more about the phenomenon.

Being

It is believed that experiences and impressions made during the formative years of childhood can last a lifetime. For me, being a teacher of literature is inextricably linked to a love of reading, which began in childhood. As soon as I learnt to read, I went through books that my parents and relatives possessed; sometimes little understanding what I was reading but still, beginning to 'see' mental images as more words entered my vocabulary. Reading was not really a family pastime but I am thankful to my parents and relatives who had a deep and abiding respect for knowledge and books and never kept me away from them. So it was that by the time I was in primary school, I already was quite well-read. My parents' decision to enrol me at the Municipal library was a momentous one, which opened up formerly unsuspected worlds of fiction and fantasy, where formerly, at home, I only had access to mostly school books left over from my parents' and relatives' school days. I thus recall having to enlist my parents to convince the librarian that I had finished most of the books in the children's section and was ready to have access to the larger library. One particular teacher stands out in my childhood memories: Ms Chung, who never hesitated to comment on the books she was reading, or sometimes brought her book to class. This contributed, in my mind, at least, to demystifying books. By the end of my primary schooling, I and some of my friends were part of a quasi-underground class book exchange network, operated largely on the barter system and our different interests. The heartache I felt when I had to trade a science experiment book (which I really liked) for another book I particularly liked at the time, still remains a poignant memory.

By the time I graduated from secondary schooling, I had already been studying English and French literature for a number of years. The teachers I had at upper secondary all had different teaching styles and approaches to teaching the subject, but I always thought there was something unique in the way they approached this subject; almost as it was personally meaningful (at least to some of them). Some were more transmissive, and went through a routine set of actions to ensure that we read the texts in class, and received notes and adequate preparation for examinations. A few others diverged, opting to explore texts deeply, and attempting to connect texts to personal experience. "How do you feel about this extract?", one teacher would ask, looking at me directly. As one of only two students in the English literature class, I must admit that I was not always forthcoming or expressive. Indeed, I found it difficult to reconcile such 'open' classes with the other subjects I was studying, where I was required only to note down information and be tested on my knowledge of such information! It took some time before I could really open up and share my thoughts with my teachers and fellow classmate, and I am grateful that I was able to approach texts in such a way. This led to my university studies, which were based largely on English literature. Here again, the fact that I had already read a number of books and had some contextual knowledge, was of great help to me. Literature classes at university were where I came into my own and where my love for literature was fully expressed. While I had lecturers who ranged from the traditional to the creative in their approach to literature teaching, it was also the time when I felt I owned a 'voice' of my own and could use it to express myself with some degree of confidence.

When I did my undergraduate studies at the University of Mauritius, I was confronted with the very real consequences of my choice of subject. I could not justify to my parents that one principal reason for going for a B.A. (and subsequently an M.A.) in English was because of my love for literature only. A subject choice at university level meant a firm decision (at least for my parents) to enter a specific field. I had an interest in teaching since upper secondary level but I still kept an open mind about future career options. It was interesting, therefore, to note how many of my fellow classmates at university would muse about the inevitability of teaching as a consequence of doing this degree; almost, in a way, anticipating a not-so-distant future where they would be deprived of decision-making. However, the irony also was that the course provided us with more in-depth knowledge of literature and language, but not really any preparation to teach in real-life. In addition, literature has been a subject that is not widely offered at secondary level, whereas English language is compulsory as subject throughout that level. No one therefore really sets out to become a teacher of literature in the Mauritian context. Many of my friends therefore were in a state of uncertainty and anxiety as we left the university, little knowing what the future would hold for us. After my M.A. in English literature, I gained employment in an International School in the country, which brought me numerous insights into teaching language and literature in a very specific context. In parallel, I started teaching at the University of Mauritius, which pre-empted my leap into the professional world of teacher training.

If I mention these elements of my own biography here, it is to highlight to what extent different influences and choices have led me to the stage I am today. The particular career paths

I took determined, to some extent, the kind of pedagogy I developed over the years, even if, at the time, I did not even think of my teaching as "pedagogy" per se. Those life events also are pertinent with reference to my choice of narrative inquiry as a means to explore teachers' lives and the choices they make. As I encountered more people in academic and professional spheres, the same question kept cropping in my mind, "What led you to become an English teacher?"

Knowing

I never thought I'd be a teacher-educator, let alone an academic in a higher education institution when I started my professional journey as a teacher. Moving into that new space was not only exciting but also unsettling as I had to unlearn and relearn a number of things, and my journey as teacher educator and academic has been, and remains, one of discovery. Engaging with pre-service and in-service educators in a higher education professional setting can often yield insights as much as questions into the nature of the work we do in the field of Education. These prospective and in-service teachers come from diverse academic and professional backgrounds and bring their own experiences of life and teaching to the classes we have. From the very first day, becoming a teacher-educator was a platform that opened me up to a variety of experiences. 'Leaving' secondary schooling thus was a misnomer; I had left teaching in an individual secondary school context to now be immersed in a multitude of teaching contexts via my students. Many of my assumptions that I had about teaching and teacher preparation were upended when confronted with real-life issues. Many of the teachers, who had similar career paths as I did, often pointed to the inadequacy of theories in solving those issues, and often urged me to help them find pragmatic 'solutions' to their problems.

Clearly, I could not hope to engage meaningfully with the requirements of my new position as lecturer without further preparation - not just in terms of subject matter knowledge but also a knowledge that was very much steeped into classroom practices, if I wanted to engage in meaningful communication with my students. They were, after all, adults and professionals, and could provide various insights into their own teaching experiences and challenges. An integral part of my interest in the research phenomenon was fuelled by the growing realisation that I actually knew less than I thought I did about the subject I was teaching and that there was a world of experiences that I still did not have access to. This gap in my knowledge and experience was bridged to some extent by the interactions I had within and outside my classes with pre-service and in-service trainees. For the past ten years, I have requested in-service teachers to share with me what they teach in class and why they do so, as part of sharing of practices within the *Literature Teaching Methodology* modules I teach in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education and the Bachelor's Degree in Education we offer at the institution I work in. Pre-service teachers also shared information about English language and literature teaching in the various schools in which they were posted, and often shared their own musings and evaluation of practices they encountered in their school mentors and peers within the department. Just as in my case, contact with the different school contexts and sharing these experiences with each other proved to be beneficial to all students.

As teacher educator and colleague, too often have I heard teachers mention to what extent they felt powerless and without any sense of agency or ability to decide upon their own fate. As a former secondary educator who now teaches various secondary school teachers, I chose to frame my phenomenon at secondary level because there is a gap in understanding how such a subject as English literature gets taught at upper secondary level when so many teachers derive their pedagogical content knowledge from a variety of sources, and there is little consensus (if there is need for such) on ways to approach genres and texts.

The more I discussed with these people, the more perplexed I became. Teachers all around the country seemed to teach different things at different moments within secondary schooling. Some never got to teach English literature, since it was seen as the prerogative of their heads of department to teach such a subject, while others commented on how they taught literature from the first to the last year of secondary schooling in their respective institutions. Some taught a variety of texts and genres while others exclusively taught one genre or even one author only. Moreover, most of the teachers I encountered directed their teaching around literature texts, and derived competencies and skills to be taught from examination questions and syllabus materials from UCLES rather than following a national curriculum. Some privileged text-based approaches while others addressed cultural issues pertinent to specific contexts. At lower secondary level, some teachers even dispensed with the one single period devoted to literature teaching on the timetable to focus on language teaching instead. It was often a matter of great surprise to some teachers to discover that there existed some form of curriculum document, at least at lower secondary level, that suggested which competencies to cover and how to go about doing it. When introduced to specific literature teaching approaches, some teachers recognised elements of those approaches in their own home-grown strategies, which they derived from various sources. Some admitted that they taught as they were themselves taught and sought to emulate a teacher they admired, or do the opposite of a teacher whom they disliked.

These interactions confirmed that there was indeed a gap in knowledge that needed to be further explored and left me with a number of interrogations which contributed to the identification of the research phenomenon:

- *What does it mean to teach English literature?*
- *What was being taught in Mauritius as English literature, and what influenced the way it was taught?*
- *Where did teachers acquire their content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge about literature and literature teaching? Did they get these from professional training?*
- *What enabled or prevented their choice of pedagogy in the teaching of this subject?*

Given that my interactions had mostly been with teachers engaged in teacher training, it interested me to know whether the wide disparity I was noting in terms of pedagogical choices was also prevalent amongst other teachers of literature.

An additional note pertaining to **terminology** must be made here. Developments in the field of literary study have led to the reconceptualising of English literature as "Literatures in English", a label that pays tribute to the richness and variety of literary productions across the world that are written in the English language, and takes ideological and political distance from Imperialist notions of canonical literature in English as being purely English, British or American. I acknowledge and celebrate this shift in terminology, especially as I have myself been teaching in a context that styles itself as politically post-colonial, yet remains somewhat conservative in its literary references and affiliations, at least as far as the teaching of this subject is concerned. However, since the term 'Literature in English' also refers to a specific examinable subject offered by UCLES at upper secondary and could lead to confusion, I have decided to refer 'English literature' when speaking about both the general subject and the domain, and 'Literature in English' only when referring to the examination paper throughout the thesis. It is understood that my conception of English literature is informed by all those changes happening in the domain.

Exploring

While it would have been interesting to see how many teachers in Mauritius taught in a specific way, I wished to engage in a deeper exploration of the motivations of teachers in their choice of text, teaching strategy and assessment. My previous interactions with teachers were already, to a large extent, narrative in nature and I wished to explore how teachers constructed and described their choices through their narrated lives. This not only resonated with the lover of literature in me, but also seemed to 'fit' the subject area itself, which is largely dominated by fictional representations of lives and cultures. Moreover, I often used anecdotes to explain key elements in my own teaching and thought that if teachers could be persuaded to respond to narrative prompts rather than direct questioning, more details and depth would add to the quality of responses received. While it might have been interesting to engage in a country-wide survey of literature teaching practices amongst teachers, I wished to know more about people's motivations, rather like piecing informational cues from a text to make sense of a story. Oftentimes, I have wondered, while reading research papers and reports, about the people who were the sources of the information that is, in many ways, the currency of academia. In these reports, these participants often seem to fade into the periphery, with little to tell us about who they are as teachers and individuals. It was clear to me that if I wanted to understand pedagogical choices of literature teachers, I could not just go to them with a questionnaire. This instinct bore its fruits, with new ties being made and better understandings and respect being generated as a result of our interactions. While not glorifying one individual's story above the rest, since I am still exploring the phenomenon of pedagogical choice, I however posit that the teacher cannot be separated from the decisions he or she takes, and that to engage in a discussion about choices, one has to take into account the beliefs, conceptions and knowledge of teachers in question, the students and peers they work with, as well as the contexts in which they operate.

My positioning in this Prologue is, as Chaucer of yore, to make explicit the different questionings that led to my quest for deeper understanding about the choices teachers make in their classroom. At the same time, we also get to understand who these people are, and their motivations for teaching the way they do. Are they motivated by their personal beliefs, dispositions and experiences, their education in the subject, professional development, or experience in the field? This study, therefore, is an invitation to delve into the world of English literature as experienced by teachers of this subject, and explore situations that authentically convey the lived experiences of those teachers. A **prologue** and an **epilogue** frame the entire thesis, which is divided into three broad parts, each preceded by an orientation, printed on yellow-coloured paper. The first part describes the background, context, rationale and critical questions for the study, examines the existing literature, and describes the research design and methodology used to generate possible answers to those questions. The second part, printed on blue-coloured paper, represents the first level of analysis, namely a narrative representation and analysis of data. The third section engages with the higher levels of abstraction with the identification of salient themes in a cross-case analysis. These findings are subsequently checked against existing literature. Finally, the thesis section provides space for abstraction on the phenomenon of pedagogical choice within the literature classroom and sets down the strengths, limitations and avenues for further research stemming from this study.

With this thesis, I do not claim that the findings of this study will necessarily shed light on all the pedagogical choices teachers make and might make in the future. They however, highlight the experiences of a group of people that are often studied, and yet under-represented and with no room of their own to speak out. This study thus documents the pedagogical choices of those teachers, with the understanding that the teacher is not just an individual agent in charge of the classroom, but rather exists in an ecology of its own, with visible and subtle influences at work. As a researcher engaged in the use of narrative inquiry, I, the listener of these many tales, have now become the spokesperson and mediator of these co-constructed narratives.

PART ONE:
Setting the scene and preparation for fieldwork

Orientation to Part One

As a former secondary school educator in English literature and, later on, as a teacher educator in the country's sole teacher training institution, I have had a long abiding personal and professional interest in English literature and its teaching. My observations and interactions with educators, however, led me to notice a great variety of pedagogical practices and rationales in the English literature classroom. This has, in turn, pushed me to explore, together with eight participants, how pedagogical choices are made in the English literature classroom at upper secondary level and to find out how and why such choices are made.

Part One of this study describes my initial introspection and engagement with the research phenomenon, the context and background to the study, the rationale and critical questions to the study, key elements pertaining to the teaching of English literature and pedagogical choices, and a proposal for a tentative theoretical lens through which to consider the phenomenon. It sets the scene for the phenomenon of pedagogic choice in relation to the teaching of English literature at secondary level in Mauritius. As an academic involved in teacher training in English language and literature, I clarify my positioning in relation to the critical questions formulated around the phenomenon of pedagogical choice in the teaching of English literature at upper secondary level in Mauritius.

Chapter One provides an overview of the phenomenon under study, namely pedagogical choices of English literature teachers at upper secondary level in Mauritius. I provide a rationale for this study, and point out the potential insights that such a study might entail for different stakeholders. I also outline my critical questions, which will be further explored in the literature review chapter as well as the methodology chapter.

Chapter Two consists of three sections. The first considers literature both as an artistic form and as a field of study and maps out the various domains usually considered essential for any study of literature. The second section addresses the way English literature as subject is taught at secondary level, and the approaches and methods that are usually proposed for this subject. The third section addresses the phenomenon of pedagogic choice within the existing literature on decision-making and choice. While I comment briefly on salient aspects of decision theory, I focus more precisely on the literature that addresses instructional choices that are made by individuals in educational settings and highlight the pertinent arguments raised.

In **Chapter Three**, I expose the choice of methodology in producing data for my research questions. After exposing my reasons for opting for narrative inquiry, which I feel is more suitable for recording the lived experiences and mapping out the pedagogical choices of teachers, I set out to describe the data production plan, the research instruments I have used, as well as my research participants. I also lay down the gatekeeping procedures I followed and how I approached and involved my participants in my study. I conclude with a section outlining how I proceed with the data analysis to finally generate significant themes and parallels across the different narratives.

Chapter One: Setting the scene

1.0 Introduction

> "Teachers are constantly making decisions in their classrooms; indeed, decision-making is probably the central feature of the role of the teacher."
>
> (Eggleston, 2018, p.1)

The introductory Prologue set the tone in relating how I personally approached the research phenomenon from personal and professional outlooks. Reflecting on my own choices as a literature teacher and aiming to understand how other literature teachers build up their understanding of the subject and how it could be taught at secondary level, I set out on this exploratory journey to listen to different people who were in this profession. My journey into the world of pedagogical choices was, however, not un-informed; in this chapter, I contextually situate my study, and show how the current situation lends itself to further inquiry into the choices teachers make.

1.1 Orientation

Section One states the focus and purpose of my study. This is followed by **Section Two**, which establishes the context by describing the Mauritian educational system, as well as background information pertaining to the place of literature in the national curriculum and the teaching and learning of English literature at secondary level. **Section Three** presents the rationale for the study, outlines the key research questions, gives a brief overview of the methodology and outlines the significance and limitations of this study.

1.2 Section One: Focus and purpose of the study

The aim of this research is to explore English literature teachers' pedagogical choices at upper secondary level. This study was prompted by personal and professional curiosity about literature teaching practices in the Mauritian context as well as concerns about the dearth of research in that area. I aimed to research the phenomenon of pedagogical choice because it is a core feature of teaching and involves teacher cognition and knowledge. Decision making has been the subject of much research for the past few decades in a variety of domains. While research seems to have moved on to what teachers *know* rather than what they think and decide, researching pedagogical choice provides the theoretical platform to research the link between thought and action (Borko et al., 2008).

The UNESCO Education 2030 Incheon Declaration recognises teachers and educators as "crucial partners" (2017, p. 57) and recommends that they "should be engaged at all stages of policy-making, planning, implementation and monitoring." It further declares that this could be achieved if teachers and educators could "bring classroom realities to the forefront of policy dialogue, policy-making and planning and provide a bridge between policy and practice, contributing their experiences as practitioners and their collective insights and expertise to overall policies and strategies" (ibid., p.57). Coupled with this statement, the Mauritian National Curriculum Framework - Secondary (henceforth, NCF-S) recommends that a "flexi-curriculum be proposed such that schools and teachers be delegated with prerogatives of taking informed decisions regarding school-based curriculum development" and "increased pedagogical flexibility" (NCF-S, p. 15). There thus seems to be a national and international discourse towards more autonomy and agency in the classroom with suitably empowered teachers who would be able to make judicious pedagogical decisions in their day-to-day teaching. Yet the literature and feedback from in-service teachers suggest that teachers are often relegated to the margins while decisions get taken.

Considering this discrepancy between political expectations, policy and actual practice, it is to be wondered how teachers who are expected to be flexible and involved in decision-making, could, in reality, find themselves alienated and constrained in their choices. The study is therefore well-timed to understand the current 'climate' and understand what frames, pushes or blocks specific pedagogical choices. Since the aim of the study was to understand teachers' pedagogical motivations, I deemed a qualitative interpretivist study to be more suitable to my ontological and epistemological standpoints. Given that I had questions about literature teaching, I wanted encounters with teachers to be rich and evocative, and with teachers not feeling uncomfortable about sharing their practices. I thus opted for a narrative mode of inquiry to be able to engage with the narrated experiences these teachers would share with me.

1.3 Section Two: Establishing the context

1.3.1 Mauritius at a glance

Mauritius is a country of many labels, and often very challenging to explain to the outsider looking in. Some prefer to take the "postcard" angle, starting off with descriptions of a subtropical island in the Indian ocean, while others prefer to use the terms "small island developing state" (Nadal, Ankiah-Gangadeen, & Kee Mew, 2017) to describe the developmental drive of its economy as well as its nature as a geopolitical entity. Nadal et al. go on to use the term "post-colonial" (p. 206) while Bunwaree, Carroll and Carroll (2005), for instance, categorise Mauritius as one of the "ex-colonial developing countries" (p. 155) and Samuel and Mariaye (2017) speak of "continued coloniality" (p.176) while referring to the "global partners" that have taken over the older colonial forces and which impact on the growth and development of small countries. It could be surmised that small states, especially the ones

that have engaged in a process of decolonisation, are often in a state of flux as their governments try to chart a course amidst the uncertain currents of international diplomacy and politics.

Most references to Mauritius, however, refer to Mauritius as a post-colonial state, which achieved independence from British colonisation in 1968 and the country's route and rapid progress (Bunwaree et al., 2005, p.156) to becoming one of the most dynamic economies in the region. What attracts attention to this country is its multi-ethnic demographic situation, with an originally non-indigenous population that has been brought from different parts of the world over the last three centuries to be slaves, labourers, workers, traders and settlers (Aumeerally, 2005). This has resulted in a situation where different ethnic groups and communities co-exist to form "one people, one nation"[1] and where different languages are used and taught. Kreol Morisien (KM) can be considered as the national language, or *lingua franca*, since it is understood and spoken by the majority of the population.

French and English, both languages being remnants of the former colonial powers that ruled the island, exist with different levels of importance within different spheres. French has, for long, occupied a more social and communicative purpose, while English has been the de-facto language of official proceedings, administration and politics and is, in fact, the medium of instruction in schools. The efforts made by a number of stakeholders in ensuring that Kreol Morisien (KM) is given due respect and presence with the design of a KM dictionary, the setting up of Akademi Kreol Morisien[2], amongst other institutions, the increasing use of Kreol in popular and mass media, and very importantly, the presence of Kreol in school, even if offered as optional subject, has led to Kreol becoming more and more prominent (Jean-Francois & Korlapu-Bungaree, 2012). In the midst of this linguistic trio, is the presence of other languages, usually considered as ancestral or cultural languages. These languages, also introduced and taught as optional subjects as from primary level, are often associated with specific ethnic groups and are often powerfully represented by sociocultural as well as linguistic groups. Within the education system, English occupies a central role, being the medium of instruction for most subjects (National Curriculum Framework – Secondary, 2016, p. 46). The complex linguistic context thus holds great potential for the exploration of pedagogical practices involving a language positioned as central and functional within the schooling system (Mahadeo, 2006).

1.3.2 The Mauritian Education Sector

To understand the contexts in which secondary teachers operate, it is important to have an understanding of the Mauritian educational system (see **Appendices 7a**, **7b** and **7c** for more information). These details are part of the contextual tableau against which the narrated lives of English literature teachers will be drawn. This section thus outlines some of the major actors

[1] From the Mauritian National Anthem.

[2] Akademi Kreol Morisien, set up in 2010, is the Kreol Morisien (KM) language academy.

involved in the background to this study and provides some details as to the different contexts that exist in the system.

Secondary Education has been free in Mauritius since 1977 and has become compulsory, since 2005, for all up to the age of 16. The provision of primary and secondary education is regulated by the State through the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research. Secondary Education in Mauritius runs over seven years from Grade 7 to Grade 13. With the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reforms (2016), all children having completed the first six years of basic education (Grades 1 to 6) in their primary school move on to a secondary school to complete the last three years of the nine-year basic education cycle (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 5). Pupils who were not able to reach the minimum standards at the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Assessment[3] are channeled to the Extended Programme in their secondary school, where an adapted curriculum assists learners in completing their basic education in four years instead of the conventional three years (Samuel & Mariaye, 2020).

While the student is assessed internally in Grades 7 and 8, there is however, an exit point at Grade 9, which indicates the end of lower secondary schooling and marks the end of compulsory education. Students who successfully complete the Grade 9 National Certificate of Education (NCE) examinations then proceed on to higher secondary education, where they may sit for the 'O' Level examinations, and qualify for a School Certificate. Students who have been unsuccessful at the CPE examinations can opt to enter the Extended education stream or can enter it if they have not performed well during their first years of secondary schooling.

At lower secondary level, students study languages (English, French, Hindi and other languages), Mathematics, Sciences (Biology, Chemistry and Physics), Social Sciences (History, Sociology and Geography) Technology (ICT, Design and Technology, Home Economics, Design, Clothing and Textiles), Arts (Visual Arts, Music, and Drama and Dance), and Health (Home Economics, Physical Education). At this level, literature features in the NCF specific subject in the syllabus as from 2016, but is usually granted one period, as was the case when it was subsumed under English language.

As students proceed to Grade 10, students have to choose at least six subjects which will be assessed at the end of Grade 11 in the GCE 'O' Level/School Certificate (SC) examinations, set by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). This body is responsible for the preparation of syllabus and examination papers and assessment and correction of examination papers, in collaboration with the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES). At this stage, English and Literature in English are offered as separate subjects. After the School Certificate examinations, the student proceeds to two additional years of upper secondary education, namely Grade 12 and Grade 13, which culminate with the Cambridge Higher School Certificate, which is obtained after sitting for the GCE 'A' Level examinations. At this level, students are required to specialise in 3 main subjects and 2

[3] The PSAC Examinations mark the end of the Primary education cycle.

subsidiary ones for their examinations. There is also an option to compete at national level for bursaries for tertiary education.

As at March 2019, there were 180 secondary schools, or colleges, servicing the country and which are either state, state vocational, parastatal, private-aided, and private-unaided schools. There were 110 schools offering both general education as well as an extended[4] programme (Ministry of Education, 2017) while 70 schools offered general education only. There were 69 state-run schools and 111 private aided and non-aided schools (Statistics Mauritius, 2019, p.5). In Mauritius, most state colleges are single-gender schools while many private and parastatal schools are mixed-gender in terms of student population. Following the decision to offer free education to all as from 1977, as well as the decision in 2005 to make education compulsory till the age of 16, efforts have been made to ensure that all children in Mauritius receive formal education and training. The Ministry is assisted by different state and private institutions, notably the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA), which was established to provide the facilities and maintain standards at non-state secondary schools. The Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique[5] (SeDEC) coordinates and oversees the running of schools under its purview.

1.4 Section Three: The teaching of literature in English in Mauritius

1.4.1. English language and Literature in English in the Mauritian Context: A Complicated Relationship

Section 1.3.1 provided some insights into the Mauritian society. If there is multilingualism in Mauritius, it is one that is the result of the country's colonial past and settlement history (Nadal et al., 2017, p. 206). This section considers the relationship between English language and literature. Even though my study is focused on English literature, this subject is inextricably linked to the teaching of language in the Mauritian context.

The British colonial system has left the country with English as an important language and subject. While not being the actual official language of the Republic, or spoken by the majority of the population, it has remained the official medium of instruction in school since 1916 (Nadal et al., 2017, p. 207) and represents the country's bid to be responsive to the forces of globalisation by preparing the nation to be functionally literate in that language. The Education Ordinance of 1957, which repeats earlier ordinances, states the following:

[4] Formerly, there were two major streams within the formal secondary schooling context, namely the mainstream academic stream and the pre-vocational stream. The latter stream has, since the NYCBE reform in 2016, now been redesigned as a four-year extended programme to provide additional support, time, and an adapted curriculum for learners (Ministry of Education, 2017).

[5] 'Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique' (SDEC) can be translated as 'The Diocesan Board of Catholic Education'

> In Standard IV, V and VI of the Government and aided primary schools the medium of instruction shall be English, and conversation between teacher and pupils shall be carried on in English; provided that lessons in any other language taught in the school shall be carried on through the medium of that instruction.
>
> (Colony of Mauritius, 1958, pp. 129-130)

The reluctance with which the successive governments have considered discussing any change to language policies in place (Sonck, 2005, p.43) suggests that there is likely to be a lasting dissonance as long as they do not take into account the linguistic needs of the population. In 1997, the Ministry of Education issued a White Paper where it acknowledges language policy as "a very sensitive and very controversial issue" which "arouses considerable passion and emotion" (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 1997, p.29). While it found this situation 'unfortunate', the Ministry thinly hinted at studies that could "establish whether we need some flexibility in our medium of instruction at classroom level; and to what extent our present approach to languages needs to be revisited to live up to our national aspirations" (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 1997, p.29). Such a dissonance is what teachers already report from their English language and literature classes, with students who feel forced to interact and formally communicate in a language with which they share very little affinity and which is often not in their immediate environment. The additional fact that English is a requirement in eventually getting an overall pass in order to obtain a School Certificate or a Higher School Certificate adds to the frustration of some students.

Despite controversies surrounding the role and presence of English within the educational system, Tirvassen (2007) notes a general trend over time to "anglicize" the education system. He argues that signs of such a move are apparent, for instance, in the fact that English was the language of legislation, the language most used in the National Assembly, and the language in which all official documents were written (2007, p.103). This set the required foundation, he suggests, for English to be firmly entrenched in the most important institutions in the country.

Despite this, the structures put in place seem to have calcified over time, with much more complex language practices stepping in where earlier language practices, at least in the academic sphere, were more streamlined. With relatively limited outlets in Mauritian society for English to organically be adopted by the population (Mahadeo, 2006, pp. 23-24), it is not surprising that the student of today has relatively few authentic reference points, that is, instances of English being used in the local public domain or in the environment, besides popular culture, in his or her learning of the language. This would result in English being seen by the latter "as an object of analytical study rather than a means of communication whose use can be effectively acquired experientially" (Mahadeo, 2006, p. 23).

What, then, of English literature? It would seem that English literature has always been around as long as English language has been taught in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Macaulay's infamous "Minute on Education[6]" (Macaulay, 1835) where he praises the "intrinsic superiority of the Western literature" (Macaulay, 1835, para. 10) as a means of educating the colonised natives of the British empire is one example of the way the English language and literature were to lend a strong hand in the civilising mission (Macaulay, 1835, para. 12) of the British empire. While Macaulay's understanding of literature may have broadly encompassed literature, history, science and the cultural output of the Empire in general, he nevertheless exemplifies the setting up of an exclusionary system that prominently used the literature and the arts in the colonial enterprise. Whether this mission has survived within literature as a contemporary subject area offered at different levels is to be determined. It would seem, however, that literature, for literature's sake, has more currency in undergraduate programmes in local universities, where there has been a steady number of students opting for a BA in English practically every year since the inception of that programme (Higher Education Commission, 2019). At the same time, across the range of subjects offered at upper secondary level, literature is often one of the lesser chosen subjects (Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, HSC Statistics, 2019). Exploring different conceptions of this subject would assist the researcher to understand rationales behind the purpose and usefulness of different subjects within the education project of a small island developing state.

As powerful it may arguably have been in the past, there are those who would view the decline of English literature as representative of the decline of English studies itself (Bousquet, 2009) despite English language's reinvention as the *de facto* language of globalisation, trade and more recently, the internet (Graddol, 2000; Jansen, 2017). While the English language still enjoys relevance and currency amongst many postcolonial nations, literature seems to be struggling. In this particular context, its tenuous presence in the upper secondary Mauritian system provides the opportunity for those who want to specialise in literature or who want to compete for a state scholarship, via a system of subject combinations, to be able to do so. Arguments that English literature could further the goals of learning English in EFL/ESL contexts have also taken root, especially in some proposed models of literature teaching. As I will outline in the next chapter, many approaches to the teaching of literature valorise the protean nature of this subject which blends itself well to 21st century thinking, with its focus on the development of soft skills. There is a potential for English literature, with its emphases on intercultural understanding, critical thinking, and development of empathy, to latch itself onto a new identity and reinvent itself. The fact that it has not been able to do so in this context and other contexts besides Mauritius suggests a malaise in relation to the purposes of this subject within a national curriculum. To quote a teacher from this study, "do we need dusty old English literature to appreciate English?" To me, this statement is symptomatic of some deeper unease running through English teachers these days. Many of those teachers run their literature classes out of passion and interest and seek to develop the same love for reading and books as they had while growing up. Nevertheless, the steady decline of the subject, with dwindling numbers and even more diminishing interest of students in reading, combined with the lack of professional training for many teachers are likely to erode teachers' enthusiasm and impact

[6] Macaulay, T. B. (1835). Macaulay's minute on education. Retrieved from http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html

their choices in the classroom. A study such as this thus is important to understand how teachers react in the face of reduced choices, and how these choices reflect their ability to address their learners' needs or, in fact, satisfy the system's need for accountability.

1.4.2 Literature in English in the national lower secondary curriculum

Appendix 7a explains the different streams of study available to students in the Republic of Mauritius as they move through formal schooling. The following Figure 1.1 shows the academic progression within the schooling context for students following the mainstream course of study:

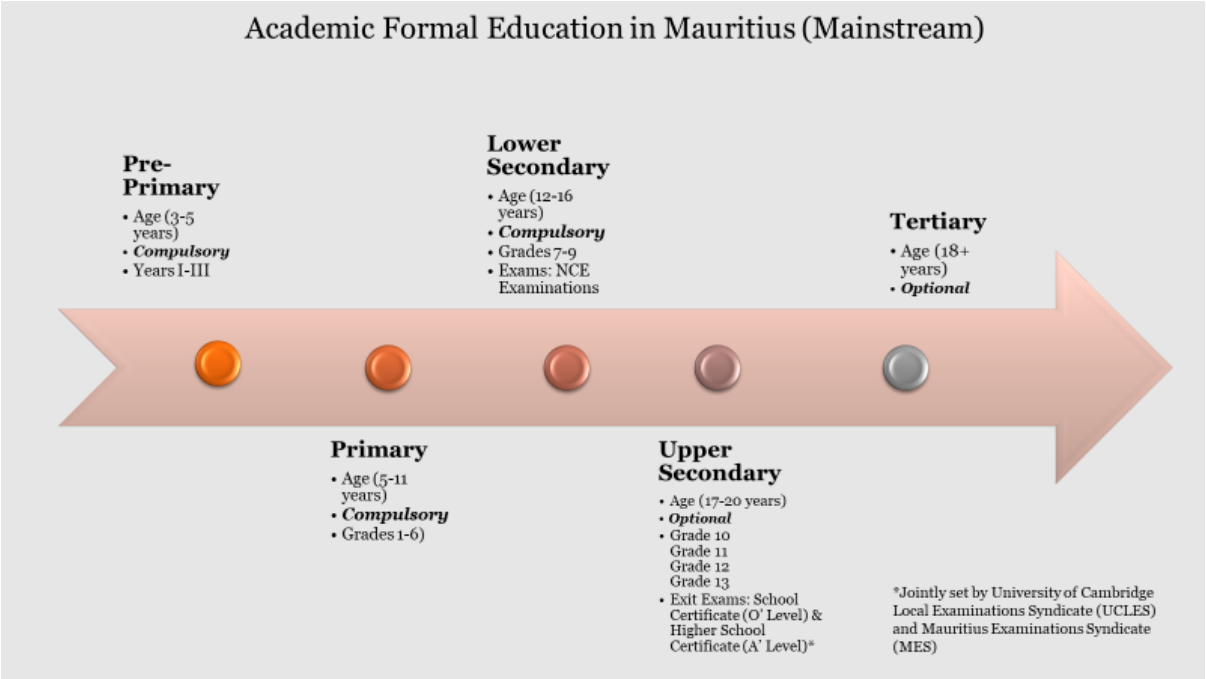


Figure 1.1: Mainstream Academic Formal Education in Mauritius

While this study was concerned with upper secondary literature teachers' pedagogical choices, I deemed it essential to address the way literature is taught at lower secondary level. Firstly, the teachers who would be teaching at upper secondary might also be teaching at lower secondary; it would be interesting to see how teachers share their notions of the similarities and differences between teaching at the two levels. Secondly, students opting for literature classes at Grade 10 level might or might not have had exposure to literature.

The National Curriculum Framework – Grades 7-9 or Secondary (NCF-S) document is thus an important document which could assist in the charting of a learner's literary skills. Moreover, I was interested in knowing whether the framing of literature in the NCF-S

Secondary, aimed at lower secondary, would also impact on teachers' understanding of what they had to teach at upper secondary level, where there was no similar National curriculum document to guide them.

The National Curriculum Framework documents comprise the following sets of documents:

- National Curriculum Framework for Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (2015a)
- National Curriculum Framework – Grades 1-6 (2015b)
- National Curriculum Framework – Grades 7-9 (2016)

With the introduction of the Nine Years Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform in 2016, resulting in the elaboration of a new curriculum framework, the role and importance of English literature as a subject from Grades 7 to 9 in the Mauritian educational system (Ministry of Education, 2016) is described more explicitly and contrasts with its depiction in the former curriculum framework (Ministry of Education, 2008). Given that the teachers in my study have worked with students who have gone through the previous curriculum at lower secondary level and now are at upper secondary level, I therefore will present the two different provisions for English literature in the two National Curriculum Framework documents (2008 & 2016) and reflect on possibilities such difference might subsequently impact upon English literature teaching at upper secondary level.

The National Curriculum Framework - Secondary (2008)

Under the 2008 National Curriculum Framework - Secondary document, literature was not offered as a separate subject but rather as shown below:

> In the lower secondary curriculum, Literature in English forms an **integral part of the language lesson** but at Forms IV and V levels, it is studied as a subject. Literature, being a rich source of language used in varied ways, has tremendous **potential as a resource for language teaching** and for the development of **analytical skills and critical thinking**. [...] At the same time, [learners] become aware of the **diversity of cultures** in the world and **develop appreciation and tolerance**. In the upper forms, more emphasis is laid on the development of skills for **analysis and appreciation**.
>
> (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.34) [my emphases]

The above, besides a few smaller guidelines elsewhere in the curriculum document, constituted the recommendations made by the government, and especially the Ministry of Education, upon the implementation of a literature curriculum at lower secondary level, which would comprise

the first three years of secondary schooling. This would lead to the following outcomes, as outlined in the NCF-S document:

Table 1.1: Selected learning outcomes for English (Forms 1-3[7]) from the NCF-S (2008)

- Students demonstrate increased literal and critical understanding.
- They read a wide range of texts on different topics and with different organizational patterns.
- They relate information from different parts of the same text or different texts and analyse these.
- They understand that writings reflect certain ideologies and cultural constructs. They thus recognize the writer's purpose and understand the reason behind the use of certain stylistic devices, e.g., irony and metaphorical language.
- They provide personal response to the text, demonstrate empathic skills, and justify/discuss their views.
- Students read aloud texts of varying lengths and those including dialogue fluently and with conviction. They display confidence and vary pace, tone, pitch and stress as required.

(National Curriculum Framework – Secondary, 2009, pp. 42-43)

In the 2008 National Curriculum Framework - Secondary document (Ministry of Education, 2009), as it can be noted, at lower secondary, English literature is integrated in the language curriculum. Even if the NCF-S (2008) was not prescriptive in its recommendation of literary texts for language study and literary appreciation, many secondary schools included at least one period (around 35 to 40 minutes) in their timetable for the introduction to English literature as from Grade 7. It may be surmised that not all schools might have actively put in place a learning programme for literature, thus providing valuable data about the way English literature is introduced and managed from lower secondary level onwards.

As from Grade 10, English literature is offered as a subject in its own right, separate from the English language paper. At Grade 12, interested students were able to choose the A' Level English paper at Principal level, which is a full literature paper. At upper secondary level, the curriculum and syllabus for English literature teaching are defined by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which sets the two exit examinations, that is, the O' Level (at Grade 11) and the A' Level (at Grade 13) examination papers jointly with the local Mauritius Examinations Syndicate. There is hence a shift from locally set

[7] Now referred to as Grades 7-9.

assessment (usually consisting of a mix of continuous and summative assessment) at lower secondary (NCF-S, 2016, pp. 39-41) to examinations set to international benchmarks (Samuel & Mariaye, 2020) at upper secondary. This raises questions as to how increased accountability linked to exit examinations could potentially impact upon teachers' choice of pedagogy in the literature classroom.

With the NCF-S (2008) laying emphasis upon the "development of skills for analysis and appreciation" at lower secondary level (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 34), one could question how teachers subsequently went about (or still go about) addressing texts at upper secondary level, and whether there was some engagement with students' past experiences of literature (if any) before they engaged with the subject at upper secondary. Moreover, without guidelines from a national curriculum document, the way teachers interpreted and implemented guidelines from University of Cambridge Local Examinations could assist in explaining the choices teachers make in their teaching of literature.

The NCF Secondary (2016)

The NCF-S (2016) (see **Appendix 8a**) elaborates on the conceptualisation of English literature in the lower secondary curriculum (NCF-S, 2016, p.48) and differs from the older curriculum document in providing a rationale as well as guidelines on how to teach this subject. The fact that literature is described from an ontological perspective in terms of its "considerable value to human life (NCF-S, 2016, p.48) seems to imply a deeper engagement from the teacher in the process of teaching literature than perhaps developing an appreciation of literature in young people. The pedagogical benefits of learning literature are also outlined, with reference made to "aesthetic gratification" and "appreciation of different literary genres", besides improving language skills (NCF-S, 2016, p.48). As broad and abstract as some of those terms may seem, they do bring forth the rich and qualitative nature of literature as something that brings more than facts to the learner; they also suggest that texts cannot be approached as items to be read casually without deeper engagement. Literature is also described in terms of its role in developing values, "intercultural understanding", critical thinking and empathy (NCF-S, 2016, p.48). The interdisciplinary nature of literature and the possibility of linking contents, genres and styles to other domains are described as having great pedagogical value. While avoiding to be prescriptive, the official curriculum framework document also suggests that teaching should not entail reading of texts and explanations only (NCF-S, 2016, p.48). An eclectic approach is advocated so as to develop higher order thinking in learners. Similarly, the NCF Secondary recommends exploring a variety of assessment options to tap into the literary potential of students, while still focusing on developing students' appreciation and study of literary texts.

Some schools (whether private or state schools) thus do not offer English literature classes at lower secondary level, but start teaching it as a full-fledged subject as from Grade 10. There are also private and state secondary schools that do not offer English literature at all

throughout the seven years of study, even if it is not documented how and why official provisions in the NCF-S pertaining to the teaching of this component are disregarded. In some cases, therefore, the first taste of English literature occurs at Grade 10 after the student has made his or her choice of subjects for 'O' level examinations. This situation has somewhat changed with the implementation of the NYCBE educational reform (2016) where English literature is explicitly described as a subject to be taught and assessed on its own at lower secondary level (that is, from Grades 7 to 9), even if the implication is that arrangements are to be made in the English language timetable to accommodate this new subject. So far, it is not clear if all schools have implemented this formally into their timetables but the advent of a national examination at Grade 9 level in 2020, which would potentially include assessment in English literature prompts questionings as to the orientation that this subject will take at that level, the texts to be prescribed (or not), the competencies to be developed, and the nature of the paper to be set.

All these points, it could be argued, represent the pedagogical guidelines indicating to the educator at lower secondary how to handle the literature component of their English class. Such guidelines were not present in the previous version of the NCF-S, where literature and literary skills were mostly subsumed under the language syllabus. While it could be argued that teachers could have brought in their personal experience, their academic and professional knowledge and perhaps their own research into their teaching at both lower and upper secondary levels, it could be argued that the newer generation of young learners at lower secondary could possibly be better prepared at handling literary study, and later on, deeper analysis of texts at upper secondary level. The study can thus assist in uncovering how educators, who now are teaching at upper secondary level, have approached teaching without in depth curriculum guidance, and whether there is a difference in terms of pedagogical practices when they teach students with some experience of literature in contrast to those who do not possess that prior knowledge.

1.4.3 Literature in English in the upper secondary curriculum

At upper secondary level, students engage in two consecutive years of study culminating in a possible exit point at Grade 11 and another two consecutive years of study that end with a final secondary level exit point at Grade 13. During those four years, students are prepared in terms of skills and knowledge to be able to tackle end-of-year national examinations, which would lead to a School Certificate and Higher School Certificate at the end of Grade 11 and Grade 13 respectively. For these exit examinations, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations (UCLES), also known as Cambridge Assessment, is the external examining body that is tasked to set and mark assessments for learners in numerous countries. UCLES, a non-profit-making department of the University of Cambridge, has furthermore developed the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE), which has now become one of the most widespread English-medium qualification providers (Golding & Kopsick, 2019, p.8), notably

in former colonies of Britain. The papers that are prepared are then set as national examinations that are monitored locally by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate.

The implementation of the UCLES curriculum not only implies getting acquainted with the assessment objectives of the 'O' level and 'A' level examinations (see **Appendices 8b** and **8c** for more details about learning outcomes and assessment objectives) but also choosing texts which are proposed at those two levels. In both situations, UCLES proposes to its clientele a list of literary texts from Prose, Poetry and Drama literature in English. The composition of such a list, from which teachers would have to select, requires closer scrutiny, especially since local teachers (unlike the previous situation mentioned by Bissoondoyal (1998) regarding the involvement of advisory panels for some other subject areas) are not consulted. Would this imply a tacit understanding on the part of UCLES of what English literature is and what authors, texts and contexts these could relate to? Such assumptions could impact, for instance, on the inclusion of literary texts in English by local authors. A parallel can be drawn with French literature at Grade 11 and Grade 13, where local texts are usually included within the syllabus. What could explain this difference in framing the subject? Is there an assumption that there are no local authors writing in English or that the local offerings do not "fit" what UCLES perceives as 'quality literature', or has UCLES never been contacted by local authorities and/or writers with respect to updating the proposed syllabus? By what standards are some authors (besides the obvious canonical offerings that are still present in such prescribed lists) included? How, then, do teachers engage with such content and teach it? These are, admittedly, questions that go beyond the purview of this study but which could be at the base of certain assumptions about texts and their value, from the perspective of teachers. It is to be noted that some Mauritian authors are sometimes included in the lower secondary literature curriculum, for instance, *Tales of Mauritius*[8] or *More Tales from Mauritius*[9], to name a few.

There are different ways whereby the position of UCLES in relation to the Mauritian education system could be explored. With a syllabus and curriculum at upper secondary for English literature that seem to be derived from an international source, rather than locally generated, the choice that the State seems to have made in using the services of UCLES would require further probing as this choice could have an influence upon the pedagogical practices within the classroom. One may question why Mauritius (alongside other countries) would resort to a system as the basis for its curriculum policy framework at upper secondary level, in contrast to countries such as Singapore, for instance, that opted to keep the structure offered by UCLES but provided a curriculum that included more native writers and texts (Ping & Ang, 2013, p.96). UCLES seems to stand as a yardstick for "quality" education at international level but Breidlid (2013) warns of the implication that schools of the Global South lack knowledge or require knowledge that only one source, namely UCLES here, could provide. Moulding and adapting the national curriculum provided by UCLES might worryingly imply a reliance on a former coloniser once more, and become a potential source of disempowerment for educators in such contexts when it would seem that Mauritius was firmly working on its decolonisation.

[8] Ramdoyal, R. D. (1979). *Tales from Mauritius*. Edition de L'Ocean Indien.
[9] Ramdoyal, R. D. (1981). *More tales from Mauritius*. Macmillan.

UCLES' relationship with the different countries it has dealings with could signal a trend towards the commodification of curricula within an increasingly knowledge-centred world economy. Referring to the case of Mauritius, Bissoondoyal (1998) suggests that the principal attraction of UCLES' services lay in the "international recognition and portability of qualifications" (p. 52) as well as the range of subjects offered, even if he points out dissatisfaction at local level with UCLES on the limited relevance of some of its papers to the Mauritian context (pp.52-53). 'Buying in' on such curricula as offered by UCLES could be "educational geostrategic leveraging" (Jules & Ressler, 2016, p. 28); a soft power move (Altbach & McGill Peterson, 2008, p. 314) to place Mauritius more visibly as a nation investing in international education standards, thus consolidating an outward-looking glance for this island state. Some could even see such a move as an act of 'education diplomacy' (Jules & Ressler, 2016), even if in doing so, it potentially re-establishes a North-South interrelationship that might not align itself with many former colonies' move towards decolonisation, and making the matter more ambiguous when it comes to the selection of an *English* literature curriculum. Interestingly, UCLES proposes a number of options to its clientele, allowing different contextual environments some degree of choice to select those syllabi that best suit their educational agenda. Bissoondoyal (1998) describes UCLES' attempts in Mauritius to provide customised syllabi for specific subjects such as History, Geography, Asian languages, which involved local advisory committees, as well as local markers for subjects such as French and Art (p. 52). Little is mentioned about attempts to 'Mauritianise' the literature curriculum. Whether these choices are really to the advantage of the client given the (limited) choices provided is thus questionable and raises the possibility of challenges even at the level of the policy of the UCLES curricula development if it is merely offering programmes to suit the mass. This could potentially impact policy makers and practitioners at national, institutional and operational levels who may find themselves with an increasingly reduced set of choices within localised contexts.

Studies on the systemic decisions regarding implementation of specific curricula within educational systems (especially in the context of African countries) have been carried out in the past (Bray, 1998a, 1998b; Dillard, 2003; Lowe, 2000; Omolewa, 1977, 1980, 2006; Samuel & Mariaye, 2019; Somerset, 2011). Bray (1998), for instance, has looked at the impact of international examination systems upon the small island state of Maldives, while Samuel and Mariaye (2019) have considered the way educational policies in Mauritius have been influenced by multinational organisations. Omolewa (2006) has explored, over the decades, the impact of international educational organisations, amongst them, UCLES, on some African educational systems. One may wonder who creates or "sells" the curriculum, who selects it and who, in the end, implements it. Choosing a curriculum that is perhaps made for "wholesale", with little contextual reference to the client's context, could bring about challenges at different levels. Alongside those studies, there is a need for complementary information from a more personal or situational vantage point which could show the impact (if any) of those systemic decisions upon pedagogical choices in the classroom. A closer look at how specific syllabi get selected for specific countries would thus be needed, and while the teachers responding to this study might not be aware of those choices happening at international level, their responses to

the curriculum chosen by others could provide deeper insight into the choices teachers have once the broader choice of curriculum has already been made by the country's policy makers.

Moreover, while there is a variety of texts that span a number of countries, cultures and genres on offer in the UCLES English literature list of prescribed texts, it is unclear how teachers in the literature classroom carry out their own text choices and whether they feel empowered or inhibited by the selection of texts offered. Golding and Kopsick's (2019) survey of the authors and texts that compose the UCLES lists of texts suggests that categories have seemingly widened, in terms of variety as well as the inclusion of certain formerly excluded voices, possibly resulting from the rise of postcolonial writing and greater recognition of literatures in English around the world. However, their study concludes that the composition of such lists is still dominated by authors (mostly men) of the Global North and that the underrepresentation of Global South voices serves to further dispossess Global South schools (Golding & Kopsick, 2018, p. 13). How do teachers, who have been educated and trained in a different tradition, plan and teach such texts? If and when given the choice, which texts do they choose to teach? Is there a pedagogy in literature teaching that may be applied to any type of text? These are questions that the narratives of literary teachers attempted to answer through the exploration of actual teachers' choices and practices.

1.4.4 Assessment of literature in English at upper secondary level

This section briefly introduces the assessment outcomes of the literature examinations at Grades 11 and 13 and considers an eventual link between an examination-oriented curriculum and pedagogy.

The 2017-2019 syllabus document for 'O' level thus states the following aims for Grade 10/Grade 11 students:

- To communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in speech and writing
- To understand and respond imaginatively to what they hear, read an experience
- To enjoy literature and appreciate its contribution to aesthetic and imaginative growth
- To explore areas of universal human concern, which will lead to a better understanding of themselves and others.

(University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2017, Cambridge O' Level Literature in English 2010 syllabus[10])

The UCLES O' level literature syllabus also outlines the corresponding assessment objectives for the Paper 2010 (see Table 1.2 below), an examination paper consisting of two

[10] University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2017). Cambridge O Level Literature in English 2010 syllabus. [Retrieved from https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/204250-2017-2019-syllabus.pdf]

components, namely Poetry and Prose (Component 1) and Drama (Component 2) (UCLES, Cambridge O' Level Literature in English 2010 syllabus, 2017, p. 9).

Table 1.2: Assessment outcomes for O' Level Literature in English (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2017, Cambridge O' Level Literature in English 2010 syllabus, p.9)[11]

AO1	Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary texts
AO2	Understand the ways literary texts can be interpreted from surface level to deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes and their contexts
AO3	Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language
AO4	Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers achieve their effects (e.g. structure, plot, characterisation, dramatic tension, imagery, rhythm, setting and mood)
AO5	Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to what is read.

As far as 'A' level Literature in English is concerned, students are required to sit for the 9695 Literature in English syllabus, which consists of four examination papers, each of 2 hours, on Poetry and Prose (Paper 3), Drama (Paper 4), Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century texts (Paper 5), as well as one optional paper (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2019, p. 20).

The 2019 syllabus document for 'A' level English literature also outlines the following assessment outcomes for that level:

Table 1.3: Assessment outcomes for A' Level Literature in English (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, A' Level Assessment Criteria, 2019, p. 23).

AO1	The ability to respond to texts in the three main forms (Prose, Poetry and Drama) of different types and from different cultures.
AO2	An understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings.
AO3	The ability to produce informed, independent opinions and judgements on literary texts.
AO4	The ability to communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate for literary study.
AO5	The ability to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of literary works.

An initial comparison of these two sets of assessment outcomes suggests that the O'level syllabus tends to privilege a more text-centric orientation, with deeper understanding of the way meanings in texts are conveyed as well as a personal response to texts. On the other hand, the A' level syllabus seems to concentrate on reflective and analytical responses to

[11] University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2020). Learner Guide for Cambridge O Level Literature in English. [Retrieved from https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/478389-learner-guide-for-cambridge-o-level-literature-in-english-2010-.pdf]

literary texts (Four out of five of the outcomes listed in Table 1.3 convey the need to develop in the student the ability to respond in one form or the other to the texts) on the part of the learner. Assessment Outcome 2 in Table 1.3 however implies that these responses also require a deeper understanding of writers' use of language and style, which are aspects more deeply covered in the two earlier years of study (see Table 1.2).

Although little is mentioned about pedagogical approaches to texts, the aims outlined above seem to suggest what aspects to address in class. For instance, there is emphasis on understanding the workings of literary devices and texts, responding to literary experiences, focusing on the universality of human experiences as well as appreciating literature and its effects. How these aims and assessment outcomes could be translated into instructional strategies seems to be left up to the teacher. With the UCLES programme of study being the existing alternative to a local/national curriculum from Grades 10 to 13, with little to recommend in terms of pedagogy and implementation of the syllabus in the classroom context, one could also wonder to what extent assessment practices are driving the kinds of choices made in English literature teaching. Thus, this study opens up an interesting area of research into how teachers make sense of these curriculum documents and to what extent their interpretation of assessment outcomes informs their teaching of the subject.

1.4.5 Teacher training and the teaching of literature in English

Professional development for teachers at secondary level has, for a long time, not been an official requirement to join the teaching profession, probably since teacher education programmes were still being developed and there was an urgent need for educators in the workplace with a background in English language and literature to address the need to educate the Mauritian population and ensure that they were provided education in the quasi-official language of the country, namely English (International Labour Organisation, 2005, p. 8). Over the years, one of the conditions for recruitment into teaching in the public sector has been to have at least an Educator's licence (Pay Research Bureau, Pay Review 2013, 2013, p.461, para. 99.5[12]). Even then, many private schools did not necessarily require someone who was pedagogically trained and it may be surmised that they are, to this day, a steady employer of a large pool of university graduates who have little or no professional training. Not every English literature teacher in Mauritius, therefore, has necessarily undergone professional training, even though it is now becoming more and more pressing, given the long lists of "supply" teachers waiting to obtain permanent teaching posts, that every qualification counts (Awootar, 2018, para. 3[13]).

[12] Pay Research Bureau (2013), Pay Review 2013, p. 461. Retrieved from http://prb.pmo.govmu.org/English/Documents/PRB%20Reports/pssfile.pdf

[13] Awootar, A.D. (2018, September 13). Educating children of a lesser god – the supply teacher model. *Le Mauricien*. Retrieved from https://www.lemauricien.com/article/educating-children-of-a-lesser-god-the-supply-teacher-model/

On the other hand, facilities which used to be given to educators to have access to such professional courses, such as leave from work, or incremental credits for additional qualifications (which until recently, used to be remunerated, but now have been severely constrained) have led to a slacking off in terms of numbers of in-service trainees opting for professional training (Higher Education Commission, 2019). However, since attaining degree-awarding status, the Mauritius Institute of Education has been steadily developing its catalogue of Bachelor in Education degrees and seeking school leaving candidates who are interested in teaching, or candidates with earlier professional qualifications such as a Teacher's Diploma or Certificate, who might be seeking an upgrade (Mauritius Institute of Education, 2018, pp. 12-13).

Teachers principally go through pedagogical training at the Mauritius Institute of Education, which has been the sole provider for teacher education courses, although a few other higher education institutions are now making inroads in that area by offering didactics modules and work placements in school contexts (Nadal, Ankiah-Gangadeen, & Kee Mew, 2017). From time to time, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, which oversees the running of examinations at national level, organises workshops with the help of UCLES examiners for teachers who will be also examiners for English language and Literature in English papers.

I will briefly refer to courses relevant to the training needs of literature teachers. The Educator's Licence (English), the Teacher's Diploma Secondary (TDS English, recently discontinued), the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE English) as well as the Bachelor in Education (B.Ed. English) are courses offered at the Mauritius Institute of Education. These courses offer pedagogical as well as subject didactics modules that aim at preparing the teacher for secondary level schooling. All those courses have at least one module that caters to the teaching of English literature. In the case of the Educator's licence, run over one semester, there is only one subject didactics module, which aims at exposing the aspiring teacher to "an overview of main approaches underpinning the teaching, learning and assessment of English language and literature at secondary level" (Mauritius Institute of Education, Educator's Licence Programme Handbook 2017, p. 27). It would thus be of great interest to see if such courses are sufficient to equip the future educator in all aspects pertaining to teaching and provide a basic level of understanding of the teaching processes. A similar module is offered at PGCE level but it is subsequently complemented with a literature teaching module in its own right, which aims at equipping "trainee educators with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to teach Literature at secondary level" (Mauritius Institute of Education, PGCE Part-Time 2018-2019 Handbook, 2019, p.38). Other examples of literature didactics modules are included in **Appendices 8d** and **8e**.

Here is an overview of the module breakdown for this PGCE Part-Time[14] English Literature Didactics module:

[14] The PGCE Part-Time is a 2-year postgraduate course aimed at in-service educators.

Table 1.4: Module outline for Subject Didactics III module (Mauritius Institute of Education, PGCE Part-Time 2018-2019 Handbook, 2019, p.38)

Subject Didactics III
Learning Outcomes
Trainee educators should be able to: ● demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of literary genres and theories ● implement relevant strategies for teaching and evaluation in the literature classroom ● use appropriate tools and resources for the teaching of literature in English.
Content • The importance of Literature in the Curriculum o The origins and evolution of English literature o The teaching of English literature as academic subject-Teaching the canon o Literature teaching goals in the NCF and Cambridge Syllabi • Major Literature Teaching Models (The Language Model, Cultural Model and Personal Model) • The Generic Approach-The nature and characteristics of the three main literary genres (Prose, Drama, Poetry) • Text-based approaches -The Thematic Approach; Stylistic Analysis of texts • Literary Theories and Critical Interpretations of texts • Strategies to develop critical and empathic understanding of text, theme and character • Tools and resources for the teaching of different genres at lower and upper secondary levels • Evaluation of students' work and remediation

What may be observed from the above contents outline are the wide-ranging aims of the module. Trainee teachers are introduced to the curriculum framework and knowledge related to the subject (origins, development, and characteristics). Then they proceed with knowledge about the various literature teaching models and approaches, and subsequently work on strategies. Although these items seem separate from each other, many of these however, operate on a hierarchical basis – that is, each new item taught subsumes the previous, and in fact, is dependent upon it. It may be queried whether the above content items and competencies are effective at equipping the teacher beginning his or her career, or whether in-service teachers find such courses useful in addressing their day-to-day realities.

Insights gathered from colleagues and confidential student feedback questionnaires,during the course of two recent programme evaluations[15] suggest that trainees'

[15] Two teacher education programmes, namely the Teacher's Diploma Secondary and the B.Ed Secondary programmes (in both cases, for in-service and pre-service teachers) were the object of programme evaluations, followed by programme reviews in the period of 2018-2020 at the Mauritius Institute of Education. I was part

expectations of what teacher education could and should provide as pedagogical input and support diverge somewhat from stated professional development outcomes and that this dissonance results, in some trainees at least, in a fracture between taught professional content and actual practices in the workplace. Despite reviews and changes at the level of certain programmes to set up "transpositional spaces for the integration of theory and practice" (Mariaye et al., 2012, p.127) in programmes such as the PGCE to bring forth a larger reflexive dimension, trainees' responses to these dialogic spaces are not always what teacher educators (and educators) expect The study could thus help me understand whether there is any incidence of professional training upon instructional choices and the extent to which teachers develop a self-awareness of their capacity as decision-makers within their respective contexts. At the same time, the responses from participants would provide data as to the suitability and usefulness of such professional development courses.

1.5 Section Four: Rationale for the study

1.5.1 Rationale

This study was initially prompted by my personal and professional experiences as an English literature teacher and teacher educator. I explain in the **Prologue** how my personal, academic and professional identities intersected and influenced my ontological standpoint and epistemological beliefs, which led to my deep interest in the field of literature teaching. This topic interested me for two main reasons. When I was an educator, I had not had initial teacher training, like many of my colleagues, and I ended up joining the teaching profession all the same. Yet, we were expected to teach in a formal context, with a set curriculum and syllabus and expected to lead young minds to achieve a certain set of learning outcomes. I thus had to learn how to teach by myself, and I must admit, by trial and error. I therefore learnt how to "be" a teacher and how to teach in the workplace itself. I mention in the **Prologue** that I had an affinity with English literature and this, to a great extent, assisted me in my eventual teaching of this subject at school.

From a professional perspective, my professional interactions with in-service and pre-service teachers aroused my curiosity about the way teachers went about teaching English literature in their respective classrooms, what they thought about literature, how they came up with conceptions of what and how to teach, and what they thought they were achieving when teaching this subject, and the challenges they were experiencing. Given the variety in terms of teacher profiles and contexts, I was interested to know whether some of these differences impacted on teachers' pedagogical choices, and if they did, to what extent they influenced pedagogy in the literature classroom. The more I started reading about what teachers knew and

of the programme evaluation team and worked on the evaluation reports that were subsequently communicated to academic staff and MIE management.

what teachers did, the more I found that there were substantial differences in the way teachers approached teaching in general and the subjects they taught.

Beyond my own personal and professional interests, this study has the potential to broaden knowledge at different levels. This study arises out of the need to contextually explore teachers' experiences of teaching a "minority" subject in the process of steady attrition and the ways they address a variety of challenges through their choice of pedagogy. A number of researchers have pointed out at the gap that exists and the relative dearth of literature on how English literature teachers go about selecting how to approach texts and how to teach and assess this subject (Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009; Krishnasamy, 2015; Park, 2013; Rubin & Land, 2017). Burroughs & Smagorinsky (2009), for instance, comment on the fact that "it is a narrow body of scholarship, consisting largely of status studies and surveys of materials used in schools" (p. 13).

While there is an existing body of knowledge on decision making and a growing number of local and international research being carried out in the secondary education sector, little has been explored in the field of literature teaching and pedagogical decision making at that level in similar contexts such as that of Mauritius, which, as pointed out in the initial sections, presents a complex situation for the teaching of languages and literature. Theoretically, this study presents the opportunity to generate new knowledge about decision making within a professed decolonial or postcolonial context, with neo-colonial influences and globalisation perhaps reaching as far as the field of education. Moreover, in a context of dwindling interest in the field of study of English literature as a global phenomenon, the study of how such a subject is framed within a national curriculum, and how different stakeholders engage with this subject could serve to better understand the roles that different disciplines play within an education system, the inclusion and treatment of such subjects within the curriculum, and the various influences that impact upon education policies at national and international levels. There is hence the opportunity for this study to bring in valuable information about pedagogical practices pertinent to this discipline and the influences upon pedagogical choices from a unique vantage point. Given the relative paucity of literature on the phenomena in similar contexts, this, in turn, could contribute to the now growing body of literature on the Global South, and the patterns and trends noted in the course of this research could serve to understand how educators in such contexts construct and enact their pedagogy, and on a larger scale, bring about better understanding of how current global and regional tendencies impact on educational policies.

The aim of this study is also to reframe discourse around teachers' pedagogical thinking and actions by exploring to what extent they see themselves as curriculum implementers, and/or as individuals with agency, who are capable of making specific choices in their classroom consciously and who are able to plan their teaching in challenging circumstances. Since exploring pedagogical choices provides insights into what, how and why a teacher teaches the way he or she does, it is essential to obtain rich and detailed information from participants about their pedagogical practices. Vrinioti (2013) argues that "an insight into what lies behind teachers' practice will allow for informed decision-making which is crucial for forward planning and development" (p. 151). Carrying out a study on teachers' pedagogical

choices, then, would not only be beneficial to the educators themselves but also to those involved in teacher education and policy-making. One way to address this need for deeper exploration of teachers' pedagogy was through the choice of narrative inquiry.

While now increasingly being used in educational research, narrative inquiry has only been tentatively been explored with respect to the phenomenon of pedagogical decision making. Ankiah and Samuel's (2014) research with pre-primary educators, for instance, has yielded deep insights into the latter's lived experiences and their language choices. This study thus seeks to contribute methodologically by deeply engaging with participants' experiences to create rich data through narrative biographical and situational analysis of their teaching at secondary school level. The relevance of such research lies in the ability of the researcher to identify the different elements and patterns (Strauss, 1987) that constitute the individual plots of the participants while also revealing the deeper parallels across the participants' lived experiences. The ability to "see the world through the eyes of others" (Riley & Hawe, 2005, p.226) rather than merely reporting survey data could lead to deeper understanding of the complex contexts in which these teachers operate. Such an approach would imply recentring the participant as an active contributor to knowledge generation and focusing on the teacher rather than a set theme allows the possibility of engaging with his or her interpretation of the world (Riley & Hawe, 2005, p.229). This is specifically relevant since phenomena under study are subject to the people, situations, contexts and influences, which are likely to change. By exploring what teachers understand about the subject they are teaching and what motivates their teaching in different circumstances, narrative enquiry also acknowledges the fact that generating knowledge is very much an act of situated meaning making by the participant and the researcher that integrates time and context (Simms, 2003). There is an in-depth interaction and engagement with the participants' experiences which brings both the storyteller and the researcher to be "subject to multiple intersecting layers of interpretation" (Chattopadhyay, 2013, p. 137). "Narrative structures" (Riley & Hawe, 2005, p.227), which underscore the interpretivist stance adopted throughout this study, are co-constructions which assist in shifting raw data from "stories" to "narratives" (Frank, 2000) to reveal how teachers understand their situation and what actions they take in their teaching, and therefore present a more dynamic alternative to the traditional involvement of participants within research.

1.5.2 Key research questions

Using qualitative research methods, this interpretive study sought to understand the experiences and perspectives of teachers as they made specific pedagogical choices in the English literature classroom through narrative inquiry. The study had eight participants, who were interviewed and observed in their teaching context. The study consisted of three key research questions, which were:

1. How is English literature taught in upper secondary English literature classes?

2. What factors influence teachers' choice of pedagogy in upper secondary English literature classes?

3. Why do English literature teachers use their chosen strategies in their classroom the way they do?

1.5.3 Overview of methodology

This study explores the pedagogical practices of English literature teachers at upper secondary level but also principally addresses how and why such practices are chosen. To do so, it was important for me to understand teachers' motivations in their selection of pedagogy. I opted for a qualitative study since I was more interested in a deeper exploration of literature teachers' decisions than a large-scale quantitative survey of practices at this point. I chose an interpretivist approach since I wanted to know how individuals made sense of the world around them and how this impacted upon their personal and professional lives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) through their experiences and meaning-making of pedagogical choices within specific teaching contexts.

I decided to use narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Huber, 2010; O'Grady, Clandinin, & O'Toole, 2018; Riessman, 2008) as a means of tapping into teachers' storied lives and understanding how they made sense of the various pedagogical choices they had to make in their workplace. Once my research questions were elaborated, and a preliminary scoping of the existing literature done, I implemented a series of research instruments that would assist me in producing data around the phenomenon of pedagogical choice (see further clarification in Chapter 3). Interpreting this data could thus assist me in answering my critical questions around teachers' pedagogical practices. I thus elicited responses about upper secondary school literature teachers' pedagogical choices and practices through different data production instruments such as interviews, conversations, observation, teachers' artifacts and video vignettes. This methodology was used to provide deeper insights into the participants' storied experiences as they made sense of the choices they had to make in their teaching of English literature. The data was synthesized into eight narratives of pedagogical choice and subsequently compared in a cross-case thematic analysis where salient themes were generated and further discussed.

1.5.4 Limitations and Delimitations of this study

The use of an interpretivist paradigm and narrative inquiry as methodology presupposed a deeper exploration amongst a relatively limited sample of participants, that is, eight upper secondary English literature teachers teaching English literature as a full-fledged subject as from Grade 10. Some attempt was made by the researcher to ensure some degree of variety in terms of the teacher characteristics, without claiming to represent every single

teacher profile in the country. Given the time and access provided, this study also does not purport to record every kind of lesson or activity in literature teachers' pedagogical repertoire.

In the naturalist, interpretivist sense, the researcher was only able to record and note what was presented and mentioned to him in the course of the research project (This theoretical stance is discussed further in **Chapter Three**). Since the engagement with the different participants was deemed to have yielded rich and thick descriptions, it is understood that the participants narrated or stated only the information that was salient to them. Their opinions therefore might not be representative of all literature teachers' views on the teaching of literature. As such, this study did not purport to present a comprehensive study of how literature is taught in all schools in the country or reach a universalist and definitive conclusion about pedagogical choice.

Thus, it is presumed that the findings of this study would not be generalised as different practices emerged from interactions with the participants with different profiles and from different teaching contexts. More (or fewer) participants could have yielded different readings and interpretations of the data. Given that the phenomenon has been studied in the particular context of English literature teaching and provides insight into pedagogical choices in specific contexts, it may also be pondered whether the subject specificities impact upon the findings; it would be difficult, in that sense, to assume whether teachers might, in the course of teaching another academic subject, face the same kind of influences as the English literature teacher. That said, it should also be pointed out that while the contextual space studied is unique, it also however is emblematic of other research contexts that may be experiencing decolonisation, or the ambiguities inherent to being a "postcolonial" state, or the issues that small island developing states have to face. These various aspects are unpacked and further discussed in **Chapters Eight** and **Nine**.

Effort was made to ensure that the data and the narratives were trustworthy and believable, and the possibility of comparing the data from different data sources provided some measure of confirmability (Seale, 1999; Shenton, 2004), fidelity (Blumfield-Jones, 1995) and authenticity (Kathard, 2009; Sikes, 2012). The ontological and epistemological framing of the study also presupposes that the participants have interacted truthfully and that they were able to step back to metacognitively comment on their own choices.

1.5.5 Significance of this study

Kujawinska-Courtney (2000) posits that "each educational system is a reflection of a certain political, social, economic and cultural situation, and its practices seem to reflect the endorsement of or conflict with the prevailing ideology of the time" (p. 61). Findings from conducting research on pedagogical choices in the secondary schooling context will help us to understand the different influences impacting upon the teaching of specific subjects at a particularly crucial level and point in time in the educational landscape. Exploring how English

literature is taught at upper secondary level not only unpacks the pedagogical moves within a specific subject within spaces, but also potentially suggests a deeper exploration of contextual factors, such as influences upon pedagogy in a small island developing state, and the role and place of specific subjects within the curriculum at particular moments in the nation's history. While there tends to be a pessimistic narrative surrounding the slow demise of certain subjects (Spivak, 2003), due to their own supposed limitations and inability to respond to contemporary needs, this study also seeks to identify external influences contributing to pushing up or pulling down certain items in the nation's curriculum. The specific phenomenon of literature within the curriculum could thus lead to a discussion of how subjects are framed in national curriculum documents and become part of the national educational vision, or removed to adjust to new agenda. More and more subjects are being called in being relevant, and small developing island states in the Global South[16] often end up giving up, perhaps all too easily, those things which made them unique contexts in a way, in response to forces of globalisation (Baldacchino, 2004; Crossley & Sprague, 2014; Jules & Ressler, 2016). This study could thus be relevant in terms of how curriculum policy frameworks are potentially borrowed, exported, selected, organised and interpreted, and can thus be significant to those engaged in the study of educational policies and curriculum development. There is also the possibility of gauging the impact of international trends in education and the possible compromises and/or sacrifices small island developing states might be ready to make to be "relevant" in the world economic and political scene, such as adopting curricula that respond more to the new global economic order and the rise of "informationalism" (Warschauer, 2000, p.512).

My interactions with various educators have led me to anecdotally understand that there are many who consider literature as the 'bête noire'[17] of academic subjects in the local context. This is principally due to its specialised concepts and terminology, implying the development of text reading and appreciation skills over a length of time (usually deemed very challenging by educators), as well as the cognitive and empathic demands it makes of students. Teachers eventually are required to teach beyond the plots of selected texts, and develop literary knowledge and competence in students who possibly face issues with the English language, and have difficulties understanding the different cultural, historical and social contexts in those texts, to begin with. While this might arguably be why the subject is deemed to be inaccessible and opaque to a large number of students, there is perhaps some discussion that could be had on the possibilities literature presents as a means of addressing the challenges of contemporary society. If Mauritius is to be an active partner in the region, it cannot remain insular and insensitive to issues such as migration, cultural assimilation, pandemics, refugee and humanitarian crises, as well as aspects pertaining particularly to small island developing states (SIDS) such as depletion of natural resources, sustainable development or dependency on imports. Locally, the rise of subjects such as Entrepreneurship education at secondary level

[16] Dados & Connell (2012) refer to the 'Global South' as "the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. It is one of a family of terms, including "Third World" and "Periphery," that denote regions outside Europe and North America, mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalized." (p. 12)

[17] **Bête noire** (or "black beast") is a French idiom which refers to something that is strongly disliked, unpopular and usually avoided.

seems to be one attempt by the State at preparing its youth at responding to the needs of the country. More than ever, there seems to be a case to be made for an education system and curriculum that are not only responsive to challenges of the 21st century, but that also help the nation navigate through a world characterised by the *anthropocene* (Crutzen, 2006); where the physical landscape, as well as interactions and meaning-making have been irremediably changed by human behaviour and actions. In a world characterised by change and flux, could English literature be that subject that also allows connections to take place beyond texts as teachers endeavour to develop intercultural understanding, communication skills and empathy? Studying the pedagogical choices and motivations of teachers could bring about deeper understanding of the workings of this subject.

On the other hand, this study generates knowledge on how teachers interpret those curriculum documents, what informs their choice of pedagogy, and the various elements that visibly or subtly impact upon the teacher's role as educator and professional. These may be linked to the growing body of research in the areas of pedagogical content knowledge, signature pedagogies, professional knowledge, pedagogical thinking, teacher beliefs and teacher autonomy, agency and leadership. At a point in time when education systems are being called upon to reinvent themselves or where "reforms" become the norm, I am especially interested in the role of the teacher as an agentic being in the process and in the possible linkages that can be made between teacher knowledge, practice and agency. The insights derived from this study thus aim to fill, to some extent, the gap in our understanding of how teachers translate curriculum goals into achievable outcomes, as they do, in this particular case, in the literature classroom. More implicitly, there is the possibility of discussing the impact of international and national policies within the enclosed space of the classroom and the challenge for teachers to exert freedom and agency to teach the way they want.

Methodologically speaking, the use of narrative inquiry signals the need for local research practices to embrace qualitative methodologies more confidently as a means of engaging with the realities of professionals in the educational field. This would also bring about deeper insights, through the storied lives of practising teachers, about how teachers think, learn and develop as teachers. The use of narratives not only showcases specific practices in specific contexts but also provides a potential ground for open discussion around pedagogical choices and possibilities, and the conditions within and outside the teacher that shape those decisions. Since literature teachers come in different profiles, the way they approach literary texts and the teaching of literature differs widely from one narrative case to the other. These narratives thus present a powerful description of what happens in such classes, given specific conditions and how these various teachers make sense of their profession. They aim at providing as authentic a picture of literature teaching practices as can possibly be drawn with the current data sources and contexts explored. A possible contribution could also be for teachers to use the instruments used in this research, as well as the findings, to introspect and reflect upon their own practices. Narrative cases could thus be useful tools for professional development, as more teachers are invited to share their narratives and understand that their pedagogical practices are relevant. Other secondary English literature teachers may thus reflect upon their own pedagogical choices and practices as they engage with the results of this study, which could perhaps serve

as much-needed insights for teachers to inform their practice, given the paucity of continuous professional development and networking opportunities amongst educators following initial training.

The findings and insights from this study can be of significance to educational policy-makers, curriculum developers, people involved in teacher training and professional development since they shed light on the impact of curriculum policy choices made at macro level upon the microcosm of the classroom, highlighting some of the issues and challenges faced by educators in making pedagogical decisions. The need for insights into the influences upon the choices made in the teaching of English literature, a previously little-explored domain in both local and international contexts, has also been highlighted. The findings could thus assist decision-makers, and education stakeholders while exploring the links between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

1.5.6 Outline of the thesis report

What follows is an *overview* of the structure of the thesis with a brief description of the sections and chapters:

The thesis is organised in three parts, and is prefaced by a Prologue and concluded with an Epilogue. Each part signals a shift in the research process leading to the formulation of the thesis, and is introduced by an orientation section.

The **Prologue** signals my orientation as researcher and is a general introduction to the entire thesis and the drive behind it.

Part One (Chapters One to Three)

Part One marks an entry into the subject of the research study, outlining the chosen phenomenon, the rationale for exploring it, the research context and critical questions, a critical overview of existing literature on the phenomenon and the domain of literature and the research orientation and methodology used.

Chapter One has introduced the background, context and rationale for the study and presented the research questions as well as the choice of approach and methodology to study the phenomenon.

Chapter Two contextualises the research in existing literature, provides an overview of approaches to the teaching of English literature and suggests a temporary theoretical framework to approach the phenomenon of pedagogical choice.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology and justifies the use of narrative inquiry as a means of exploring literature teachers' pedagogical choices. The selection and profile of participants as well as the data production tools are also outlined. I also explain the means by which I ensure trustworthiness in data production as well as the

ethical considerations I took. Finally, I explain the choice of analytical frames to generate insights into the research phenomenon.

Part Two (Chapters Four and Five)

Part Two signals the entry into the first level of analysis, namely the creation of eight narratives or storied lives of the participants. Following the patterns and themes noted in the different narratives, a continuum of pedagogical choices reveals the multiplicity of possibilities open to the teacher as they negotiate with more examination-oriented and academic practices to more constructivist and holistic practices. and the eight teachers spread out across that continuum. I decided to retain four of those narratives and show different instances of pedagogical decision making and the various influences upon these choices. While certain broad tendencies are noted across the two chapters, these chapters are not meant to depict binary opposites but the pedagogical contexts and permutation of different factors within and around the teacher which lead to specific choices being made in the teaching of literature.

Chapter Four contains two narratives that suggest a broad tendency towards safety and accountability in the selection of pedagogical choices.

Chapter Five presents two narratives depicting situations where there is a broad tendency for the teachers to adopt expansive teaching and assessment choices**Part Three (Chapters Six to Nine)**

Part Three marks the shift into the analytical section of the study, leading to the development of the thesis.

Chapter Six provides a discussion of the findings obtained from the cross-case thematic analysis of the narratives of pedagogical choice. Patterns and trends in the data are identified and categorised to form themes.

Chapter Seven relates the findings to existing literature, and evaluates what is confirmed, rejected or extended by the literature.

Chapter Eight is a deeper discussion of insights into pedagogical choice and addresses the different influences upon the phenomenon

Chapter Nine summarises the findings of the study in relation to the critical questions and elaborates on deeper insights into the phenomenon. The implications of the study are then outlined as well as suggestions for further research and the limitations of the study.

The **Epilogue** is the concluding section of the entire thesis and my reflections and standpoint after having carried out this study.

1.5 Synthesis

In this chapter, I have outlined the development of my interest in English literature teachers' pedagogical choices and given a rationale for studying this phenomenon. I have also provided some background information about the research context, namely Mauritius, a small island developing state. Literature in English (henceforth called 'English literature' for clarity and convenience in phrasing) is a subject that is offered to fewer and fewer upper secondary school students each year. There is, however, limited research in what happens in the literature classroom, the pedagogical decisions that get taken and what informs English literature teachers' pedagogical choices in this subject. I have outlined some of the existing literature on the subject of literature teaching and pedagogical choice in education and formulated some research questions to further my understanding of the research phenomenon. I have also briefly introduced the methodological orientation to this study and given an indication of how I set out to achieve the objectives of this research. Exploring how teachers make meaning out of the choices they make while planning, teaching or assessing literature could provide valuable insights to educators, teacher education and policy-makers. The next chapter will present and discuss the existing literature in order to elaborate a theoretical framework for understanding pedagogical choices.

Chapter Two

Reviewing the literature and elaborating a tentative theoretical lens

2.0 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I broadly presented contextual information to the research topic as well as insights into the Mauritian educational system. It also provided the rationale for the study as well as the critical questions, which will now in part be addressed in the literature review. This chapter will present a review of current literature, with emphasis on those concepts and readings which are pertinent to English literature and the phenomenon of pedagogical choice, as well as potential gaps in the extant literature, leading to the formulation of a temporary theoretical framework.

2.1 Orientation to this chapter

This chapter consists of four sections. The first two sections address my first research question, namely, "How is English literature taught in upper secondary English literature classes?". In **Section 2.2**, I outline English literature as a domain of study and consider some important conceptions and orientations which have framed this subject. **Section 2.3** addresses existing literature on approaches to literature teaching and discusses whether any of those known approaches have had some influence in the Mauritian context. Models and theories explaining how English literature is currently taught across different contexts will form the backdrop for a discussion of how English literature is expected to be taught, and is currently taught, and whether literature teaching in Mauritius is influenced by external currents or other influences. **Section 2.4** considers the literature around the phenomenon of pedagogical choice and possible explanations for the decisions that teachers take in their teaching. Concepts associated with teacher decision-making and pedagogical choice would thus assist in making more explicit the complex processes whereby teachers make pedagogical choices in their teaching of the subject. Finally, **Section 2.5** proposes a temporary theoretical lens and methodological orientation to approaching the phenomenon and the research questions as well as identify gaps in the current literature.

2.2: Section One: English literature: Mapping out the domain

2.2.1 A brief overview of English literature as a domain of study

While some form of reflective literary study has existed alongside the development of literature as an art form, the English literary curriculum as an autonomous academic subject emerged alongside the formation of the history of colonial relations in the 19th century. Viswanathan (1989) comments on the irony that "English literature appeared as a subject in the curriculum of the colonies long before it was institutionalised in the home country" (p. 3). He further traces efforts made by the colonial powers to bring what they considered to be "modern knowledge" through literature, even though it was in 1835 that the aforementioned Macauley (see **Chapter 1**) suggested "improving" the Indian population's mind through a study of English language classics. Hall (2015) describes the original intent behind the introduction of the study of English literature across the British empire as "an ethical and political project, to inculcate appropriate values in subject populations, as well as 'exposure' to the English language" (p. 100). Literature study was therefore developed and assessed from the onset in the colonies. Hall (2015) further describes the rise of English literature with the spread of education in 19th century United Kingdom amongst working classes as a sort of equivalent to the Greek/Latin classics previously taught to the intelligentsia. By the 1880s, the field of English studies was already starting to show signs of demarcation between language and literary interests.

By the 19th century, scholars were actively engaged in discussions of what to teach in relation to the literary canon, which was an authoritative list of books and authors that would eventually be central to the literature curriculum (Ross, 2000). These valued works of literature have changed over the centuries but probably reveal more about social norms and values than the intrinsic value of given texts (Eaglestone, 2002). In L1 contexts, literature has often been attributed a privileged position in the teaching of English or in its own right, as "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986; Gibbons, 2017). Referring to the Newbolt Report (Board of Education, 1921), Cushing and Giovanelli (2019) suggest that the literary canon was portrayed in that report as a "stepping stone to increased intellect, national pride and national cultural identity" (p. 201) and note how similar discourse about the importance of literature are currently being communicated via curriculum documents almost a century after. The composition of such literary curricula around the world can reveal much in terms of their rationales. The opening up of the canon in the 20th century as well as the emergence of new literary and critical 'lenses' have not only opened up new ways to read the classics but also widened the choice and selection of texts to be studied (Hall, 2015, p. 109). Increasing academic interest in the subject in the mid-twentieth century led to more attention given to potential of literature in developing humanistic, personal responses as well as cultural insights, which have subsequently impacted upon second language literature teaching (Hall, 2015, p. 100).

The 1970s and 1980s saw progression in the subject of English literature, which broadened its canon, allowed flexibility in the choice texts, and initiated more flexible assessment options. Strong criticisms had been levelled at the subject, which was deemed to favour a more transmissive mode of teaching and failed to address contemporary students' needs and interests. Two broad strands contended about the purposes of literature as a subject; on one side, there was a strong liberal humanist tradition which emphasised on students' personal responses to literary texts and on the other side, there was a move towards the inclusion of literary theory, linguistics and cultural studies, which was an offshoot of developments happening in the discipline of English in Higher Education. Even then, there were some who believed that secondary level English literature was still oblivious to the tectonic shifts happening at tertiary level (Hollingworth, 1983). North (2017) describes the field of literary studies over the past decades as being roughly divided the literary scholars and the literary critics (p. 1).

In more recent times, in English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, literature has often been attributed a subsidiary role to English language, aiming to introduce and engage students to meaningful communication in English (Sage, 1987). This ready inclusion of literature as a means of exploring "language in operation" (Moody, 1971) or "language at its finest" (Ghosn, 2002), has taken on board other purposes, which Collie and Slater (1990) list as the provision of useful authentic material, development of language, and the personal and cultural development of the student. In parallel, there have been thinkers who have lauded literature's potential for connecting "the subjective state and the physical reality of the outside world" (Balakian, 1977) and its capacity for adding some form of qualitative value to "the deserts our lives have already become" (C.S. Lewis, quoted in Holmer, 1976). In the 1980s and 1990s, "every facet of literature of instruction has been attacked, defended, revised and reconsidered" (Zancanella, 1998, p. 98). Debates were centred on the following areas:

1. Instructional methods (where traditional text-centred practices were pitted against reader-centred practices)
2. Curriculum content (the use of canonical texts versus the inclusion of more diversity in terms of culture and gender)
3. Control of the curriculum (whether state or national standards and tests determined how literature would be taught, or whether teachers could exercise control over what and how they would teach)
4. Role of literature in the curriculum (whether English as subject would be oriented towards literature or literacy development).

Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) identified some important phases of literature teaching in the 20th century, as depicted in Figure 2.1 below:

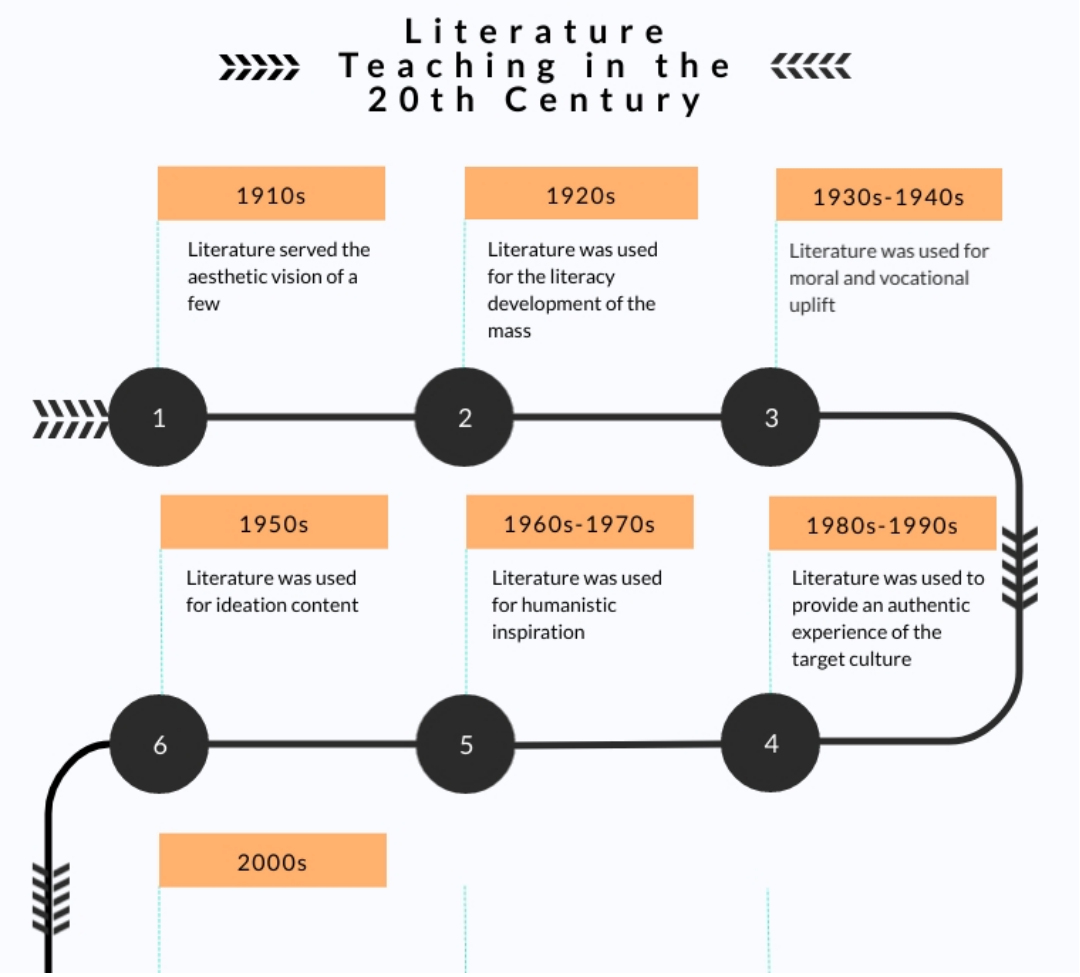


Figure 2. 1: Main phases in literature teaching (Adapted from Kramsch and Kramsch (2000)[18])

It is important to note that Figure 2.1 is an adaptation of Kramsch & Kramsch (2000) who have written extensively about the use of literature for literacy development of the masses, where they describe how successive movements have pushed forth and against the inclusion of literature within the language curriculum. This view has, however, been critiqued in a number of ways by Doecke (2019) who argues, with reference to the 1921 Newbolt Report, that a strong argument was actually being made for universal access to the aesthetic experience of literature. In many contexts, language and literature have been taught as two "disconnected pedagogic practices" (Cushing & Giovanelli, 2019; Carter & McRae, 2014). A greater emphasis was laid in the 1980s on assisting learners to use English to "interact, express, negotiate" (Harper, 1988). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) enabled the use of literature as a rich source of authentic, culturally-grounded and enjoyable materials. Furthermore, interest and research into reading have encouraged the development of reader-response strategies in language classes (Hirvela, 1996).

Moreover, research on the value of reading was done in the 1980s which promoted 'reader response' approaches to use literary texts in language classes (Hirvela 1996; Elliott,

[18] Created on Canva.com

1990). However, as Zancanella (1998) suggests, literature instruction in classes is complex, nuanced and idiosyncratic, and requires further exploration of how "the local, the personal, and the specific are linked to the wider social and political environment" (p. 101). Snapper (2007) points at the reworking of the A' Level English literature syllabus as from 2000, with emphasis on context and interpretation, in a bid to align the subject with its counterpart at university and make it more open and accessible. The changes caused mixed reactions amongst teachers and educationists; some, like Atherton (2005) saw it as a revolutionary change akin to a philosophical shift while others, like Craddock (2003) saw the changes as an attempt to deconstruct the experience of literature, which he considers to be organic. Atherton (2005) also remarks on the persistence of some questions about the academic nature and objectivity of the subject, leading to some kind of disciplinary anxiety, which she describes as "an uncertainty about the kind of knowledge to which literary criticism should lay claim, the usefulness of such knowledge, and the relationship between academic literary criticism and the wider practice of reading in society" (p. 7).

The next two sections will address the two broad orientations to the inclusion of literature in the curriculum, namely, within the language classroom, and as its own disciplinary subject.

2.2.2 An overview of English literature teaching approaches in ESL/EFL/Multilingual contexts

This section will consider some of those prevailing views pertaining to the provision for literature in ESL/EFL and multilingual contexts before attempting to see if there is some correspondence to the Mauritian context. Where possible, approaches pertaining to either L1 (where English is a first language) or L2 (where English is a second language) situations specifically will be pointed out.

Studying literature teaching in an L1 context, Many and Wiseman (1992) came to the conclusion that different strategies used in the literature class had marked influences on students' writing work. For the past four decades, there has been considerable interest in the possibilities that literature offers in foreign language (FL) education (İnan & Yüksel, 2013; Kennedy & Falvey, 1999; Paran, 2008; Tutas, 2006), especially at university level (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2012; Lao & Krashen, 2000). Such an interest came with misgivings, as argued by Hall (1989) who considered that the potential of literature in FL education had not been sufficiently researched. Beausaert, Segers & Wiltink (2013) argue that teachers' approaches to teaching can impact upon the way learners learn. Hall (2015) subsequently warns about studies carried out on the reading of English rather than literature, and while he admits that there are great parallels between models of second language reading and first language reading, he is cautious not to generalise about these points.

The idea that literature and literary language were superior to spoken English was a prevalent one at the beginning of the 20th century (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). With increasing

emphasis on pragmatic and communicative concerns, language classes started focusing more on developing communicative competences and the communicative process. Literature came back in language classrooms with the aim of providing a source of authentic cultural material (Hall, 2005). Savvidou (2004) posits linguistic, methodological and motivational reasons for the integration of literature in the language classroom. Linguistically, literature brings in a variety of examples of meaningful communication in a variety of situations and contexts. Methodologically, literature studies could also be considered as preparing students for activating their prior knowledge and reading skills at different levels. Moreover, it has been argued that literature would provide sufficient motivation and enjoyment for reading and inspiration for writing given that literature is memorable and grounded in a specific context (Parkinson and Reid Thomas, 2000). Literary texts also provide the opportunity to engage the reader with higher level comprehension skills and literary understanding through the study of stylistic devices or topical elements in chosen texts (Sánchez-Martí, 2008).

On the other hand, Gilroy and Parkinson (1996) considered that FL teaching contexts were too diverse for theorising about the "place and form of literature teaching" (p. 210). Subsequent studies (Council of Europe, 2001; Early & Marshall, 2008; Hall, 2005; Macleroy, 2013; Paran, 2010; Parkinson & Reid-Thomas, 2000) considered that literature could present a number of benefits in the foreign language class, such as assisting in language acquisition, developing critical skills and enhancing cultural knowledge. Maley (1989) suggested two possible purposes for English literature taught in foreign language classes, namely the study of literature and the use of literature as resource. With reference to undergraduate study, the Modern Language Association (MLA) suggested that language, literature and culture be taught as a "continuous whole" (MLA, 2007, p. 3) in a unified curriculum. In this kind of integrated model, literature would thus be proposed as the content through which language learning could take place.

Despite such positive suppositions, Paran (2008) notes that this consensus had not yet reached most classrooms and urged for more empirical research that would look into the inclusion of literature within language classrooms at secondary level, which he described as "the locus of most language learning in the world" (p.490). A number of studies have considered theoretical applications of literature in the EFL classroom (Bassnett & Grundy, 1993; Brumfit, Brumfit, & Carter, 1986; Carter & Long, 1991; Carter, Walker, Brumfit, 1989; Maley & Moulding, 1985). However, there has not been much empirical research on the implementation of literature in second or foreign language classes (Jones and Carter, 2011; Hanaeur, 2001; Nguyen, 2014), or involving L2 teachers and students at secondary level (Bloemert, Jansen and van de Grift, 2017; Bloemert, Paran, Jansen and van de Grift, 2019, 2020). Paesani (2011) concludes that much of the existing literature is in fact about "pedagogical and curricular best practices and policy statements" (2011, p.164) rather than research. Reflecting on the need for context and practice-based research, Andringa and Davis (1994) suggest that "methods of documentation, description and analysis of real teaching situations offer a new perspective on literary education and mediation" (p. 2269).

Following Maley and Moulding's (1985) description of the two major directions in literature teaching in second or foreign language contexts, Paran (2008) proposes a "quadrant" outlining the following possibilities between literary study and language study, ranging from more focus on literary aspects to increased emphasis on language:

1. Focus on both literary knowledge and skills as well as lexis and grammar
2. Emphasis on language learning only, with no focus on literary values, knowledge or skills.
3. Focus is only on literature and literary effects of language.
4. Emphasis on extensive reading, with no explicit language or literary focus

While not being exhaustive, the following table, compiled and presented by Bloemert, Jansen, and van de Grift (2016) provides a useful overview of some L2/FL literature teaching approaches (p.173):

Table 2.1: A selection of categorisations of FL literature teaching approaches (Bloemert, Jansen, & van de Grift, 2016, p.173)

Littlewood (1986)	1st level: language as a system of structures 2nd level: language as a specific stylistic variety 3rd level: language as the expression of superficial subject matter 4th level: language as the symbolisation of the author's vision 5th level: literary work as part of literary history or of the author's biography
Sage (1987)	The educational value The linguistic importance The cultural value
Carter and Long (1991)	The Language Model The Cultural Model The Personal Growth Model
Lazar (1993)	A language-based approach Literature as content Literature for personal enrichment
Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000)	1st reason: cultural enrichment 2nd reason: rhetoric 4th reason: language difficulty 5th reason: authenticity and genuine samples

	6th reason: literary language is memorable 7th: assimilation of language rhythm 8th reason: non-trivial motivator
Maley and Duff (2007)	Linguistic factors Cultural factors Personal growth factors
Van (2009)	Approach 1: New Criticism Approach 2: Structuralism Approach 3: Stylistics Approach 4: Reader Response Approach 5: Language-Based Approach 6: Critical Literacy
Divsar and Tahriri (2009)	Language-based Literature as content or culture Literature as personal growth or enrichment
Nance (2010)	Cross-cultural understanding and ethical engagement Critical thinking Intellectual exploration Unique language benefits
Barrett, Paesani, and Vinall (2010)	Literary analysis Stylistics Culture

A closer look at Table 2.1 indicates that some common points across the different studies of literature in education and literature pedagogy. From these different configurations, Bloemert, Jansen, and van de Grift (2016) propose four main categories with two main orientations, which I will discuss further down:

Table 2.2: Four approaches to FL literature education (Adapted from Bloemert, Jansen, & van de Grift, 2016, p.174 & p. 178).

FL literature education			
The study of literature *Focus: the literary text*		**The use of literature as a resource** *Focus: the student*	
Text Approach	Context Approach	Reader Approach	Language Approach
(Elements) 1. Literary	(Elements) 1. Literary periods	(Elements) 1. Reading pleasure	(Elements) 1. English linguistic

terminology 2. Recognising text types 3. Distinguishing text types 4. Storyline 5. Character development 6. Who, what and where	2. Literary history 3. Historical aspects of a literary work 4. Cultural aspects of a literary work 5. Social and societal aspects of a literary work 6. Information about the author 7. Biographical aspects of a literary work	2. Student's personal reaction 3. Critically report on reading experiences 4. Critical thinking skills	aspects in a literary text 2. Making reading miles to improve language skills 3. English vocabulary in a literary text

2.2.3 Text approach

The text approach is principally centred on the teaching of formal elements of literature through close readings of texts or introducing students to literary terminology and discourse. By paying close attention to literary language and conventions (Van, 2009), the teacher can draw learners' attention to the aesthetic value of literature and assist them in interpreting meanings from the texts. Such an approach would require approaching complex texts in order to enhance comprehension and interpretation skills and develop understanding of the use and effects of literary terms (Barrette, Paesani & Vinall, 2010; Picken, 2005; Widdowson, 1975). Essential aspects within this approach pertain to knowledge of genre(s) and the development of skills to identify different styles and types of texts (Van, 2009). With upper secondary set literature texts spanning over the three main genres (poetry, prose and drama), it could be argued that Mauritian students should have access to such types of texts and be able to recognise their salient features and "distinctions in style" (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 62). The text approach also familiarises students with story structure, and an understanding of how concepts within the literary text are connected (Amer, 2003). Introducing students to components of narrative texts would facilitate comprehension (Wilkinson, 1999) and bring them to recognise the "story grammar" (Riley, 1993) and meta-structure (Early & Marshall, 2008) embedded within such literary texts.

2.2.4 Context approach

Within this approach, the cultural, social and historical contexts surrounding literary texts are deemed to be of great significance to the understanding of literature and its diversity (Lazar, 1993; Carter & Long, 1991). Littlewood (1986) considers literature as a window to the world for the learner, offering insights into often "foreign" (p. 180) aspects such as power, identity, cultures and religion (Barrette et al., 2010). Under such an approach, an understanding of literary movements, and the historical elements to literary texts could assist the learner in locating the text with respect to the rest of literary world. It also diminishes the potential sense

of estrangement a non-native speaker might feel towards descriptions of content and situations, which a native speaker might take for granted (Littlewood, 1986). Literature therefore acts as an essential bridge between the imagination, language and human experience (Carter, 2007; Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000). Developing greater understanding of the contexts in which literary texts are set allows teachers to encourage students to compare across cultures (Urlaub, 2013; Gholson & Stumpf, 2005) and revisit their own biases and stereotypes about culture (Byram, 2014; Costello, 1990). This, according to Eaglestone (2000), "could be an opportunity to understand and encourage an even more open and multicultural society" (p. 110). Kramsch (1997) considers a more personal take on cultural readings of texts, and suggests how learning about the lives of different people in different contexts could be a source of thrill and excitement.

2.2.5 Reader approach

A review of the research carried out in literature classrooms suggests the influence of reader response theory (Fish, 1980; Iser, 1980) as well as schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980) onto reader-centred approaches to literary study. In the literature classroom, information is not directly transmitted since it is arguably not "ready packaged, neatly arranged, or prepared for easy consumption" (Nance, 2010, p.4). Bakhtin (1981) argued that language is "not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions" (p.294). Amer (2003) suggests that approaching literature from a reader's perspective can highlight the importance of the reader as an independent, self-aware meaning-maker (Lazar & Heath, 1996). Hall (2015) posits that reading "is therefore best seen not as a narrowly decontextualised psycholinguistic process, but as events and practices in which the identities and conditions, previous experiences and future hopes of readers contribute importantly to processes of active meaning construction from text" (p. 49). In FL contexts, students can be involved in critically reflecting upon a variety of situations and analyse the beliefs, perspectives and motivations of people who might be similar or different from themselves (Barrette et al., 2010).

Reader Response Theory prepares students to understand their integral role as reader in the meaning-making process (Amer, 2003). Lazar (1993) suggests that adopting this approach can enable students to identify implicit assumptions and messages underlying literary texts. Moreover, such reader-centred approaches also contribute to increased appreciation and pleasure in reading (Lao & Krashen, 2000). Focusing on an L1 context, Rosenblatt (1986) however warns of the different kinds of reading that could take place with a literary texts, specifying how an efferent (or information processing) approach to the text (often mediated through paraphrasing or retelling by the teacher or peers) might be more accessible than an aesthetic reading, which to her, is very much dependent on the reader. She also proposes a Transactional theory of literary reading, which "permits emphasis on the to-and-fro, spiralling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning" (1995, p. xvi) so that meaning occurs as the reader makes sense of the signs on the page

(Church, 1997). Reader response theorists tend to reject expository texts, which narrow down possible interpretations but instead valorise texts that enable the reader to activate their schemata and open up interpretative possibilities to the text (Iser, 1981). The schema theory suggests that readers make sense of a text with the help of their background knowledge. Thus, their comprehension of literary texts implies an interaction between the reader's acquired knowledge (or schemata) and the text. The formal schemata refers to the students' background knowledge of organisational structures of different kinds of texts while the content schemata refers to the background knowledge a student has about the content area of the text. Thus, by providing relevant information about the structure, content and vocabulary of the text, teachers can influence the way the text is received and interpreted by students.

2.2.6 Language approach

A number of studies have considered the role and contribution of literature in the language classroom, especially in L2 contexts (Belcher and Hirvela, 2000; Carter and McRae, 2014; Edmonson, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Sanchez, 2008; Vandrick, 2003; Widdowson, 1992; Yang, 2001). Table 2.3 below summarises some of the salient arguments for the inclusion and use of literature in the language classroom.

Table 2.3: Reasons for using literature in ELT classrooms

Studies exploring the use of literature in the language classroom		
Reasons for using literature in ELT classrooms		**Research/Studies**
• Linguistic	• Linguistic development • Linguistic Model • Linguistic Competence • Encouraging language acquisition • Expanding students' language awareness • Literature contributes to the expansion of vocabulary. • It promotes knowledge of vocabulary, phrases and specific expressions • Awareness of forms and conventions of language • It contributes to the development of reading fluency.	Duff & Maley (1990) Lazar (1993) Gilroy and Parkinson (1996) Ur (1996) Belcher & Hirvela (2000) MacKenzie (2000) Parkinson and Thomas (2000) Frantzen et al. (2002) Hall (2005, 2015) Yuksel (2007) Carroli (2008) Paran (2008) Atmaca et al. (2016)

	• Rhythmic Resource • Source of authentic materials • Knowledge of grammar	Jiang et al. (2018) Bloemert et al. (2019)
• Methodological	• Convenience • Variety in texts • Non-trivial content	Parkinson and Thomas (2000) Maley (2001)
• Developing students' interpretative abilities	• Psycholinguistic arguments (focus on 'form', discourse, inferencing, processing non-literal language and ambiguity. • It contributes to the development of interpretation and inference. • Reader Response and transaction	Lazar (1993) Rosenblatt (1995) Hirvela (1996) Maley (2001) Hall (2005, 2015)
• Motivational	• Affective arguments (pleasurable, motivating, personalising) • It provides pleasurable and linguistically memorable content. • Motivating materials • Enhances learners' interests • Personal relevance	Lazar (1993) Duff & Maley (1990) Lazar (1993) Moon (2000) Parkinson and Thomas (2000) Maley (2001) Hall (2005, 2015)
• Developing the person (intellectual, personal, moral growth)	• Educating the whole person • Liberal thinking • Depth of thinking • Human qualities • Development of a global approach • Development of empathy • Understanding different points of view • Educational, moral, recreational and socio-political development	Burke and Brumfit (1986) Carter & Long (1991) Ur (1991) Widdowson (1992) Lazar (1993) Bredella, (2000) McKay (2001) Ayo (2003) Sanchez (2008) Wyse (2009) Van (2009)

• Psychological competencies	• Memorability • Mental training • Analytical thinking • Critical thinking	Carter & Long, 1991 Parkinson and Thomas (2000) Moon (2000)
• Cultural arguments (cultural knowledge, intercultural experience)	• It enhances cultural and intercultural understanding. • Cultural Enrichment • Culturally authentic literary texts • Universality • Promotes tolerance	McKay (1982) Sage (1987) Lazar (1993, 1994) Shanahan (1997) Parkinson and Thomas (2000) Dupuy (2000) Ghosn (2002) Hall (2005, 2015) Mustakim et al. (2018)
• Pragmatic, sociolinguistic and communicative proficiencies	• Critical examination of discourse from different cultural and social contexts	McKay (2001) Maley (2001) Savvidou (2004)
• Creativity	• Promotion of creativity • Transfer of imaginative energy to students • Suggestive power of literary works • Literature as “micro-universe”	Frye (1964) McKay (1982) Maley (2001) Mustakim et al. (2018) Saleem & Ilyas (2019)

Literature texts are often considered to be authentic sources of language, especially in second language teaching contexts (Lao & Krashen, 2000) and are considered to provide rich input for learners. Students can thus develop their language skills and proficiency through extensive reading and exposure to such texts (Beglar et al., 2012; Grabe, 2009; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Elley, 1991). Moreover, the possibilities of studying meaningful language as opposed to decontextualised language learning often found in grammar-centric classes can expose students to different styles and registers (Lao & Krashen, 2000) and promote the development of literacy and linguistic skills (Warford & White, 2012; Nance, 2010). Besides language skills, proponents of this approach also focus on developing their students’ understanding of syntax and textual coherence (Maley & Duff, 2007). However, this approach is often hindered by the nature of the selected texts, which are often not readable due to complex

vocabulary, syntax, literary styles and conventions and discourse.

Bloemert, Jansen and van de Grift (2016), inspiring themselves from other studies (Macleroy, 2013; Paesani and Allen, 2012; Barrette et al., 2010; Hoecherl-Alden, 2006), propose a Comprehensive Approach to FL literature teaching, which would involve the four main approaches (text, context, reader and language) in an interrelated manner to enrich literature lessons and enhance the learning experience.

2.2.7 Literature learners in ESL/EFL/Multilingual contexts

When it comes to learners, language, according to Hall (2015) is likely to be one of the most obvious differences, between first and second language contexts, where "automaticity in reading is likely to be more laboured and "effortful" (p. 84). Literary texts are thus likely to challenge second language learners linguistically and culturally (Anderson & Barnitz, 1984), some of whom show limited progress once they have reached a "linguistic threshold" (2015, p. 86). This could comprise lack of vocabulary, or limited cultural knowledge (Abu-Rabia, 1996; Grabbe & Stoller, 2011). Hall (2015), however, points out that such limitations may be addressed through exposure and increased familiarity with texts, contexts, periods, topics or situations. Grabbe and Stoller (2011) point out that "most students read little in either the L1 or the L2, and they do not enjoy reading" (p. 89). Other issues noted in previous studies pertaining to second language literature readers could be useful in understanding how literature is taught in the Mauritian context:

- The difficulty that second language learners face when accessing literary texts due to challenging vocabulary, syntax, genres, and literary devices (Schulz, 1981)
- The use of non-standard language features, dialect, or (as in the case of Chaucer or Shakespeare and their contemporaries, older forms of the language) may cause difficulties for students to understand some literary texts (Goh, 1991)
- The urgency to understand what texts literally mean, especially with students with relatively low language proficiency, could interfere with higher level comprehension and prevent them from inferring meaning or making "significant connections" to the text (Chi, 1995; Davis, 1992)
- Similarly, certain creative, playful and stylistic uses of language and punctuation might be overlooked by some L2 readers (Goh, 1991; Lunn & Albrecht, 1997). Aspects such as irony, comedy, puns, and points of view might also be misunderstood or could cause further frustration to L2 learners (Hoffstaedter-Kohn, 1991)
- Regarding student attitudes, Hall (2015) notes that students are relatively unaware or unconvinced about the value or purpose of literature in their schooling context.

Even then, while there may be ground for the argument that the English language may present some difficulties for Mauritian students, studies in other contexts suggest that uptake, comprehension or even engagement with texts may be challenging in a variety of contexts,

including so-called L1 contexts. Beyond first or second language issues, it could be argued that literary study, especially at secondary level, raises issues pertaining to linguistic, cultural and historical distance across a variety of contexts. Zabka (2016), for instance, addresses the relative opacity of literary texts to young students by suggesting that readers should be taught how to approach texts empathetically rather than passively receiving information about texts that have no meaning to them. For him, literary responsiveness and academic maturity (p. 227) are skills that should be developed for students to competently respond to literature. This view is supported by Yandell and Brady (2016) who believe that a meaningful school curriculum should be enacted by both teachers and students. This enactment would imply that both parties should "come together in a meaningful communication, talk, write, read books, collaborate, become angry with one another, learn what to say and do, and how to interpret what others say and do" (p. 2). Yandell and Brady (2016) also caution against deficit perspectives of students (p.3) which imply that the literature curriculum might be inaccessible to some students. Instead, they propose the idea of a knowledge-led curriculum, where knowledge is "transcendent" and "powerful" (p. 3), and where teachers work with their students' schema, using their local knowledge to make sense of unknown texts and contexts from their vantage point.

Yandell (2010) suggests that rather than engaging in pedagogical choices that could potentially alienate students, teachers would need to pay close attention to their students' "lives, cultures, histories and experiences beyond the school gates" (p. 162) and to ensure that they tap into their students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992). Having worked with bilingual students, Yandell (2010) posits that students who are used to handling more than one language have metalinguistic awareness and are less likely to assume that a literary text will yield a direct meaning (Yandell 2013). He thus warns teachers against imposing a 'double barrier' by assuming that students will not be able to access meaning from the text.

2.2.8 Which literature teaching approach/model describes what is being proposed in Mauritius?

Taking into consideration the different orientations to the teaching of English literature across various contexts, I will attempt to draw parallels with the context of the phenomenon under study. To answer the first research question requires a careful assessment of existing approaches as well as research into potential sources. How do English literature teachers know what and how to teach? Where do they get their subject matter knowledge and their pedagogical content knowledge? The Mauritian "ambiguous linguistic situation" (Mahadeo-Doorgakant, 2017, p.19), as explained in the first chapter, is arguably complex in the coexistence and interplays of languages on different fronts. It is thus difficult to apply one specific label to any one language at a given point in time, especially when it concerns English. As earlier described, at school, English is the official medium of instruction for most subjects, even though some form of code-switching does take place in a number of classes due to the shared linguistic backgrounds of teachers and students. Despite the growing media and cultural presence of English, especially via the internet and social media, it is often supplanted by KM or French as preferred media of communication. Linguistic practices across Mauritian families vary, and

although admittedly present in some form since pre-primary schooling, English is very firmly entrenched in its academic role within the schooling context. Defying easy categorisation, English thus, arguably, occupies a twilight zone as a medium of instruction for a number of subjects and as a subject that is taught and assessed as a first language in a complex context where labels such as L1 or L2 or 'foreign language' (FL) do not seem to be applicable. The teaching of English literature relies principally upon an assumed proficiency in English language, especially at upper secondary, in order to access meaning and engage in higher levels of engagement with literary texts, ranging from the expression of informed opinions to in-depth textual analysis, as outlined in the UCLES assessment outcomes for A' level.

Unlike the great upheavals that English has faced in the United Kingdom as subject at secondary and tertiary levels, there is nothing comparable (for instance, the Newbolt Report) with respect to the treatment of English language and literature in the Mauritian context. Perhaps it is significant with respect to the country's colonial past and postcolonial present that English occupies the place it does in the country. Unlike literature in French, which exists as a vibrant and enduring local literature, with well-established authors, local literature in English is not as well-known nor does it enjoy the same prestige as its French counterpart. This may serve to explain the relative dearth of academic work based on local literature in English, which contrasts sharply with the numerous offerings on the French side, and may also explain why English literature at tertiary level has only a few occasional Mauritian texts on its syllabus. It could be argued that, for a country that prides itself in its multilingual heritage and which valorises English as its de facto official language, there is relatively little ownership of the language, especially as a means of literary expression. While local institutions like the President's Fund for Creative Writing sponsors local authors to write in any language written or spoken in the country, including English, and while there are authors that do write in English, there is little recognition and appreciation of such literature at local level. It could be argued that having a literature that reflects the contemporary realities of Mauritians could perhaps lead to a more enthusiastic uptake of literature at different academic levels. To some extent, such literature exists at lower secondary level, but at upper secondary level it remains inexistent. It may thus be wondered whether the relative absence of English literature on the local literary scene is a cause, or yet another symptom, of the spectral nature of this domain.

Pulverness (2014) compares literature's uneasy relation to the English language as Banquo's ghost at Macbeth's banquet[19], suggesting that it is often an unwanted or undesirable guest. In the 2008 National Curriculum Framework in Mauritius, literature is principally presented as a valuable resource for language learning, as contrasted with the 2016 revisiting of the same document, which now recognises the intrinsic value and purposes of literature. Whether this shift in curriculum literature translates into teacher beliefs and is infused into the planning, teaching and evaluation of literature will be addressed in the findings and implications of this study. Depending on which school they have attended, the upper secondary school students featuring in this study may or may not have had access to deeper explorations

[19] Shakespeare, W. *Macbeth*, Act III, sc. 4

of literature. Very much like Pulverness' (2014) allusion, literature at lower secondary level has been a ghost in many secondary school situations, which could explain why many teachers find it potentially challenging to introduce this subject as from Grade 10 onwards. There is very little literature to support the complex situations emerging from the situations described above since much of the research on literature teaching is mostly confined to L1 or L2 teaching contexts, with little literature on multilingual societies where English is one of many languages in the local environment. There is also little empirical evidence or in-depth study of the framing of literature within the Mauritian curriculum and how teachers teach this particular subject, even though some parallels may be drawn with countries that possess similar historical and developmental pathways. Given that there are teachers who have not been through professional training at the Mauritius Institute of Education, where they potentially could have derived some influence in terms of pedagogical content knowledge, the study hence presents new insights into how teachers derive and use the pedagogical knowledge they have to make specific pedagogical choices in their teaching. The following section will consider the research phenomenon more closely by considering the existing literature on pedagogical choices, which could potentially explain how teachers engage with teaching at secondary level.

2.3 Section Two: Pedagogical Choice: definition and models

Teaching is knowledge-intensive, interactive, and dynamic (Schoenfeld, 2010) and usually entails actions, negotiations and responses to diverse variables (Freeman, 1989). As a continuous and cyclical process, teaching also involves events that are causally related to one another (Poulou & Norwich, 2002) in a "complex and subtle interplay of decisions and teaching practices" (Clough, Berg, & Olson, 2009, p. 829). The evidence that teaching is a "complex cognitive skill" (Gün, 2014, p. 75) lies in the numerous spontaneous decisions that are required during the complex task of teaching (Osam & Balbay, 2004). Shavelson (1973) considers that "any teaching act is the result of a decision, either conscious or unconscious" (p. 144) while Aho et al. (2010) posit that pedagogical decisions in the classroom are in-the-moment decisions which cannot be undone. Carr (2007) posits that "good teaching requires sensitive context specific judgement in complex interpersonal circumstances" (p. 377). Teachers' planning and decisions thus impact upon the pedagogical activities they propose, integrating their knowledge, skills, dispositions, experience and feelings into "the most complex of crafts" (Bishop, 2008, p. 34). It is thus essential for educators to be able to understand what factors impact upon effective decision making in order to make informed pedagogical choices in the classroom. To be able to understand how literature teachers engage in pedagogical choices however, it is important to understand the notions of choice and decision and how decision-making theories can provide a good understanding of how this process functions in the classroom.

2.3.1 Defining the concept of decision

A choice is the act of selecting between two or more possibilities. A decision is a stated or inferred thought behind an observed teacher activity or teacher utterance (Shavelson, 1976). A decision could be described as "a process that weighs prior evidence, and value to generate a commitment to a categorical proposition intended to achieve particular goals" (Gold & Shadlen, 2007, p. 563). This definition also reveals part of the process by which decisions are reached. Another way of understanding decision-making is making choices among alternative courses of action. Gigerenzer and Gaissmaier (2011) argue that decision making is informed by rules of logic, statistics or heuristics. While the first two pertain to the realm of logical thinking, heuristics and intuitions venture beyond the rational. Rational decision-making involves the exploration of a series of steps calculated to address specific objectives and attain specific results. On the other hand, complex decisions taken in situations of high uncertainty may rely on "error-prone intuitions" (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011, p. 453) or even memory (Gold & Shadlen, 2007).

Decision-making as a domain of study finds its roots in psychology and economics (Johansen & O'brien, 2015). The field of economics allowed for reflection on rational models of choice, suggesting that human beings tended to use logical thinking to identify alternatives and make choices (McFall, 2015). Those models, however, do not look into a meta-analysis of the steps taken by individuals, but rather look only at the choices made after following the required procedures. Even though rational models of decision-making are founded on logic and reasoning, Korte (2003) suggests that decision-making is far from logical all the time. In real life situations, many choices are made based on the values, attitudes, dispositions, assumptions, beliefs and objectives of the decision maker (Beach, 1990). The existence and reliance of people on different sorts of biases (which will be addressed later on in this chapter) suggests that decision makers must acknowledge their assumptions, biases and beliefs about the outcomes of specific decisions.

From a psychological perspective, decision-making models have attempted to explain the systems that have allowed specific decisions to be taken, as well as the behaviour leading to, or resulting from those decisions (Kable & Glimcher, 2009, p. 733). Cognitive theories have thus emphasised on internal cognitive and learning processes in the decision-making process (McFall, 2015), where an individual "decides on a plan or plans how to decide, reasons out a decision or decides on the most important reasons" (Perkins, 2009, p.2).

What makes the study of pedagogical choices and decision-making of research interest is that decision-making is the process that enables the pursuit of a desired objective through a selection amongst alternatives (Huitt, 1992, p. 37). It is a complex process that integrates heuristics with the decision maker's knowledge and experience (Baysal, 2009). Baysal (2009) also points out decisions are made at more than one level and that many decisions are determined during social interactions where decisions are also affected by others' choices

(Rilling & Sanfey, 2011). This is particularly pertinent in the dynamic, interactional space of the classroom where teachers' choices are likely to be made with respect to the students, amongst other factors.

2.3.2 Types of Decisions

While attempting to situate the decisions that teachers engage in, there are different types and levels of decisions, as illustrated in the Figure 2.2 below. Decisions may be divided into personal choices taken by individuals, which usually cannot be delegated to someone else, and organisational decisions, which are not the primary focus of this study. There are three main domains in which teachers are involved in decision-making: at an individual level, at group level and at institutional level (Arnold and Feldman, 1986). This study focuses on the individual level, that is, pertaining to teachers' pedagogical choices in their classroom with respect to choices of what, how, and why they teach English literature the way they do. However, since an individual's choices are often mediated through other factors, understanding how decision-making operates at different levels could provide deeper insights into the phenomenon under study.

Simple, mundane, and frequent decisions (what to eat, or wear, for instance), which are not usually time-consuming are programmed decisions since they involve an automated response, or decision rule. On the other hand, non-programmed decisions refer to unique, essential decisions which will entail gathering data, and conscious reflection upon suitable alternatives. Within an organisation, decisions can take place at different levels: *Strategic decisions* are taken at the level of an organisation and determine its overall course of action; *Tactical decisions* refer to decisions about processes, that is, how things will operate; and *Operational decisions* are decisions taken by employees so that the organisation is able to function. Usually these three sets of decisions are taken by different groups of people. For instance, strategic decisions are usually taken by management and directors; tactical decisions are taken by middle management while employees across the institution will be involved in operational decisions. This distinction is of relevance in the light of the different choices that teachers are expected to make, which can often clash with existing operational decisions. While these organisational decisions might not be the prime focus of this study, some of the aspects mentioned here are relevant to the experiences of the school teacher working within a larger institution.

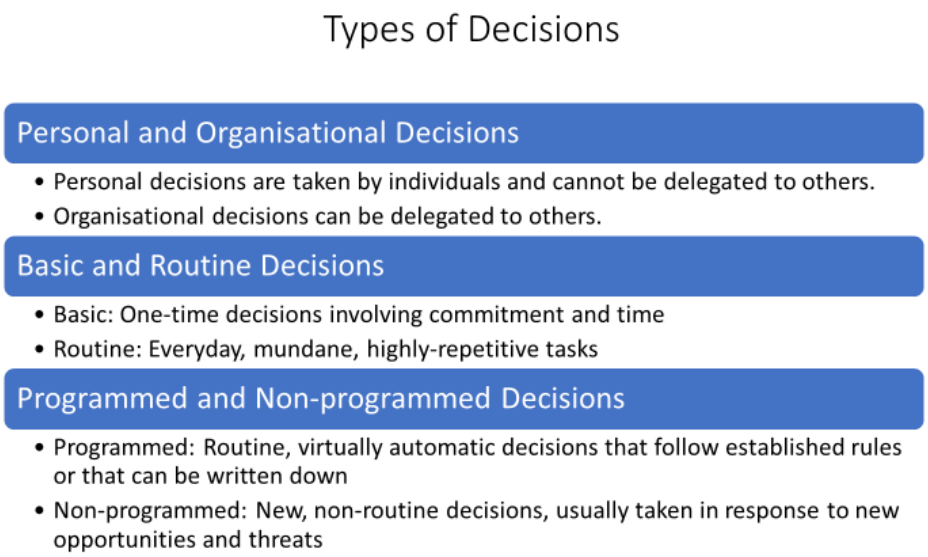


Figure 2.2: Types of decisions

2.3.3 Decision-making theories

The following diagram, adapted from Daft's (2010) work on organisations, shows an overview of some major decision-making theories, and while it is not exhaustive, it provides a wide coverage of the different theoretical orientations to decision-making. For the purpose of this study, I have concentred mostly on *individual decision making theories* (in green in the diagram below), even though I also mention some other theories which may be located in other domains but have some relevance to teachers' individual decision-making.

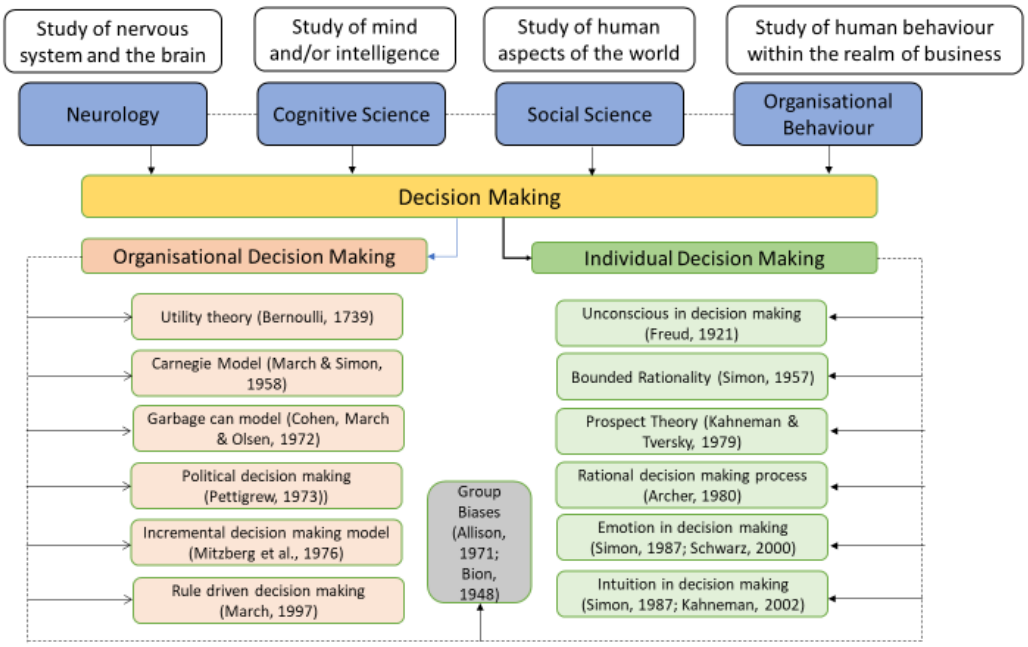


Figure 2.3: Main theories in organisational and individual decision making (adapted from Daft, 2010, p.450-489)

2.3.4 Decision-making models

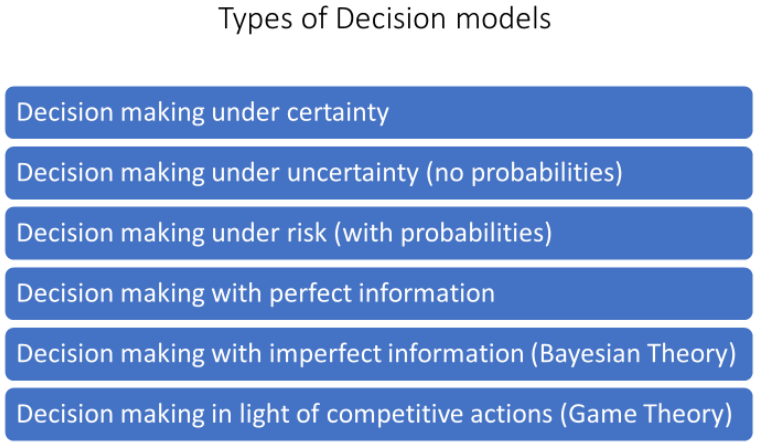


Figure 2.4: Types of decision models (adapted from Daft, 2010)

As the above figure suggests, there are a number of existing decision models that have been formulated from different disciplinary fields. Some of these models have been further refined, and I will discuss the following models in the next sections: The rational decision-making model; the bounded rationality model; the intuitive model and the creative decision-making model.

2.3.4.1 The rational decision-making model

The rational decision-making model, also known as procedural rationality approach, has, for a long time, been the most used model to explain how people take certain decisions. It is inherently a normative model, in that it prescribes specific steps that should be ideally

followed. This model outlines the procedure to be followed by decision makers to ensure that the best choice is made and the best outcome reached. Relying upon the assumption that human beings, as 'homo economicus' (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009), essentially prize reason, logic, objectivity and analysis over instinct and subjectivity, it is a cognitive process that involves multiple steps for making choices between alternatives, as illustrated in the following figure. The procedural rationality model refers to the systematic processing of information in order to generate options to be considered against evaluation criteria (Galotti, 2002).

A simplified version of the rational decision-making model highlights the core processes, namely an input phase, a processing phase, an output phase, and a review phase (Huitt, 1992), involved in the rational procedural model in the diagram below:

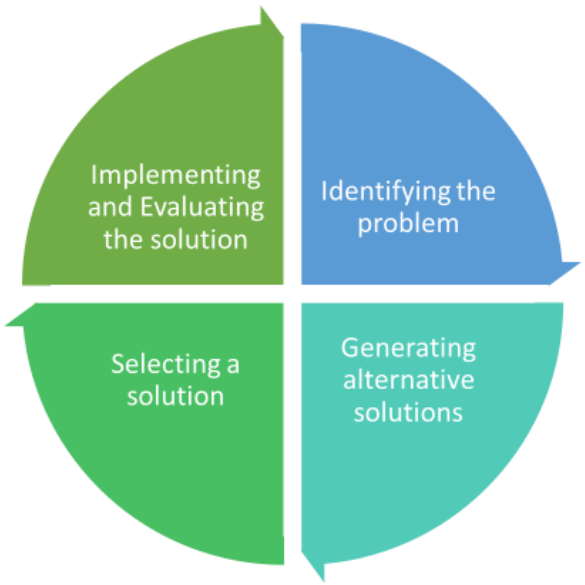


Figure 2.5: A simplified rational decision-making model (adapted from Huitt, 1992)

The next diagram details a more elaborate process in rational decision-making:

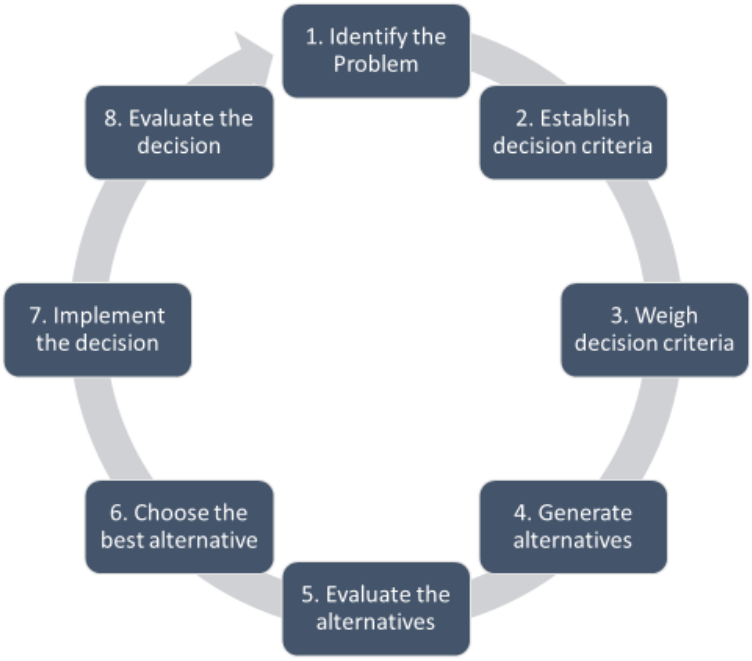


Figure 2.6: The steps in the rational decision-making model (adapted from Daft, 2010)

The different steps in rational decision-making involve firstly the identification of a problem as well as a need for take a decision. Once the problem is clearly identified, the decision maker must gather all the criteria to evaluate the possible alternatives, based on pre-established decision criteria. Decision criteria refer to those prior conditions and requirements which determine whether a decision is appropriate. Setting criteria beforehand allows the decision maker to avoid bias towards specific alternatives. At the same time, such a model encourages the generation of a wide set of alternatives. This is followed by a choice, which would involve careful consideration on the part of the decision-maker. The choice could, for instance, depend on the most important criterion, or what presents lesser risk, amongst other factors. Finally, the choice is usually implemented, and its outcomes evaluated.

The following assumptions support the rational decision-making process:

- The issue to be decided upon is clearly understood.
- The criteria to be used for analysing the possible alternatives are agreed upon and measurable.
- All those involved in the decision-making process are aware of all possible alternatives.
- The goals behind the decision-making process are clear and do not change.
- The final choice will maximise outcomes.
- Decision makers will have full access to all information due to no restriction in terms of time or expense.
- Decision makers are rational and objective.
- Decision makers are cognitively capable of evaluating every alternative and have ample time and resources to do so

2.3.4.2 The bounded rationality model of decision making

The bounded rationality model takes on board some of the criticism levelled against the rational model by acknowledging the limitations inherent within decision-making (McFall, 2015), as well as external forces possibly impacting upon choices. Following this model, it is understood that there are people who will not engage in an exhaustive search for alternatives and who will usually opt for an acceptable or convenient one. The arguments put forward for bounded rationality are that the ability to make decisions is constrained by the information available, the cognitive limitations of the decision maker and the limited time at hand for the decision to be made. Simon (1955) argued that the human mind could not be entirely rational and that the human mind could have cognitive limits. While still being a rational model, the bounded rationality model puts forth the premise that people also act on the basis of limited information. Thus, decisions are sometimes made on the basis of limited information and resources which lead a narrower set of alternatives.

Unlike the procedural rational model, where people are expected to maximise outcomes or benefits of decision-making, under bounded rationality, people in reality want a satisfactory, rather than ideal, outcome. Simon (1955) defined two cognitive styles, namely, maximizers and satisficers. While maximizers tended to work towards the best solution, satisficers would settle for a "good enough" outcome. Maximizers thus tend to engage in long and deep selection and evaluation processes while satisficers recognise human limitations to achieve optimal solutions and thus apply rational processes after simplifying the alternatives. Simon's (1955, 1997) conception of 'satisficing' (a combination stemming from the two verbs 'satisfy' and 'suffice') described the trade-offs a decision maker would have to make when making a choice. According to Simon (1955), it would be challenging for individuals to allocate a utility and compare the relative values of every possibility or alternative. The satisficing model therefore proposes an evaluation of outcomes as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, and to seek alternatives to the options one finds satisfactory. While broadly similar to rational decision-making, satisficing reduces the time spent in comparing alternatives and identifying the best choice by going towards the first alternative that satisfies one's minimum criteria. Simon's (1955) proposal of an alternative model of rational choice aimed at reducing the cognitive load associated with the rational model, as illustrated in the following diagram:

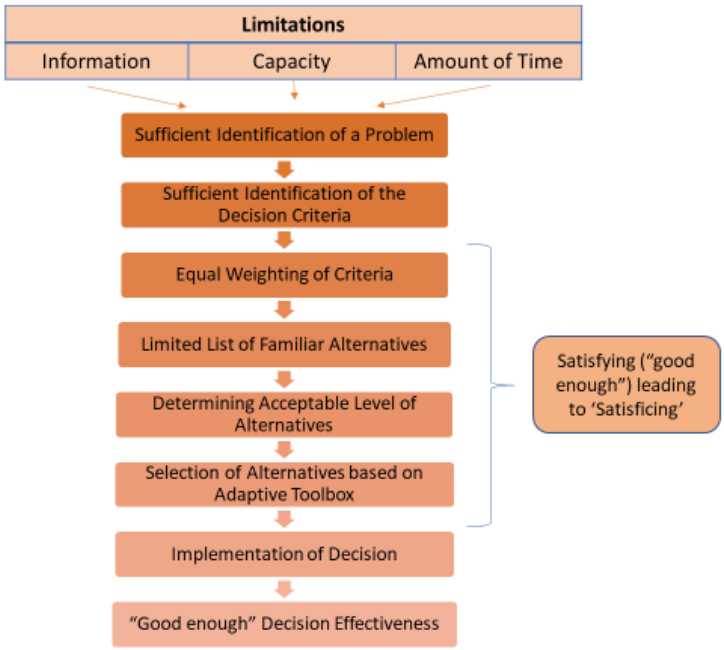


Figure 2.7: The Bounded rationality model (adapted from Rizun, 2014)

The concept of satisficing has, since then, been reprised by others (Pettit, 1994; Schmidtz, 1995; Byron, 1998) to establish a rule for rational choice in dynamic choice contexts, that is, where in situations where not all alternatives are visible (Byron, 2005). Pettit (1984) proposed the terms "aspiration" and "aspiration level" (p. 166) to refer to the process of satisficing. He argued for setting an aspiration level which would generate satisficing if any alternative would reach or exceed it. Schmidtz (1995) and Byron (1998, 2005) instead opted for a threshold expected utility and proposed a version of satisficing that allows the identification and selection of the first alternative where the expected utility is greater than the threshold or minimum expected utility that would satisfy the decision-maker.

Subsequently, Simon (1976) himself would propose a different interpretation of bounded rationality, namely 'procedural rationality', where individuals would follow a sequence of well-reasoned steps to decide on a problem to obtain the best possible choice. Goodrich, Stirling and Boer (2000) elaborate on satisficing by defining it as a comparison between two independent evaluations of outcomes: the outcome of accepting a particular alternative, and the outcome of rejecting that alternative. They consider the act of making a trade-off, which results in satisficing, as a meta decision or decision rule, since it involves a decision about how to decide. Therefore, not only are alternatives considered, but their respective payoffs (for accepting and rejecting) can also be factored in the process leading to satisficing. They also argue that trade-offs do not necessarily entail the best possible decisions but rather involve a suspension of judgement between decisions deemed to be 'good enough' until one of the options demarcates itself through its benefits.

2.3.4.3 Making intuitive decisions

The intuitive decision-making model has emerged as an alternative to other decision making processes and could be used to explain how some decisions are taken in the highly dynamic space of the classroom. This model refers to arriving at decisions without conscious reasoning. From an organisational perspective, Burke and Miller (1999) suggested that 89% of managers relied upon their intuition to make decisions and that more than half admitted to using it often. In specifically stressful and high-stakes situations, which might involve time constraints, decision making under variable, uncertain conditions, the rational model may not always be effective, and experts sometimes rely on other factors to make certain choices. The structured nature of rational decision making is not always appropriate when dealing with complex decisions. Intuition is one way whereby decisions may be made in situations of uncertainty, providing the individual with immediate insight (Myers et al., 2002) and an opportunity to be creative in his or her exploration of solutions. Intuition is the rapid appraisal of a decision situation based on prior experiences and one's course of action at the time, which often does not require conscious thought (Myers et al., 2002). Under the intuitive model, while the problem is consciously identified, it is then subconsciously reconsidered in light of the decision maker's various experiences, ideas, emotions and impressions (Dane & Pratt, 2007) related to the issue in order to generate a solution. Intuition under this model is neither random nor irrational but is based on the experience, expertise and understanding of the decision maker.

Intuitive decisions are not decisions taken randomly, nor do they stem out of alternatives carefully considered. Instead, intuitive decision making by experts involves going to what is the best solution in a specific situation at the time, involving a careful consideration of the environment for recognisable cues or patterns (Pliske & Klein, 2003; Salas & Klein, 2001). When a pattern has been discerned, the individual will then base himself or herself on their prior experience to run a possible course of action, as illustrated in the following figure:

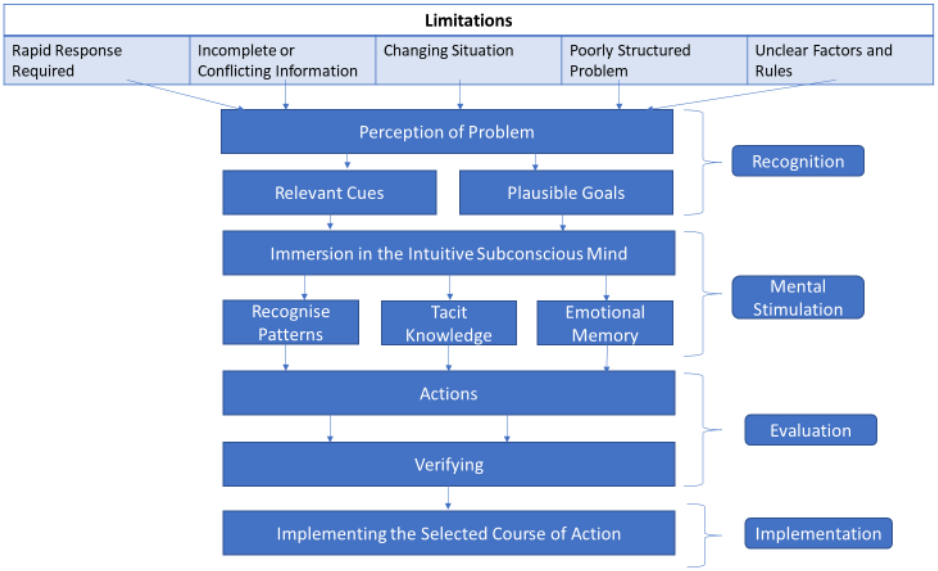


Figure 2.8: The intuitive rational decision model (adapted from Rizun & Taranenko, 2014)

2.3.4.4 Creative decision making model

Another way of considering decision making is through the lens of creative decision making. Creative decision making involves the generation of imaginative ideas in order to have an impact over the outcome. Bauer and Erdogan (2015) propose a series of steps comprising problem recognition, immersion, incubation, illumination, and finally, verification and application, as illustrated in Figure 2.9.

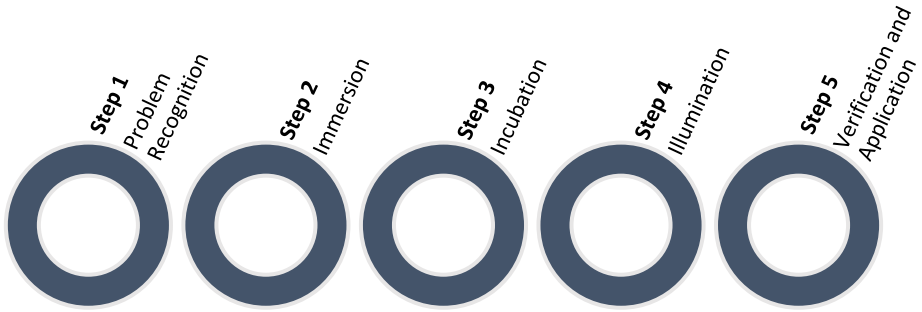


Figure 2.9: The creative decision-making model (adapted from Bauer & Erdogan, 2015)

Problem recognition entails the identification of a problem and the need for a solution to be found. This is followed by immersion, where the decision maker will consciously gather information and reflect about how to address the problem. Incubation is the phase where the decision maker puts the issue on the side and does not consciously attempt to address it. Illumination follows where the solution to the problem becomes apparent. The decision maker finally verifies whether the solution is feasible and implements it. While often considered as an essential element of innovation, innovation extends itself beyond creativity as it is backed by planning and follow-up actions. In addition, three factors can be taken into consideration when evaluating the creative decision making model, namely, fluency, or the number of ideas that can be produced; flexibility, or the difference or variation between the generated ideas; and originality, or how unique these ideas are.

Creative decision making differs from previous models of decision making since it involves unconsciously gathering data and thinking about the problem. Solutions can happen serendipitously, as insights or illumination, followed by a stage of verification and application where the decision maker consciously checks if the solution is feasible and implements it. Creativity is often a term used alongside teaching and it would be interesting to note if creative teachers used a similar process as the one depicted in the above figure in their teaching.

Group decision-making and individual decision-making

Group decision-making is sometimes pitted against individual decision-making. On the one hand, group decision-making can be based upon the diverse backgrounds, experiences and viewpoints of a larger group, and can potentially generate more comprehensive solutions (Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999). Implementation of joint or collective decisions tends to be easier if everyone has been involved in decision-making, but on the other hand, there is the risk of process losses such as lack of coordination or loss of time involved in consulting different points of view and discussing different alternatives. Another issue might be 'groupthink' (Janis, 1972; Bénabou & Tirole, 2009), described as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action" (Janis, 1972, p.9). In such situations, there is a possibility that the wrong decision may be taken out of loyalty to the group, or for the sake of preserving group vision or morale, irrespective of one's personal beliefs or inclination.

In this section, different models of decision-making were discussed. What could be argued is that people cannot be expected to be fully rational when making choices and do not always a rational path to decision-making due to lack of time, capability or inclination. The cognitive limitations and biases of individuals also impact upon the decision-making process, and it may be argued that these limitations can only be factored in and negotiated with rather than be eliminated. From the consulted literature, it would seem that there is no unifying theory to explain the interface of these different factors, or what causes someone to use his or her intuition rather than her reason for specific decisions.

2.3.5 Relevance of individual decision-making theories to the present study

What emerges from a discussion of the previous sections suggests that some considerable effort has gone into explaining how decisions are carried out at individual level, especially in terms of thought processes and reasoning. The limitations of the rational model have led to the acceptance that choices are not always rational and that there is no standard, linear procedure or process that will lead to rational outcomes. Moreover, decisions are also impacted by a number of elements such as lack of information, time restrictions, emotions, cognitive biases and heuristics as well as outside influences. It is thus to be surmised that pedagogical choices will not be any different and that pedagogical decisions are complex and not always rational.

As discussed with respect to the *Bounded Rationality Model*, individuals' rationality and decision-making ability are constrained by limited time, capacity and cognitive resources; teachers therefore are likely to resort to heuristics to find a convenient pedagogical solution. To fully understand the complexity of decision making in the classroom, one could arguably principally explore those events that crop up in the classroom and which activate the decision-making process in teachers. As illustrated in **Chapters Three, Four** and **Five**, observing teachers in their everyday teaching context, policy capturing their views on different aspects of teaching literature, and later on, situating the narratives principally in the classroom setting provided the context to illustrate where a large number of pedagogical choices tend to be made, while focusing on their conscious and unconscious choices, their knowledge, beliefs and motivations.

Another pertinent element in the rational models covered is the notion of satisficing. With such dynamic environment such as the classroom, where decisions and choices are made sometimes instantaneously, the notion of satisficing provides point of comparison as teachers engage with complex roles at different levels in their institution. What teachers aim for, and what they finally agree to contend with, especially in class, is a possible point of comparison. Heuristics are also present a fascinating outlook on decision-making, showing how various biases and cognitive shortcuts could actually lead to a simplification of the decision process or to errors of judgement and miscalculations.

2.4 Section Three: Pedagogical choice and decision making

The phenomenon under study being teachers' pedagogical choices, it is important to define what pedagogy is. Watkins and Mortimer (1999) describe pedagogy as "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance the learning of another" (p. 3). Alexander (2003) suggests that pedagogy is "what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command in order to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted" (p. 3). Leach and Moon (1999) suggest that pedagogy does not only involve the teacher but also includes the active participation of the learner. Cogill (2008) posits that there are many forces impacting upon teachers' pedagogy and that beyond programmatic forces or curriculum aspects, the school environment, the teacher's own experience as learner and teacher, his or her training, the student profile amongst others are also forces that could shape one's pedagogy. What opens up the possibilities for research at that level is the fact that Mauritian teachers are likely to have developed their own personal 'theories' as to how English literature should be taught, and it would be significant to understand what motivates teachers to teach the way they do.

Literature is quite scant on the subject matter of pedagogical choice as far as English literature teaching is concerned. There however exists an extensive literature on teacher's pedagogy in relation to the teaching of sciences and mathematics, as well as substantial research on decision-making itself. The specificities of English literature as a subject are such

that much of what gets taught are mostly a product of the teacher's own decisions. Choices of what to teach, how to teach and the rationale behind the teaching of aspects of English literature at upper secondary level therefore are of a prime importance, especially when there is such limited guidance from the NCF-S.

Teachers' pedagogical or instructional decision-making has been the subject of research over the past decades even if studies have shifted from studying one variable to the other. While many theories of decision-making have focused on the analytic and cognitive processes that guide choice behaviour (de Martino, 2006; Funke, 2014; Thomson, Bachor, & Thomson, 2002), there have been numerous studies looking into aspects of decision making (; Borko, Roberts, & Shavelson, 2008; Freeman, 1989; Poulou & Norwich, 2002; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Palmer & Rangel, 2011). However, studies aiming to capture the relationship between "in-flight thinking" (Paterson, 2007, p. 427) and specific instructional moves (Kalantzis & Cope, 2010) are still scarce. Exploring teachers' pedagogical choices in the upper secondary classroom opens up the discussion on those choices, which could refer to teaching strategies, assessment, the ways students are grouped, the resources being provided, amongst others. At another level, a teacher could enjoy more freedom in making pedagogical decisions while teaching in class than have the agency to decide about curriculum content. Therefore, the choices teachers are able to make, and what they do with them provide deeper insight into how teachers teach and how specific subjects are taught.

One of the early instances of a study of pedagogical decision-making was Jackson's (1968) attempt to study the complexity of the classroom. Jackson (1968) noted that there were predictive teacher decision making styles before teaching; interactive decision making styles during teaching and positive decision making styles occurring after teaching. Other researchers have uncovered the importance of pedagogical choices in teaching (Aho et al., 2010; Borko et al., 2008; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Palmer & Rangel 2011).

Borko et al. (2008) suggest that pedagogical decisions are the essential connections between real-time teaching situations and practical actions. This echoes Bishop's (2008) view that pedagogical decision-making is at the centre of teaching. The fact that pedagogical choices are often in-the-moment and cannot be reversed (Aho et al., 2010) suggests that these processes should be studied closely.

More recently, there has been renewed interest in data-based decision-making in the field of education (Prenger & Schildkamp, 2018; Vanlommel et al., 2018), which can be described as teachers' in-depth analysis of data sources to study and modify their current pedagogical practices in order to boost results (Prenger and Schildkamp, 2018). Information could also be gathered and processed intuitively (Vanlommel et al., 2018). Referring to data consciously or unconsciously could enhance the quality of pedagogical choices.

Bishop (1976) considers teacher decision-making to be at the heart of the teaching process. He points out that "if we know more about teachers' decision-making, then perhaps

we can begin to relate theories about objectives, intentions, children's attitudes [...] to the actual process of teaching. Shavelson's (1973) ideas concur with those of Bishop, since he claims that decision making is the "most basic skill", especially during the actual teaching process. Richards (2001) considers that "teaching is a dynamic process characterised by constant change. Teachers therefore have to make decisions that are appropriate to the specific dynamic of the lesson they are teaching" (p. 10). These decisions, which he calls "interactive decisions", are an interesting means of getting to understand what impacts upon such choices. It should be noted that those choices are important here especially in the light of the rationale behind them, as well as their consequences upon the teaching and learning experience.

Rajendran et al. (2006) refer to pedagogical decision making as the process of thinking and reasoning which fixes and justifies the choice (amongst other available alternatives) of what will bring about effective and meaningful learning for the learners. Moore (2001) identifies decision making as the "making well-thought-out choices out of several alternatives" which are "based on judgments consistent with one's values and on the relevant, sound information available. These decisions – which can be made while planning a lesson and while teaching and assessing – can be relate to the technical, common sense or pedagogical (Saad et al., 2009). However, Eraut (1997) points out that there are differences in terms of decisions taken in an intuitive, deliberative and analytical way. Intuitive decisions, which could be akin to hunches, are often taken abruptly but can be the fruit of years of experience and prior knowledge, activated without the person being really consciously aware. Analytical decisions, on the other hand, require time and are often backed by reliable information. Deliberative decisions do not involve as much analysis as the previous model but involves some element of thought and rational thinking before the person is able to proceed. These three models therefore diverge from some of the other models that conceive of decisions as being rational in essence.

Shavelson and Stern (1981) posit that teachers "make judgements and decisions, and carry them out on the basis of their psychological model of reality" (p. 461); a reality that entails a set of beliefs on aspects such as pedagogy and subject matter. They outline a number of variables at play in determining teachers' pedagogical choices. Firstly, they consider the importance of antecedent conditions, that is, information about the students (including ability, participation and behavioural problems), the nature of the instructional task (more precisely the goals, subject matter, students and activities related to particular tasks), as well as the classroom and school environment (group dynamics, evaluative climate and pressures both within and beyond the classroom). Other aspects also relate to teacher characteristics (where beliefs, conceptions of the subject matter and cognitive complexity are also considered) as well as teacher cognitive processes as regards information selection and integration, conflict/stress management and teacher inferences (judgments, expectations, hypotheses and decisions, amongst others). Shavelson and Stern (1981) also consider how pedagogical choices impact upon the selection of content and activities, the grouping of students, teaching routines and aspects relating to interaction with students. Through the exploration of those various aspects of the teaching and learning experience, they seek to step away from the traditional 'process-

product' approach which seeks to correlate teacher's teaching characteristics, behaviour and skills with the academic achievement of the students.

While some decisions seem to require little time and effort, other choices entail in-depth scrutiny of context, circumstances, possible alternatives and outcomes. Some choices are made in groups while others are selected by individuals. Culturally, decision-making can also vary, with some cultures appreciating quick decision-making while others preferring deliberation and consultation with all parties before reaching a consensus. These cultural differences may impact also on conceptions of pedagogy and the choice of instructional strategies in specific contexts.

2.4.1 The cognitive dimensions of teacher decision making

Going towards teachers' pedagogical choices involves moving into the cognitive domain. There is a substantial body of work on teacher cognition and its impact upon the professional lives of teachers (Borg, 2003). In turn, this cognitive dimension, that is, what teachers *know*, *believe* and *think*, has an impact upon the central aspect to this study, namely the phenomenon of teachers' pedagogical choices in practice. Calderhead (1996) proposes three stages to show shifting focus in this field of research. The first stage emerged in the 1970s and focused on teacher decision-making. This was followed by research carried out mostly on "teachers' perceptions, attributions, thinking, judgments, reflections, evaluations and routines" (Calderhead, 1996, p.710). The third, more contemporary stage, has mostly placed emphasis on what teachers know and believe.. This study, while focusing on teachers' pedagogical choices, aims to gather insights into this phenomenon in Mauritius by addressing all these three aspects, which are intrinsic to the teacher, as well as external influences. Indeed, it would be difficult to disregard teachers' cognition, which might influence the choices made by teachers as to how they teach English literature the way they do.

Closer to the domain of English literature teaching, Borg (2003) engages in a survey of research carried out on teacher cognition in language learning and points out in his review that "teachers' voices are somewhat lacking" (Borg, 2003, p. 104) in many of the studies. However, he highlights the importance gathering evidence of teacher cognition in diverse forms and he lists examples from other studies where responses were gathered as "responses to questionnaires, teachers' retrospective commentaries on their instructional decisions, repertory grid data, comments elicited through video-based stimulated recall, data from theoretical profiling instruments, various forms of interview data, and observed or reported classroom practices." This is a reminder that thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, and choices are intangible and require the researcher to engage in qualitative discourse with the teacher to get the latter to communicate these without any constraint.

As previously discussed, people usually select one alternative among other possibilities when making a decision. While this selection process is deemed to be a deliberate one, some choices may be clearly rational while others may be unconsciously selected. Kansanen (2008)

suggests that teaching is similar in this respect. In this section, I review the research related to the connections between pedagogical decision making, and cognitive factors, which Borg (2003) considers as "what teachers know, believe and think" (p. 81).

While teachers may be going through rational or bounded rational processes for selecting a specific choice, there is a growing body of knowledge on the importance of teachers' beliefs and knowledge (Borg, 1998; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; da Silva, 2005; Kagan, 1992; Weinstein, 1990). Two major areas, namely, teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge, are addressed in this section since they have play a prominent role in influencing pedagogical choices and practices (Nespor, 1987; Evans, 1999). Belief is defined as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996, p.103). Crumley (2009), argues that "knowledge is distinguished from belief by the ability to give an account of explanations" (2009, p.54).

While beliefs are often pitted against knowledge in a number of fields, the ambiguous relationship between the two has created a grey area within the field of educational research where teacher thoughts, beliefs and knowledge often overlap. For instance, Elbaz (1981) refers to teachers' "practical knowledge". The roots of such practical knowledge may arguably lie in what Aristotle calls *phronesis*, a moral virtue which is also practical wisdom or intelligence which will allow one to know how to act in specific situations. Aristotle distinguishes phronesis from *episteme*, or expert, theoretical knowledge, and from *techne*, or craft, or technical knowledge. In educational contexts, Kessels and Korthagen (1996) argue that phronesis has to do with the "understanding of specific concrete cases and complex or ambiguous situations" (p. 19). While educational theory can inform phronesis, the latter does not simply represent an application of that theory since the educational contexts teachers engage with are very complex and uncertain. Phronesis thus engages the teacher with dealing with the current context, reminiscent of Schön's (1992) conceptions of knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action. Aristotle also suggests the significant input of *phantasia* to phronesis, where teachers can mentally compare possibilities as they decide upon courses of action and which allows them to keep an open mind to those possibilities (Noel, 1999). Korthagen (2001) posits that reflection is underpinned by a sense of personal safety and doubt, especially amongst pre-service teachers. On the other hand, reflection is impeded by anxiety, helplessness, fear, apathy and loneliness (Cole, 1997). These aspects can help explain the kind of pedagogical choices that teachers make in the literature classroom and what could be underlying reasons for their actions.

Shulman (1986) mentions the term "subject matter knowledge"; Freeman (1993) proposes the idea of "conceptions" while Borg (2003) refers to "teacher cognition". From an epistemological point of view, knowledge is described as "a justified, true belief" (Feldman, 2003; Crumley, 2009). As individuals grow up and interact with the world around them, they develop psychological propositions which they assume to be true (Richardson, 1996). At the same time, they also gain considerable knowledge about the world they live in (Lackey, 2007). A number of researchers (Borg, 2006; Ishihara and Cohen, 2014) are of the view that both are

linked. Lewis (1990) is of the view that knowledge is embedded in beliefs, supporting the view that new knowledge is filtered through people's beliefs (1992). The blurriness between these two concepts is heightened by the fact that what teachers think and believe is invisible and unobservable (Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992) and the only way to understand teacher knowledge and beliefs is by capturing what they say. While decision making is a subtle mix of the tacit and explicit (Kahneman, 2011), the former is often not expressed nor studied. Some beliefs, as irrational as they may be, are sometimes articulated as logical, in hindsight, (Taleb, 2007) thus making it more challenging to understand how they could have impacted upon certain choices. Questions are thus raised about the nature of truth, and what serves as measure that will satisfy all parties concerned. If there is no universal truth, justifying what people might call a true belief in the absence of prescribed criteria might make it difficult to ascertain what is the correct behaviour or action to choose (Lackey, 2007).

2.4.1.1 Beliefs and pedagogical choice

Literature on teacher cognition also reveals significant interest in teacher beliefs. According to Pajares (1992), "Little will have been accomplished if research into educational beliefs fails to provide insights into the relationship between beliefs […] and teacher practices, teacher knowledge, and student outcomes" (p. 327). Indeed, Pajares himself considers the term 'beliefs' to be a "messy construct" due to shaky definitions and different conceptions of what beliefs and belief structures entail. However, Calderhead (1996) considers teachers' beliefs to be an integral part of teacher cognition, and thus it could be argued that they also form an interesting entry into understanding how pedagogical choices are made. Whether choices made in the classroom are conscious or not, they are very often the product of certain beliefs on the part of the teacher.

What do 'teachers' beliefs' refer to? These could well vary from beliefs about the subject of English literature itself, on the way to teach it, on the thoughts that occur before or during the lesson, on ideas that the teacher might have about learning and about his or her students. Calderhead (1996) makes a distinction between *knowledge*, which he terms as "factual propositions and understandings" and *beliefs*, which he considers as "suppositions, commitments, and ideologies" (p. 715). The teacher therefore also can show signs of certain knowledge regarding, perhaps, the choice of a particular methodology or the 'rightness' of a particular form of assessment. This knowledge (which would later on inform the choice of pedagogy) could be based on a number of sources, deemed to be authoritative, such as models, agreed conventions and strategies in the department, directives from higher authorities and so on.

Pajares (1992), amongst others, has interestingly concluded that beliefs can be more influential than knowledge when it comes to pedagogical practices, stating that "All teachers hold beliefs, however defined and labelled, about their work, their students, their subject matter, and their roles and responsibilities …" (p. 314). However he does recommend to researchers to identify and narrow down which aspects of beliefs they would want to gather

information about. Kagan (1992) suggests that a teacher's beliefs could determine a particular style of teaching that "is evident across different classes and grade level" (p. 66). He even claims that "most of a teacher's professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as a belief." Mariaye's (2011) study of in-service beginning teachers in Mauritius suggests that teachers do not strictly adhere to a dominant set of beliefs about teaching. She also points out the influence of personal, cultural and professional contexts upon the beliefs of these teachers.

Ertmer (2005) suggests that "understanding teachers' beliefs requires making inferences based on what teachers say, intend, and do". This highlights the importance of an interpretivist paradigm within qualitative research. She also warns that "if individuals are unable, or unwilling, to accurately represent their beliefs, this can lead to misjudging or misrepresenting that which truly motivates their behaviour" (p. 29). This presents one possible limitation as to the identification and interpretation of teacher beliefs, which exist implicitly (Kagan 1992). Pajares (1992) and others describe ways to obtain the needed information through "attitudes, perceptions, reflections, cognitions, personal theories, concerns, images, metaphors, Gestalts, practical knowledge, and craft knowledge with many of these terms used interchangeably" (Pajares, 1992).

Borko (1978) found that teachers' instructional and assessment strategies varied as per their beliefs. For instance, more traditional teachers tended to allocate less agency and responsibility to their students while more progressive teachers were likely to encourage peer tutoring and focus on emotional growth. Despite their diverging beliefs, the teachers were unanimous in their belief in the importance of basic academic skills.

Because many decisions involve an ethical component, one of the most important considerations in management is whether the decisions one is making as teacher or employee are ethical (Blanchard & Peale, 2011). Feelings also play an important role in individual decision-making, as proposed by Munene, Schwartz & Smith (2000), who suggest that it integrates feeling and thinking. For instance, feelings could influence the kind of information that individuals recall from memory; moreover specific moods could potentially push the decision maker towards certain outcomes. Moreover, the unconscious could also impact on the selection of specific choices. Kahneman (2011), while addressing irrational mental processes, makes a distinction between intuition and reasoning, which, according to him, belong to two different classes. In the first instance, intuition allows the decision maker to feel impressions, intentions and feelings; in the second instance, reasoning is grouped alongside self-control and intelligence. According to Kahneman (2011), it is erroneous to believe that decisions stem mostly from reason when in reality, most of them stem from the first category. However, he suggests that both systems are involved in individual decision-making; an idea which is concurred by others who see a parallel between intuition and reason (Elbanna and Child, 2007; Flewett, 2010; Laughlin et al., 2002; Skjærseth & Wettestad, 2008).

2.4.1.2 Teaching philosophy, values, and pedagogical choice

Teachers focus on their own teaching philosophies and personal beliefs that influence the way they teach (Duarte, 2013; Westerman, 1991), which echoes van Manen's (1995) argument that individual teachers have their own theories or understanding of how their subject should be taught. Developing a personal philosophy (Aho et al., 2010) towards teaching can "produce an individual with certain qualities, capacities, and skills" (Biesta, 2011, p. 317) which can inform the pedagogical choices they make. This teaching philosophy is, to a great extent, sustained by teachers' personal beliefs and understanding of what good teaching is, and the means to achieve it (Lihua, 2010). Škėrienė & Augustinienė (2018) emphasize the parallels between individual teachers' endeavour to contribute to the welfare of their students and the mission of education as an institution: "the public good that education ought to be" (Biesta, 2012, p.581). This echoes with Erikson's (1997) notion of generativity, or the wish to guide the next generation, which is a phenomenon he studied amongst the elderly. There are possible parallels between the didactic mission of the teacher and the wish of a member of an older generation to pass on knowledge to the next generation. A guiding philosophy thus would enable the teacher to reflect upon his or her teaching strategies and how to achieve specific objectives. A philosophical standpoint would connect educational theory and practice and enable the teacher to map out his or her own interpretation of education (Barkauskaitė & Martišauskienė, 2011, quoted in Škėrienė & Augustinienė, 2018), and in this case, literature teaching.

The significance of personal values for pedagogical choices is highlighted in a number of studies on pedagogical decision-making (Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Aho et al., 2010; Borko et al., 2008). Teachers inevitably filter information through their values and intentions, which results in subjective interpretations (Borko et al., 2008). Far from discounting this as a negative point, Schwartz (2016) argues that this could further develop teachers' moral orientations, and provide insights into teachers' priorities and viewpoint. It also suggests that other frames besides that of knowledge can be used to evaluate teaching and learning. Liedtka (2015) thus posits that teachers need to review the similarity between what they value and what their students value to balance theory and practice.

2.4.1.3 Teacher identity and pedagogical choice

While the term 'identity' has been stretched and used in a number of contexts, teacher identity has emerged as an essential construct that allows researchers to investigate how teaching and learning take place. *Who* the teacher is, *what* he or she teaches and *how* it is taught are possibly all related. Stone (1962) defines identity as "*what* and *where* the person is in social terms" and claims that "when one has identity, one is *situated*". This 'situatedness' of identity may well be applied to teachers who find themselves very often wearing different hats within their workplace.

Craib (1998) is of the opinion that "identity is seen as a process, a matter of external negotiations between oneself and the people around ..." (p. 27). If we take into account the identities of teachers, we may posit that teachers' social identity is constructed within the social structure of the school and that this social identity remains 'active' as long as relationships constructed and sustained in that social structure are kept active as well. We therefore define who we are and our relationships with others in the light of the contexts in which we find ourselves. Certain social identities require specific roles to be played. In this case, as Vryan et al. (2003) point out, roles, attitudes and behaviour may find themselves attached to specific positions and tasks, and sustained through "role expectation (Vryan et al., 2003:368). We might also consider the development of a professional identity, which would imply attitudes and roles pertaining to professionalism, efficiency and accountability, and which would be activated generally in the workplace. These attitudes might, in turn, determine the sort of pedagogy that is used in the classroom.

On the other hand, personal identity refers to what makes an individual unique. It would consist of a personal name, history, personality and memories and is constructed by the individual. The teacher's identity is therefore not something that can be segregated into discrete units; nor does it remain static. Rather, it combines various identities, be they personal, social, professional or situational, or, to take a postmodern stance on identity, is protean and always in flux. Professional obligations and norms relating to the school environment could impact upon the decisions taken by teachers. This opens up the possibility of looking into teachers' biographies as one of the shaping forces in their own pedagogy or enable us to consider if teachers re-enact 'models' of teaching that they have been exposed to as learners themselves. The classroom context also becomes a site where identities are negotiated and where decisions are taken.

Samuel's (1993) Force Field Model of Teacher Development highlights various forces, namely, inertial forces, programmatic forces and contextual forces that shape who the teacher is, and by extension, the sort of teaching he or she does in the English literature class. These forces constantly exert their influence upon the individual in a push and pull manner. Such a model opens up our reading of the situation in Mauritius, where teachers approach the teaching of English literature from a variety of vantage points, and highlights the complexity of teacher professional identity and knowledge.

Interestingly, Olsen (2008) suggests using teacher identity not only as a construct but also as a methodological lens or research frame since "it treats teachers as whole persons in and across social contexts who continually reconstruct their views of themselves in relation to others, workplace characteristics, professional purposes, and cultures of teaching" (p. 5). This is particularly relevant in a social context like the school, where the personal, subjective identity of the teacher could come into conflict with the professional identity, highlighting notions of authority, conformity, or adherence to school norms and values. This challenges the general view that the teacher is constantly in control of what he teaches and that pedagogical

choices are made rationally and consciously, rather than being in a constant state of reconstruction and/or questioning.

2.4.1.4 Teacher motivation and pedagogical choice

A variety of internal and external factors impact on decision-making. For instance, English literature teachers are answerable to stakeholders such as parents, school management and students. On the other hand, there are factors such as policy decisions, guidelines from the Ministry of Education and the national curriculum impact on the pedagogical decisions a teacher takes. Motivation is thus an essential requirement for teaching. Events happening both within the school and beyond (such as a change of policy, or fewer students attending class) can impact upon the way teachers look at their own pedagogy (Burridge, 2018). Internal motivating forces are intrinsic to the teacher and can be situated in teachers' drive to improve their practice and the overall outcomes of their class. As they monitor their students' behaviour and performance, they develop their capacity to reflect and act upon their reflections. In other cases, Burridge (2018) suggests that some teachers prefer a state of disequilibrium as they question aspects of their practice and try to rectify something that has gone wrong. Moreover, some teachers may be motivated by their beliefs in their personal relevance. Acevedo and Krueger (2004) posit that people are more likely to make a decision when they believe that their decision matters. This implies a confidence in their own relative importance as far as outcomes are concerned. Routine, heuristics and 'safe' pedagogical practices encourage a sense of personal safety and ontological security, where people are sensitive to their own personal presence in the world and how they interact with their world. In schools and classes, predictability is promoted through timetables, school rules and norms. Being able to rely on everyone's conformity to the rules allows the teacher to derive comfort from these routines and predict the responses of other people. Ontological security is also managed through one's pedagogical practices. The more a teacher breaks from routine, the bigger the risks of threat to his or her professional identity and professional habitus. The greater the chances of disruption, the less secure the teacher might feel, although in some cases, where teachers have a strong sense of ontological safety, reviewing their pedagogical strategies could be something to look forward.

2.4.1.5 Teachers' sense of efficacy and pedagogical choice

Although teachers' beliefs about efficacy have been linked to student achievement and motivation, changes in the conception of the term, especially in the light of Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, can lead us to consider this aspect while researching teachers' pedagogical choices. According to Bandura, self-efficacy refers to "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). If suitably motivated, then individuals (including teachers) could be pushed to act in specific ways. This could have an impact on the type of pedagogy, resources and learning

environment set up by the teacher and could help in shedding light upon why the subject is taught the way it is. As pointed out by Nadal (2012), many teachers are sceptical when it comes to expectations of good performances in this subject. Tapping into teachers' own notions of efficacy would thus give a greater insight into the thought processes that lead to particular choices being made in the classroom.

Conceptions and beliefs about what makes a 'good' or 'effective' teacher could also have an impact on pedagogical choice. This is further elaborated in Moore's (2004) description of major discourses around teaching, ranging from the 'competent teacher' to the competent craftsperson, and the caring and charismatic teacher (Moore, 2004, p. 3-4). Britzman (1991) suggests that cultural myths around teachers create powerful images which determine how teachers are perceived in society. Moore (2004) also warns of the power of language which is used to define and determine teaching roles and suggests that such descriptions could be ideologically guided to serve the interests of specific groups.

Cripps, Clark and Walsh (2002) identified knowledge of subject matter and context, pedagogical skills and interpersonal skills as important elements for effective teaching. Others, such as Kher, Molstad, and Donahue (1999) suggest that effective teaching is principally dependent upon teacher-student relationships. A survey on students' perceptions of qualities of effective teachers by Witcher et al. (2003) suggests that endorsing a learner-centred approach, displaying love for their profession, treating students fairly and respectfully, being knowledgeable and an effective communicator, being pedagogically competent and being available to provide support were principal traits. There seems to be focus on pedagogical and classroom management strategies on one hand, and personal characteristics on the other (Demmon-Berger, 1986). Other studies (Brosh, 1996; Zhang & Watkins, 2007; Scrivner, 2009) reinforce the notion that students and teachers focus not only on the pedagogical expertise of the teacher, but also on personal attributes as well as interrelational skills. Such views about effective teachers and effective teaching could also be motivating factors for teachers to adopt specific strategies and dispositions in the classroom, so as to create a more conducive teaching and learning environment.

2.4.1.6 Heuristics and pedagogical choice

Insisting on optimal solutions is not possible in situations where there are limited resources and data, or in cases where untrained people are unable to apply rational decision-making methods (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 1996). Gigerenzer (2008) argues that heuristics that are derived from experience can lead to better choices compared to more thorough processes involving a greater cognitive load. Heuristics, usually considered as cognitive shortcuts, are simplified strategies for making choices in very unpredictable circumstances, using tacit understanding and experience (Policastro, 1999) to develop solutions (Bingham and Eisenhardt, 2011). Heuristics allow satisfactory decisions to be made quickly and easily (Shah & Oppenheimer, 2008). These heuristics assist in reducing the effort required to make decisions

and offer an easy way forward. Processes are learnt with experience and the recurrence of these processes allows the decision maker to infer and reflect the outcome of specific courses of action. This results in cognitive maps, or a tacit understanding of how elements are interconnected, and how likely certain outcomes will be, based on one's knowledge, experiences, and judgement. The decision maker is receptive to certain patterns that will allow him or her to create a mental scenario. Tacit knowledge, in this instance, is practical knowledge that is derived from mental models, beliefs, assumptions and insights (Smith, 2001). However, in the case of intuition and heuristics, the decision maker must be aware that his or her "initial, automatic response may be incorrect" (Dawes, 2001). Kahneman and Tversky (1996, 1979) and Gardner (1985) have identified heuristics and biases that show that people do not always behave rationally when making decisions. They argued that while cognitive shortcuts were often used inappropriately, they were also evidence that people were using them. Some cognitive biases were also negated once reframed, showing the ability for people's cognitive skills to adapt ecologically in certain environments.

2.4.1.7 Decision making biases and pedagogical choice

Cognitive biases can also influence decision-making. These are thinking patterns that are based on observations and generalised views which could lead to faulty logic and inaccurate judgements (Evans, Barston, & Pollard, 1983; Marsh, & Hanlon, 2007; Nestler. & von Collani, 2008; West, Toplak, & Stanovich, 2008). These biases influence potential decisions by causing people to be entirely dependent on previous knowledge and assumptions. Kahnemann and Tversky (1983) posited that certain cognitive biases could potentially influence individual's thoughts and decisions. Along with others (Kahneman, Slovic & Tversky, 1982; Nisbet & Ross, 1980; Piatelli-Palmarini, 1994; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), they presented a heuristics and biases approach to judgement under uncertainty, which is outlined in the table below:

Table 2.4: Potential biases to judgement under uncertainty (Kahnemann and Tversky, 1983; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008)

Type of Bias	**Description**
Belief bias	Overdependence on prior knowledge at making decisions
Overconfidence bias and optimism	When people overestimate their ability to predict events in the future; often accompanied by overconfidence
Hindsight bias	Usually the opposite of overconfidence bias; involves looking back in time and perceiving mistakes to have been obvious or predictable after they have happened because of selective reconstruction of events.
Anchoring bias (also similar to 'halo' effect)	When people rely extensively on a single piece of information, usually, an initial impression that will subsequently shape subsequent decisions.
Framing bias	When people are influenced by the way a situation or problem is presented or 'framed'
Survivorship bias	Making decisions only on examples of success and assuming the same results will occur if the same methods are used, irrespective of different pathways and experiences.

Akrasia and myopia	Akrasia (lacking self control, or acting against one's judgement) and myopia (nearsightedness, or the inability to see things at a distance)
Availability heuristic or bias	This refers to when people associate the likelihood of an event or outcome based on the ease with which these examples come to mind.
Confirmation bias	The gathering of information that confirms one's initial conclusions. Views contrary to our beliefs are thus not likely to be consulted or taken into consideration.
Representative bias	The erroneous belief that two situations are comparable because of perceived similarity, or because one proceeds to evaluate a situation without searching for similar situations.
Groupthink	A sense of community and shared values and vision which eventually prevent individuals in a group to voice out or speak about alternatives, or criticise one idea, which could be construed as harmful to the group. This often results in loss of creativity and independent thinking.
Herd instinct	Similar to groupthink, the herd instinct is characterised by the absence of individual decision-making and critical thinking, resulting in people copying others' decisions. Decisions through herd instinct may be fuelled by fears of missing out or of being left on their own. This often results in 'information cascades' where observed behaviour is mimicked and where actual information is sometimes discarded while inferences or assumptions are taken on board instead.
Loss aversion	When someone experiences, or feels, losses more acutely than gains
Omission bias	People tend to omit information that they find risky
Status quo bias and inertia	*An* emotional *bias where an individual prefers* the current state of affairs and uses the current situation as a reference point. Any deviation from that baseline is seen as a loss. Changes are not likely to happen unless there is a strong incentive. Some people might prefer, in the face of complex alternatives, not to take any decision at all, preferring to defer the difficult moment of choosing, or not making any choice at all.
Escalation of commitment (also known sometimes as 'sunk cost')	When people continue on a course of action even after information obtained suggests it would not be advisable to continue. The idea that one has already invested in a particular course of action, the desire to be consistent, the apprehension of consequences, or avoiding admitting a mistake can cause them to take a route that may no longer be prudent.

2.4.1.8 Teacher knowledge and pedagogical choice

How do teachers know what to teach and how to teach it? Saad et al. (2009) suggest that pedagogical decision making is embedded in pedagogical practice and can be theoretically analysed through the lens of teacher knowledge or practice-related theory. Teacher knowledge represents the knowledge that teachers require in order to function in their professional environment. It represents a number of skills, information, attitudes and experiences which form the foundation of the teacher's knowing what/how to teach. Eraut (1996) defines this knowledge as "the knowledge possessed by professionals which enable them to perform professional tasks, roles and duties with quality" and furthermore classifies them according to context and area of knowledge.

Shulman (1987) proposes a framework of teacher knowledge to explain teachers' practice which consists of seven major categories, namely,

1. Content knowledge
2. General pedagogical knowledge
3. Pedagogical content knowledge
4. Curriculum knowledge
5. Knowledge of learners and their characteristics
6. Knowledge of educational contexts
7. Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values

Investigating the discipline of English literature leads me to consider all these categories as being part of an essential nexus of influences informing teachers' choice of pedagogy. To what extent are the pedagogical choices of English literature teachers influenced by these different knowledges? Shulman's (1986) notion of pedagogical content knowledge marks the combination of content and pedagogy, where "the most regularly taught topics in one's subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations – in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others" (Shulman, 1986, p. 9). However, his models seem to have removed the teacher from the centre of the process, or assume that the teacher is at the receiving end of such 'knowledges'. Samuel's Force Field Model (1998), on the other hand, presents a much more actively engaged central figure (i.e. , the teacher) not only undergoing change, but also creating it through personal and professional choices.

Furthermore, Banks et al. (1999) consider the interconnections between subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and school knowledge and raise the notion of "personal constructs", which they define as teachers' "complex amalgam of past knowledge, experiences of learning, a personal view of what constitutes good teaching and belief in the purposes of the subject". Thus, a teacher's personal experiences and beliefs would influence teachers' professional knowledge and the way they teach it. This model could be significant in explaining whether English literature teachers construct their own pedagogy as far as literature teaching is concerned or whether they amalgamate different forms of knowledges acquired from various sources.

At the core of teaching lies the act of pedagogical reasoning, which Loughran (2019) describes as "the thinking that underpins informed professional practice" (p. 4). Also known as "instructional reasoning" (Tiilikainen, Toom, Lepola, & Husu, 2019), it is the platform where teachers, students, instructional content, and learning context meet (Chazan, Herbst, & Clark, 2016; Klette, 2007; Shulman, 1987; Tiilikainen et al., 2019). Teaching thus represents the dynamic relationship between knowing and doing (Biesta, 2010), where teachers are constantly involved in decision-making and engage with *pedagogical dilemmas* (Lampert, 1985), where teachers face alternatives that are justifiable and which would require careful

deliberation on the decision maker's part. Lampert suggests that teachers face these dilemmas frequently as they deliberate whether to call upon a student, or to provide feedback or when to speak or ask a question. In this light, teaching entails a constant series of selection among various alternatives, which could lead to further pedagogical dilemmas down the line. Professional judgement can be described as teacher's negotiation of "the universal terms of theory and the gritty particularities of situated practice" (p. 519). Teachers use their professional judgement, or ability to decide in uncertain situations, for the best way for students to learn, thus deriving expertise as they engage more and more with new challenges in situations of uncertainty. Doecke et al. (2007) suggest that extant research on professional knowledge has focused on the relationship between knowledge and practice, that is their knowledge *in*, *of*, and *for* their professional practice as teachers.

Oleson and Hora (2012) however also take into account how "wisdom of practice" (Shulman, 1987) is not just constructed in the workplace but also can be the offshoot of the beliefs and attitudes towards the subject area and towards teaching itself which the teacher could have even before joining the profession. These beliefs are not static but undergo many influences over time and present interesting insights into what teachers perceive as 'effective' teaching of English literature. This view rejoins the notion of the construction of the professional identity and is also supported by the study of Aho et al. (2010) where they note that beyond teachers' own "personal resources", pedagogical decisions are shaped by "society, culture and traditions" and reinforced by a "common system of implicit norms regulating the events on the surface" (p. 266), agreed upon with school colleagues, amongst other influences. Cherubini (2009) considers that to understand why teachers change or, for that matter why they do not change their practice, implies mapping out their own personal beliefs, their experience as learners, the social and organizational contexts and the psychological processes that produce their view of self.

Moreover, Cogill (2008) constructs her own model of 'pedagogic change' which takes into account factors such as pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, teachers' values, beliefs and experiences, observable practice (as proposed by Alexander (1994)) amongst others, as determining factors of pedagogical decision-making, which could provide insights into how English literature classes are carried out.

It is worth noting that Shulman's framework has led to a number of subsequent reworkings of the concept of teacher knowledge and led to other models of teacher knowledge and pedagogical choice. One major focus has been on the role of the teacher in transforming content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge into PCK, highlighting how teachers' values about subject content and their beliefs about the value and purpose of studying a specific subject (Grossman, 1990) can influence their PCK. Thus, pedagogical decision making is not a clinical process but one that is characterised by conflicting objectives, values, and emotions. Others have expanded on the nature of subject content knowledge, especially the content knowledge that is prepared for teaching (Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008). Content knowledge is thus proposed in two categories, namely, common content knowledge, referring to the

knowledge that teachers use regularly within and outside the classroom; and specialised content knowledge, which teachers use in specific settings, and which is not directly related to a knowledge of students or pedagogical practices. Rather, it is a content knowledge that has to be "unpacked" (p. 400) for it to be used in class.

Criticisms levelled against those concepts have usually highlighted the fact that research has tended to be on individual teachers' cognition and have not accounted for the role of the teaching contexts and communities in the formation of such knowledge (Ellis, 2007). Another criticism is that discussions of teacher knowledge do not take on board the dynamic nature of knowledge (Cochran, DeRuiter, & King, 1993), thus opening only a thin vista onto teachers' thinking processes. PCK is thus to be understood, not as a finished product, but as a form of knowledge always mutable and in process of development.

The model proposed by Gess-Newsome (2015), depicted in Figure 2.10, is one of many models that have been presented over time to address the complexity in pedagogical knowledges. What is noteworthy is the category of teacher professional knowledge bases, which are subsequently narrowed down to topic-specific professional knowledge that can be mediated through filters and amplifiers by both teachers and students in order to inform practice. Such a model indicates that pedagogic knowledge is not the only form of knowledge that informs pedagogical practice; rather, we can note a complex interaction amongst various forms of knowledges, ranging from the discipline to the personal to the curricular.

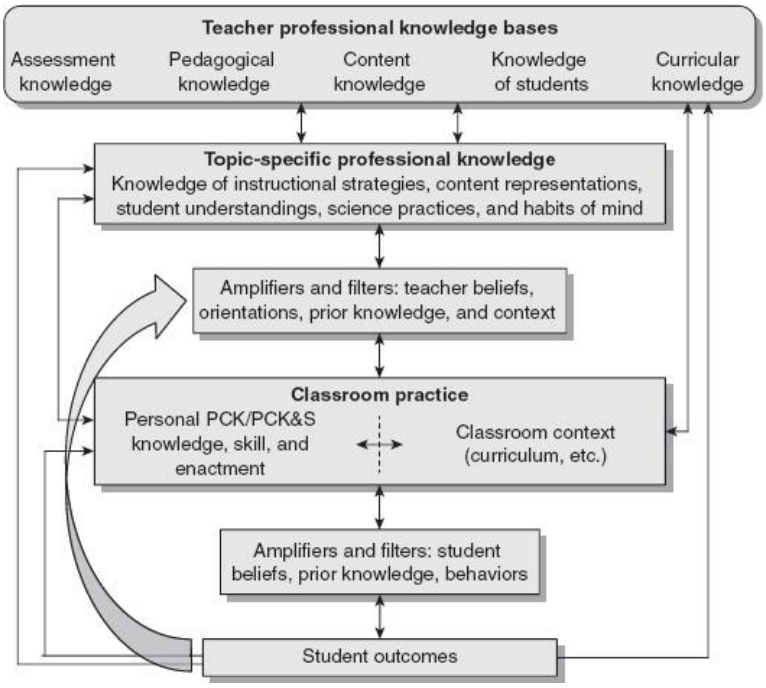


Figure 2.10: Consensus model of Teacher Professional Knowledge and Skill including PCK and influences on classroom practice and student outcomes (TPK & S) (from Gess-Newsome, 2015, p. 86)

2.4.1.9 Teachers' own experiences as learners

The personality of and skills of individual teachers largely influence what teachers do in class, and whether they choose specific pedagogical strategies or trends (Ellis, 2001). A number of studies have tried to establish the link between teaching and the personal dimension brought about by teachers' life experiences, and suggest that teacher conceptions affect their practices and impact upon their identity. Past experiences can strongly influence decision making (Juliusson, Karlsson, and Garling, 2005). People are likely to replicate an action that has yielded positive results when found in a similar situation. On the other hand, people also tend not to repeat past mistakes (Sagi & Friedland, 2007). This mode of operating could have potential adverse effects since decision makers may avoid examining choices and could end up opting for what, in their minds, has worked before.

The experiences gathered by teachers in their formative years can have a lasting impact on individuals. The knowledge and information gathered during those years constitute a storehouse of knowledge from which many teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Early career teachers, especially those without prior training, are sometimes surprised to hear that they are consciously or unconsciously behaving like their own teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Bullock, 2012). While some initial teacher beliefs can be persistent and long-lasting (Weinstein, 1990; Calderhead & Robson, 1991), others are subject to change if teachers confront their biases or older beliefs with new ones. The period of teacher training can be the moment for such confrontations to happen. Richards et al. (1996) argued that trainees were able to deeply understand the role of a teacher in class, while Freeman (1993) recognised the potential for increased professional knowledge amongst trainee teachers, which has been corroborated by other studies (MacDonald et al., 2001; Clarke, 2008; Busch, 2010).

2.4.2 Contextual factors impacting on pedagogical choice

Herbst and Chazan (2011) propose that teachers' choices are also influenced by other factors beyond personal assets such as knowledge, skills and beliefs to make choices; the teacher also has to abide by instructional norms and work-related obligations, as well as parental expectations and policy decisions. This would mean that a teacher is not necessarily alone when making a decision but is also working within a system where there is an expected pattern of behaviour. Herbst and Chazan (2011), however, point out to the difficulty in distinguishing the degree to which one teacher is relying upon his or her resources and when the person is paying heed to those external norms, again hinting at the difficulties in capturing the invisible nature of pedagogical decision-making. Policy context can affect teachers's practice through regulations, policies and accountability measures (Corrie, 2000). National curriculum frameworks, and quality assurance measures are also means of regulating teachers' work (Fenech, 2006; Woodrow, 2007).

2.4.2.1 Academic background, professional training and pedagogical choice

The background knowledge that teachers have in their specific discipline is amply discussed by Shulman (1986). He proposes a type of knowledge called Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK), which consists of four elements: content knowledge, substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge and teacher beliefs about the subject matter. Content knowledge alludes to teachers' understanding of concepts, topics and explanations in a specific subject. Substantive knowledge addresses the foundational principles of the discipline (Wilson et al., 1987) while syntactic knowledge refers to the discussions, debates, and major contributions and updates in the subject area. Finally, there are teacher beliefs about the subject matter, such as how it should be taught. Borko and Putnam, 1996; Graeber, 1999). Ball (1991) suggests that these four kinds of knowledge interact with one another to provide the teacher with a strong background which will prepare them to be independent and innovative in class (Richards, 1998). Teachers with no training, who therefore do not possess the pedagogical content knowledge, will tend to faithfully follow the textbook, or avoid having to teach specific aspects (Tan et al., 1998) or end up providing erroneous advice (Tsui, 2003). Participation in pre-service and in-service development programmes can affect teachers' academic knowledge in different ways: 1) It can influence teachers' belief and knowledge systems, and impact their classroom practices (Sendan and Roberts, 1998; Feryok, 2008). One potential effect though might be that the knowledge could affect specific beliefs or even knowledge but have no effect upon practice (Golombek, 1998).

2.4.2.2 Teaching experience and pedagogical choice

Many teachers consider teaching experience to be one of the most important sources of knowledge about teaching (Borko and Putman, 1996; Richardson, 2003; Tsui, 2003). Schön posits the importance of experience and practice in relation to pedagogical decision-making. One pertinent question is whether early career decision makers and more experienced decision makers (or experts) make the same type of choices or are motivated to make specific choices for the same reason. Early career decision makers tend to have less extensive background knowledge and experience in making decisions (Borko & Livingston, 1989). On the other hand, expertise is described by Ericsson and Charness (1994) as talent (or innate abilities); experience, and cognition (the knowledge and ability to recall). While it may be argued that teachers variously accrue experience and that it may be problematic to decide the degree to which one is experienced, expert and early career teachers have been noted to have different approaches towards decision-making in the following ways: Expert teachers were more easily able to make quick decisions to adjust to their learners' needs; their decision-making was also more in line with their own teaching beliefs, which was not always the case for early career teachers.

Being in the field brings to the teacher tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) which assists teachers in facing complex classroom events or unexpected situations, which knowledge from academic studies cannot always prepare one for. This 'lived' knowledge from a variety of experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996) forms the basis of much of pedagogical decision-making. While familiar practices provide security in new or changing educational settings (Freeman, 2002; Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011), holding on to them could prevent change. One way to counter that would be for teachers to identify the gap between their current impact as teacher and the teacher they would like to be, thus allowing them enough "emotional dissonance" (Golombek & Johnson, 2004) to separate themselves from tried-and-tested strategies.

Decision-making in the classroom allows for interaction between the teacher's knowledge base and information obtained from context (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). This knowledge base, consisting of knowledge and skills, becomes the foundation on which decisions can be made (Freeman, 1989) and is renewed with mental models that are formulated through teachers' interpretation of reality, mediated through what they already know (Bishop, 2008; Borko et al., 2008; Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993). Teachers who accept the consequences of their choices, and are able to re-evaluate their decisions, contribute to new learning experiences which will allow them to formulate future decisions (Aho et al., 2010). This means that the diverse experiences of teachers, whether they were through learning, professional development or in praxis would assist in refining the theoretical understanding that teachers have. Teachers' mental models thus integrate classroom realities with prior experiences and their own beliefs (Lihua, 2010) and teaching objectives (Borko et al., 2008), which equips them to make pedagogical choices in everyday classroom teaching contexts (Bishop, 2008). In a dynamic environment, however, teachers would be unable to implement mental models, or anticipate all kinds of pedagogical possibilities, at the risk of seeming "artificial" (van Manen, 1995, p. 13). Moreover, engaging in mental pedagogical scenarios or scripted pedagogy would strip teachers of their own independence and self-reliance (Hiebert & Morris, 2012). What could then be suggested would be a more flexible pedagogical decision-making model, which would allow teachers to respond more readily to challenges within and outside the classroom. Kumaravadivelu (2001) posits that teachers sometimes reach a state of awareness, which encompasses teacher decision-making and sense-making, as well as their knowledge, skills, values and dispositions, leading to change and growth (Freeman, 1989).

Freeman (1989) suggests that teachers are able to achieve this growth through decision-making by becoming aware of their knowledge and skills and how these contribute to the principles underlying the pedagogical decisions they take (Lihua, 2010). A theory of practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 541) would allow a balance between educational theory and practice. Such a theory can develop from "action of thought" or "thought in action" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) as a result of pedagogical thoughtfulness (Jovaiša, 2000). This may be defined as a "mental feature of personality that allows an individual to contemplate any thought, imposed question, to decide freely and reasonably

when evaluating information and experience" (Jovaiša, 2000, p.224). This thoughtfulness, which can be linked with one's values and habits (van Manen, 2008) may be translated towards learners through decisions of what to teach and in what form and organisation the class will take place. At the same time, teachers are able to show that they are capable of reflection (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) and are able to demonstrate "pedagogical tact" (van Manen, 1995, p.8), referred to as "a kind of practical normative intelligence that is governed by insight while relying on feeling" (Manen van, 1995, p. 10). This would allow teachers to make sense of information through their knowledge and beliefs and to rely upon pedagogy as a potential tool for transformation both within and outside the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

Burridge (2018) proposes the concept of *professional habitus* to refer to the "system of schemas and perceptions people use to understand their professional world," which can be consolidated through professional development, teacher training and encounters with colleagues. Participating in professional social spaces eventually starts impacting on decision-making, especially if teachers meet like-minded colleagues and form social groups within the institution, which will also entail other routines settling around the group. One aspect which is linked with tacit knowledge is routinisation, or the understanding of how to proceed with life, without necessarily scrutinising every aspect. While tacit or practical knowledge helps people navigate their lives by predicting what others are doing, discursive consciousness allows people to engage with novel experiences by comparing to past experiences and planning how to act. *Routinisation* takes place when social routines becomes enmeshed with tacit knowledge and are internalised in our responses. This leads to the development and internalisation of automatic responses to events, creating a sense of ontological security that is reinforced with routines, implicit or explicit codes of behaviour, and norms. Giddens (1984) suggests that *knowledgeability* is the way a person can make sense of the rules, norms and values of certain social settings. Burridge, Hooley and Neal (2016) argue that knowledgeability should be linked with frames of practice, which are the different approaches and means by which teachers build relationships and develop a class culture. These frames of practice usually develop through experience, study or reflection, where early career teachers might have less developed frames than the more experienced teacher. Over time, these frames become stable and experienced teachers can use these to manage their classes, allowing them to focus on the needs of their learners and develop a more mature understanding of teaching.

2.4.2.3 The classroom, school context and pedagogical choice

Prestage and Perks (2000) posit that teachers' knowledge are strongly influenced by "classroom events" and show how pedagogical content knowledge evolves with the teaching experiences that a teacher has, which could be described as moments where pedagogical choices are made. Brown and Coles (2000) also address the same issue in their study, where

they consider the intuitive practitioner making complex decisions within the classroom context. Classroom negotiation is yet another aspect that is explored by Breen and Littlejohn (2000) where they found that instructional choices were not only determined by the pre-specified curriculum and curriculum content, but also by the size and ability of the class. This leads them to recognise the quality of flexibility in the teacher, who is often placed in positions of negotiation with his own practices. This is a view which is echoed in Nicholson's (1996) study, which brings forth personal beliefs and experiences as well as social experiences within the classroom and community as influences upon a teacher's teaching practices. Edwards, cited in Daniels et al. (2009), seems to concur when stating that learning is only situated and knowledge is only produced in the context in which it will be used. Learning to teach would then be only a matter of being acculturated into existing frameworks of practice.

In the classroom, the instructional task guides the teacher's behaviour, given that the teacher has to take into account information about students and their ability as he or she sets the task. Decisions at different levels are taken to address whatever crops up during the session (Yinger, 1979). Alternative courses of action are then considered, depending on how critical the situation is. The classroom and school environment also consist of a social context (or context-within-a-context, arguably) which has a direct impact upon what happens in the classroom (Cohen, 1979). The classroom environment refers to the physical and social context of the classroom, which is, to a large extent, managed by the teacher (Joyce, 1978; Burridge, 2016; Rogers, 2020) but where control of the space and its dynamics involve constant negotiation of goals with students (Cohen, 1980; Raider-Roth, 2005; Wolff, Jarodzka, & Boshuizen, 2020).

The classroom environment is, hence, not static but influences teachers' pedagogical decisions and gets influenced in return. Moreover, there are teachers who try to establish a sense of community within the classroom (Burden, 2020; Janesick, 1978; Meinking & Hall, 2020), as they try to create and sustain relationships within the classroom that ultimately will lead to the educational benefit of their students. Bailey, Jacob, and Jones (2014) point out that "effective classroom management is based on planning and preparation" (p.19) which they feel is "an extension of the quality relationship of the room" (p. 19). Teachers therefore have to be mindful of the classroom learning space, the resources they will deploy, the class timetable, routines and habits, and the expectations generated in the teaching and learning environment, which will impact on the different interactions (teacher-class, teacher-student, student-student, class-student) within the classroom space (Bailey, Jacob, & Jones, 2014). Janesick (1978) thus reports of attempts at modelling cooperation and respect from the beginning of the year so as to create a sense of community, while Meinking and Hall (2020) suggest that disrupting the top-down approach and opting for students as partners could bring about a more conducive atmosphere to learning.

Negotiating teaching and learning and expected behaviour in class also entails establishing a reward structure (Cohen, 1979; Pesout & Nietfeld, 2020; Slavin, 1977). Students' responses are monitored and feedback provided so that "students are able to build an evaluative map of the classroom environment" (Doyle, 1981, p. 94). By establishing this

climate of evaluation and expectations, students are familiarised with how they will be proceed through the rest of the year, which creates a comfortable space for learning. This was also facilitated by the teacher who would, by accepting certain types of responses, would define expected tasks and set down guidelines for "acceptable routes to answers" (Doyle, 1980, p. 95). This shows that teachers are able to anticipate not only the difficulty level of the tasks they set but can also mentally map out the trajectories their learners will take when attempting to do the task. Doyle (1980) thus reports some teachers accepting some types of answers in order to avoid ambiguity, or to prevent students getting lost in a lengthy interpretation process.

The school environment extends beyond its physical boundaries to include influences and pressures upon pedagogical choices from school management and educational policies (Barr, 1980) and the community (for instance, parents). Floden et al. (1980) point out that choosing content for teaching can be determined by other individuals in the education system besides the teacher's own beliefs. For instance, policy decisions at national level regarding change in syllabus and mode of assessment, might lead some teachers to review their instruction and some might narrow down their teaching to topics or skills that may be assessed, even if this was not the intended outcome. McNeil (1980) suggests that while the teachers in her study were knowledgeable and interested, their pedagogical choices were very much restrained and few resources were used, mostly due to them avoiding changes and because of their fears of problems with management. Cohen (1980) posits that one way to explore teachers' judgements would be through an analysis of their goals and vision, which may influence their behaviour and practice in class. Further discussion of the school community also brings forth discussion of communities of practice and the importance of peers in sustaining professional knowledge. Hargreaves and Fullan (2015) argue that collaboration and collegiality are beneficial for the school, especially when such collaborative cultures are spontaneous, voluntary and focused on a growth culture. However, they speak of contrived collegiality, the negative side of collaboration, where teachers, despite their best intentions, fail to sustain a community of practice and a collegial atmosphere due to the "micropolitics of schools" (p. 148). Contrived collegiality is often implemented and regulated administratively, and does not always lead to meaningful communication amongst colleagues.

2.4.2.4 Learners' needs and pedagogical choice

The literature suggests that teachers generally make pedagogical choices based on an awareness of the needs of their learners (Liedtka, 2015; Duarte, 2013). Aspects such as learners' characteristics and ability not only could limit teachers' ability to act (Perfecto, 2012) but were also seen as essential forces motivating a teacher to act (Aho et al., 2010). Teachers were able to use available information about learners' capacities, preferences, learning styles and backgrounds to be able to identify and address the latter's needs (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993) and make appropriate choices. In-depth analysis of learners' needs also results in the development of empathy (Rauth et al., 2010) as well as a deeper understanding of their learners'

development (Aho et al., 2010) which will subsequently provide them with more information when faced with a decision.

Moreover, teachers' values are intrinsically linked to their actions and behaviour and students are also able to receive and respond to teachers' messages and discourses (Poulou & Norwich, 2002). Van der Merwe and Bekker (2013) suggest that teachers and learners have a pedagogical relationship, which can potentially be intuitive, emotional, engaged and responsible (Greene, 1995; Korthagen, 2001; Keltchermans, 2005). Van Manen (2008) also posits that only grounded pedagogical relationships could allow a transformation of the self "into who we might become" (p. 3) since such relationships are characteristic of effective teaching and lead to conducive environments for learning. Pedagogy is therefore attributed a relational aspect since there is give-and-take between both parties in the classroom. Pedagogy thus has the capacity to create positive conditions for meaningful exchanges to happen. To this effect, teachers need to develop sensitivity and tact, which Usher (2002) attributes to teachers with the following personality traits: empathetic, having a positive outlook on self, viewing others positively, authentic, possessing meaningful vision and purpose and are sensitive to the needs of their learners. Engaging in reflection about learners' beliefs and understanding and including these needs within pedagogical planning provides the required support that the learners might need and forms the basis of learner-centred pedagogy.

2.4.2.5 Autonomy and pedagogical choice

Another aspect which might be interesting to uncover would be teachers' sense of autonomy, which can influence their choice of pedagogy. Autonomy, or an individual's freedom to make choices that will have an impact on him or her tends to refer to something broader than decision-making. Freire (1972) argues that autonomy is a quality to be developed over time. In addition, decision-making is related to agency, or the ability to act within a specific environment (Schlosser, 2015) and the freedom to make choices in life. An autonomous person therefore is able to make conscious choices in an independent manner. Deci and Ryan (1987) argue that intentionality, or the choice made by someone to act in a specific way to achieve a desired result, could be expressed personally as a self-determined behaviour. Do teachers feel free to teach the way they want, to achieve set targets? The degree of autonomy that a teacher enjoys could determine the way the class is carried out (Gess-Newsome and Lederman, 1995). Autonomy would therefore be a very important resource for the teacher.

2.4.2.6 Accountability and pedagogical choice

Accountability has been one powerful discourse that has influenced teacher thinking and praxis in the recent decades (Ball, 2008; Perryman et al., 2011). In educational situations, it is often related to the effectiveness of schools at positively impacting students' (and by extension, teachers') results (Hatch & Grieshaber, 2002). Accountability is very often

implemented in the form of regulations and policies that set minimum standards for practice. Brady (2020) suggests that the word 'accountability' is "chameleon-like" (p. 2) in nature. It refers to the act of giving an account of oneself, or taking responsibility for one's actions (Sinclair, 1995), implying that "there is a relationship between those who seek answers and those who are answerable, those who may impose sanctions and those who anticipate them" (Brady, 2020, p. 2). While seen mostly from a managerial stance in the public sector, in educational research, accountability enjoys a somewhat negative reputation, since it has become associated with a coercive audit culture in a world increasingly dominated by surveillance mechanisms that seek to measure or map out individual and institutional effectiveness and performance. Perryman et al. (2011) suggest that "policies of achievement" (p. 179) have led schools from a state of relative autonomy to controlled autonomy over a span of thirty years in Great Britain. While Poulson (1998) argues that accountability is a positive thing, the term however now conveys a range of meanings. Ball (2008) suggests that accountability is the result of "policy technologies" which "involve the calculated deployment of forms of organisation and procedures, and disciplines or bodies of knowledge, to organise human forces and capabilities into functioning systems" (p. 41). These policies, which may well be contradictory, are sometimes simultaneously in circulation in the education system, and can influence one another. This places the recipients and enactors of such policies in difficult situations given that they have to interpret these guidelines. This often results in affective pressure (Brown et al. 2002, p.11) as staff find themselves unable to meet rising expectations and increasing workloads. Given that teaching requires a "massive investment in the self" (Nias, 1996, p.108), self-esteem and morale are intricately linked to success, and it is not surprising that emotional dissonance may ensue in some cases where increasing requirements are expected from teachers who are not given the autonomy to decide how to work (Mahony and Hextall, 2000, p. 78). Perryman et al. (2011) suggest that teachers who do not agree with the structures in place can engage in policy evasion or policy resistance (p. 191) but admit that it is not always easy for teachers to evade performativity practices.

Accountability mechanisms have led to the rise of the 'responsibility paradox' (Harmon, 1995), where responsible judgement, which should have been developed as a result of interpreting and implementing those mechanisms, is actually compromised but passed on as 'intelligent accountability' in order to guarantee some autonomy (Miliband, 2004). It is thus a means of guiding individuals to demonstrate their professional accountability by demonstrating appropriate professional dispositions. In the educational field, professional accountability requires teachers to agree on developing their evaluation literacy (McNamara, O'Hara, Boyle & Sullivan, 2007) so that they learn to hold themselves accountable in ways that are reflexive and evidence-based. Teachers are professionalised through capacity building, which is seen as a form of empowerment (O'Brien et al., 2019), and which will boost teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. Brady (2020) argues that professionalisation also entails an "appeasement function" (p. 3) since fulfilling their obligations to account for themselves and take the "right decisions … as well as the right judgements about the (in)effectiveness of their own practices" (Brady, 2020, p.3) will reassure the public at large.

There are different reactions on the part of teachers when their practice is being held accountable. While most teachers usually abide by accountability measures, in some cases, teachers have voiced out against practices which they considered as reductive and which treated their work as "measurable, auditable practices" (Fenech, Sumsion & Shepherd, 2010, p. 98), when they personally felt that their work was "untickable" (p. 98). Fenech, Sumsion and Shepherd (2010) also noted while some were able to use their professional knowledge to challenge expectations coming from the top, their experience also made them feel dissatisfied with their restrictive environment. In some cases, dissatisfaction could lead to resistance towards new policies, especially if teachers feel that they are losing their autonomy. Accountability discourses can thus lead to teachers potentially feeling de-professionalised (Maloney & Barblett, 2002).

2.5 Section Four: Pedagogical choices: Elaborating a temporary theoretical lens

2.5.1 Identifying potential knowledge gaps

As I read through and reflected upon the literature on pedagogical choices and literature teaching, I started having a more comprehensive view of the broader aspects of the phenomenon and a greater awareness, as researcher, as to how other researchers in the field had approached similar issues or related topics. For instance, while it was useful to know of the applications of rational decision-making theories in specific domains such as in business or management, trying to apply the rational method seemed challenging when considering the constant flux that exists in a regular classroom. Bounded rationality presented some promise in its appreciation of the limitations placed upon rational decision-making. I particularly appreciated the notion of *satisficing* (Simon, 1957) as a means of understanding how individuals could compromise and stop seeking alternatives if an option presented itself that satisfied their minimum requirements. Even then, I felt that this did not explain the variety of pedagogical choices a teacher would take, which might even go beyond that is logically satisficing. This brought me to more recent literature that have considered cognitive aspects as well as contextual influences.

From the consulted literature, what has emerged is the importance of teacher beliefs and knowledge upon teachers' pedagogical thinking and instructional choices (Borg, 1998; Kagan, 1992; Weinstein, 1990). Some of these beliefs stem from teachers' own learning trajectories and experiences, which may have set down patterns of pedagogical thinking and expectations that are not easily replaced, even by subsequent learning experiences or professional training, for instance (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Weinstein, 1990). Some studies have, however, considered teachers who have shown flexibility in their beliefs and knowledge (Busch, 2010; MacDonald et al., 2001). Teachers' personality, values, abilities and experience also permeate their pedagogical beliefs and practices (Ellis, 2011; Kaplan, Owings & Chappell, 2011). This has highlighted the importance of not amalgamating all teachers' experiences and of being mindful of the impact of teachers' individuality onto the teaching and learning process.

More importantly, much of the literature also stresses upon the fact that teachers do not always make rational choices; while choices may be made, how conscious teachers might be about their pedagogical intentions and decisions might vary according to context and other influences. While some studies have considered the importance of heuristics in shaping some teacher practices, thus positioning teachers in a more passive role, research on teacher cognition tends to focus on the teacher's direct impact on classroom events (Borg, 2006). This study, however, looks into how teachers may consciously or unconsciously make decisions about teaching literature. Other factors that have cropped up in the literature includes the importance of classroom ecology and the complex interaction between pedagogical decisions and practices, learners and resources (Guerretaz & Johnston, 2013).

In other cases, beliefs about the subject content and the way it should be learnt and taught (Chavez, 2003; Remillard & Bryans, 2004; Richards & Pennington, 1998; Wilson & Goldenberg, 1998); beliefs about learners' autonomy (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012) and interactions with learners (Li & Walsh, 2011; Wu & Lin, 2006); teachers' own subject matter knowledge (Tsui, 2003), as well as challenging work conditions (Crookes and Arakaki, 1999). could impact on the deployment of specific pedagogical moves.

Informed by this scoping of literature, I understood that my study could help me position my own claims to knowledge, as illustrated in the following Figure 2.11:



Figure 2.11: Identification of knowledge gaps

For the purpose of establishing a *theoretical* base for this study, a deliberate choice was made not to venture too deeply into the distinction between decision-making and pedagogical choice. While the scope of decision-making literature tends to be broader and also focuses on the processes involved in making a decision, the literature on pedagogical choices is more focused on outcomes of decision-making processes and the influences that determined those

pedagogical choices. When considering possible theoretical contributions of this study, what struck me was the fact that few studies have focused on the notion of pedagogical choice as phenomenon. While much research has been carried out on the processes of decision-making, there has been little in the literature that has considered the interplay of specific influences upon teachers and their choice of instructional strategies. While policy capturing[20], planning, and teacher cognition may be represented through narrative inquiry, for the purposes and purview of this study, I have opted to allow participants to express themselves on both the processes and outcomes of their decision-making. This has allowed me to scope the extant literature on pedagogical decision-making and instructional choices to better understand the phenomenon and ascertain where potential gaps in knowledge still remain.

Contextually, there seemed to be a scarcity in terms of research on that domain in the Mauritian context, or a context similar to Mauritius. Thus, there was the possibility for my study to contribute valuable information on pedagogical choices at upper secondary level in Mauritius, a postcolonial SIDS republic with its own approach towards language and literature. To reiterate what I mentioned in **Chapter One**, while there seems to be growing interest in SIDS and developing countries, these countries still are underrepresented in the global knowledge economy. The context of this study could bring about a unique lens through which the phenomenon of pedagogical choice may be studied and the focus on the subject of English literature provides insights into the internal-external forces impacting upon education policy and curriculum implementation. In its own small way, therefore, this study proposes to extend the theoretical conversation that has already started by considering the contribution of countries of the Global South.

Teacher decision making can be approached from a variety of approaches; when generating data on teachers' decisions, most of the studies consulted seem to address contexts that are very different from that of Mauritius. There was thus a possibility for this study to contribute salient data pertaining to pedagogical choice as well as data about the specific context of Mauritius, which could have impacted upon the development of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, from a methodological perspective, the study also seeks to familiarise stakeholders with the potential benefits of using narrative inquiry while researching the phenomenon of pedagogical choice with respect to participants such as teachers and within a context such as Mauritius. Although now increasingly being used in educational research, narrative inquiry is new to the participants involved, and the study presents an opportunity to implement and test research instruments pertaining to the narrative research paradigm and gauge its benefits with respect to the kind of research being carried out and the profile of participants involved.

To sum up, the main point of this section was to drive forth the idea that the research on pedagogical choice remains scant, despite considerable research in the field of decision making across a number of domains. The origins of choices, in many cases, seemed to be grounded in teacher knowledge and beliefs, and in some cases, researchers looked at heuristics

[20] The policy capturing technique is used to determine how individuals make judgements or take decisions (Brehmer & Brehmer, 1988; Karren & Barringer, 2002)

and other cognitive implications of making choices. Moreover, what was becoming increasingly apparent from the various studies or research consulted was that much attention was being paid on the decisions themselves and not necessarily on the decision-maker and the way they were engaging and making sense of their own choices, and whether they were satisfied with these choices and their outcomes. It was becoming increasingly clear to me that this study should not look at decisions as planning, or process, or outcome, as some studies have individually addressed, but rather explore how the educator consciously or unconsciously was interacting with the different influences impacting upon his or her choices. Garton and Graves (2014) as well as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010) suggest that variables should not be studied in isolation due to the interplay of many factors.

2.5.2 Temporary theoretical lens

Having considered the available literature and research on pedagogical choice, this section now proposes a tentative theoretical lens to understand the phenomenon of pedagogical choice at upper secondary level. In the light of the various elements raised in this chapter, Figure 2.12 provides an initial theoretical framework to better understand how and why teachers make the pedagogical choices they do.

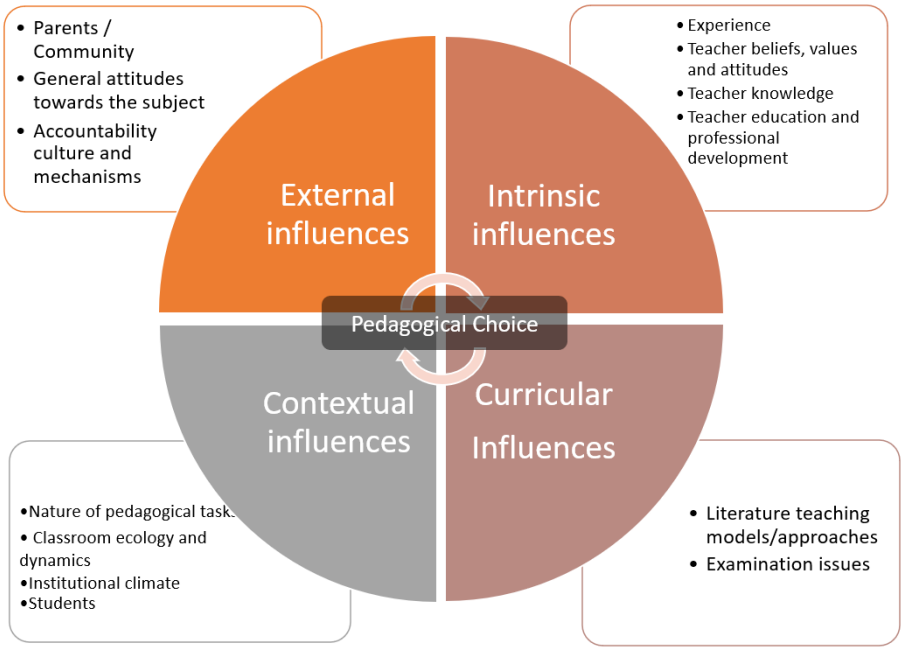


Figure 2.12 An emerging theoretical framework of influences upon pedagogical choices

This initial framework is derived from information gained in the process of writing this review of literature. The phenomenon under study is placed at the centre of the diagram to highlight its centrality within this study. The different elements in the different constructs of that matrix would help answer the critical questions set for this study.

The key constructs are as follows:

a) Intrinsic influences: These refer to the different elements centred around the individual teacher's personal handling of pedagogical choices and the various elements from the literature that seemingly impact decision-making such as teacher beliefs, values and attitudes, teacher knowledge, experience, teacher training and professional development.
b) Curricular influences: These refer to aspects pertaining to the teaching and learning of the subject, its inclusion and coverage in curriculum documents and assessment.
c) Contextual influences: These refer to aspects such as the classroom space, the school environment, the community and the dynamics in class, especially pertaining to the nature of the tasks set.
d) External influences: These refer to outside influences such as the influence of parents and community, which could impact upon teaching practice, as well as the accountability culture in place in the educational system.

From the onset, it can be seen that the different elements raised in this chapter hint at the centrality of the teacher as decision-maker. The literature also suggests that there is an interplay between rational thinking and irrational thinking, between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge and while the diagram initially presents a neat cross-section, further analysis should reveal, in later chapters, the fuzziness of those categories and the way these influences mix or interact with or react against one another in determining pedagogical choice. While decision-making is itself not visible as such, its results in the form of specific pedagogical choices in class would allow me to study the research phenomenon in more detail, which, in turn, implies that the research paradigm and methodology adopted would need to take that into consideration. Policy-capturing instruments in the form of interviews, conversations and observation would thus be set to explore and understand the invisible dimensions of teaching and teacher pedagogical choice. I was however mindful that existing literature was not the be-all and end-all of this research, and that evidence from the field would, when compared to the existing literature, allow me to approach the gaps in the literature and further the theoretical conversation already started in this chapter with respect to previous studies.

2.6 Synthesis

This chapter addressed relevant existing literature two important aspects of the research phenomenon, namely literature teaching and pedagogical choices. In this chapter, I outlined some of the conceptual connections and ramifications of English literature as a domain of study and outlined relevant literature pertaining to proposed approaches to teaching this subject. If there is now some literature on the teaching of English literature at secondary level, the approaches described do not always take into consideration the different influences that impact on pedagogical decision-making in the literature classroom, hence warranting a closer look, via this study, to address the theoretical gap around this phenomenon. The existence of different

approaches or models to literature teaching also requires an understanding of the ideological standpoints that underpin those approaches, the contexts that have allowed such models to be used, and a discussion about the relevance of such models in these contexts. In postcolonial or ex-colonial contexts, the continued presence of English literature in countries formerly governed by the British needs to be further investigated. In the case of Mauritius, the use of English has allowed the country to propel itself in the regional and international scenes following its independence, and an outward looking national curriculum that seeks to professionalise its population for the demands of globalisation provide new contextual insights into the diminishing roles of literature. What, then, is the pedagogical rationale for the inclusion of literature in the lower secondary NCF? If literature is important enough to warrant its status as a standalone subject, then, are the strategies proposed adequate and contextually responsive? The different approaches to literature study that have been described in the literature review suggest that there is no consensus on the way literature is addressed; hence the importance of a curriculum document (in some contexts) that sets the boundaries of what should or not be covered at a certain level, and the pertinence of particular approaches at these levels. This also suggests that teachers need to pay specific attention to what these approaches purport to achieve and the preparation and prior knowledge required to implement these approaches in a multilingual context such as Mauritius. If approaching English literature in countries where there are predominantly first language speakers is already challenging, there are additional challenges of running such a subject in a context where English is, at best, a second language for the majority of the population despite its formal presence in the schooling context. Research on the kind of pedagogical choices teachers make is therefore even more pertinent and required, especially in terms of the relatively limited research on the challenges in teaching literature in such contexts.

I also consulted existing literature to explore how the phenomenon of pedagogical choice was approached in order to derive a temporary theoretical lens that would assist in the research design and analysis of the findings of this study. An overview of the extant literature on pedagogical choices shows an amount of research and inquiry carried out over decades in a number of domains. Aspects pertaining to pedagogical choices have been discussed, especially in an attempt to determine a relationship between factors intrinsic and extrinsic to the teacher and the choices he or she makes. Some of the more prominent influences on pedagogical choice and decision-making are teacher knowledge and beliefs, learners, the classroom and school contexts, the texts, content and curriculum to be taught and assessed. That the study should eventually converge to the teacher once more is echoed in Verloop et al. (2001) who state that "in the mind of the teacher, components of knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, and intuitions are inextricably intertwined" (p. 446). This study too, while focusing on pedagogical choices, aims to open up the relatively unexplored domain of how English literature classes get taught, and how the teacher, eventually, makes his teaching choices out of the many options available to him or her.

The themes discussed in the previous sections of this chapter have provided me with initial codes that would be subsequently addressed in the analytical chapters in **Part Three** of

this thesis. It has also informed the way I have approached this study methodologically. The next chapter outlines the methodological innovation to the study through the research design, choice of methodology, an overview of the data production tools and the choice of analytical frame for the study findings.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology: Mapping out the journey

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the elements of the theoretical framework which stemmed from the different readings carried out on pedagogical choices and decision-making. In this chapter, I outline and justify my choice of research paradigm and methodology to obtain data for the research questions I outlined in **Chapter One**. This study not only seeks to explore English literature teachers' pedagogical choices, but also the factors impacting upon teacher decision-making. An interpretivist paradigm was deemed to be more suitable to explore the pedagogical thinking, judgement and choices of teachers, and to engage with the data, narrative inquiry was used to construct narratives of pedagogical choices in the English literature class in Mauritius.

3.1 Orientation to this chapter

This chapter consists of five sections that outline and justify the methodological procedure adopted in this study. The **first section** addresses the rationale behind the choice of research paradigm, and expands on the ontological, epistemological and methodological orientations to the study. **Section Two** describes the initial steps and ethical considerations as I prepared to enter fieldwork. **Section Three** outlines the data production plan and describes the instruments used for data production as well as concerns pertaining to the trustworthiness of the research process, tools and analysis. **Section Four** addresses the different levels of data analysis that were carried out in this study while **Section Five** dwells upon issues of positionality and reflexivity for the researcher and what these entail for the findings of this study.

3.2 Section One: Research design

This section addresses the research paradigm and design that were adopted for this study. Since I wanted to explore pedagogical choices in the English literature classroom, and understand why teachers taught the way they did, I also required, beyond knowing what was being taught, the reasoning behind these practices. I thus had to reflect upon the kind of data I required to answer my critical questions as well as the best way to generate that data.

3.2.1 Engaging with an interpretivist paradigm

As I engaged with the generation of knowledge, I had to acknowledge the paradigms by which I, as researcher, operated, which would consist of ontology, epistemology, and methodology, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

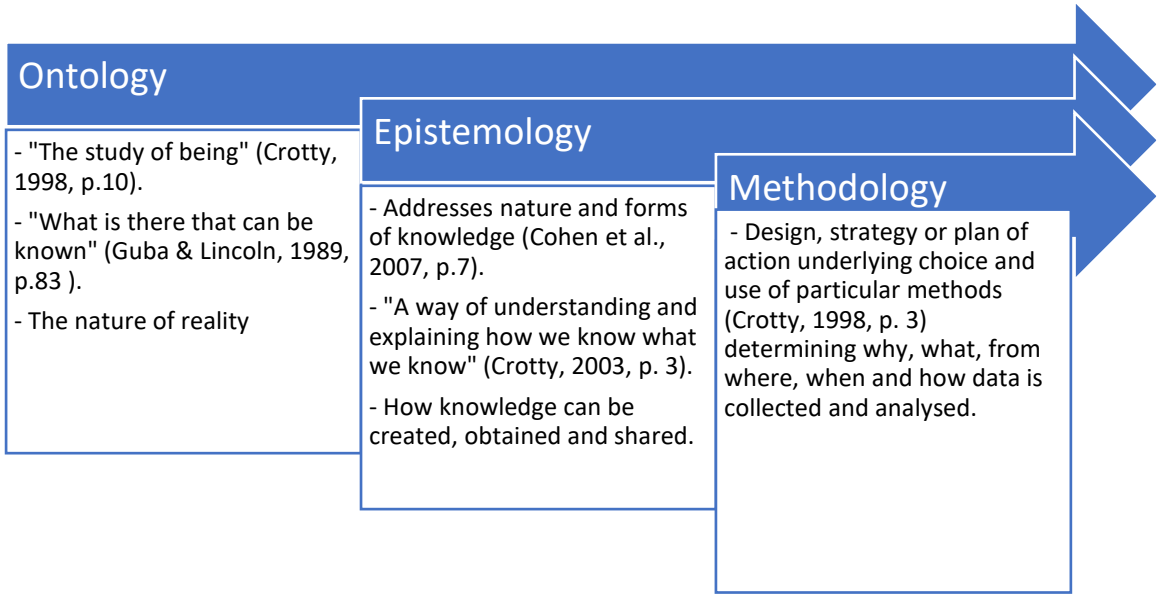


Figure 3.1: Foundational elements underlying a research paradigm

In this study, the ontological perspective adopted was that of a social world where human beings ascribe meanings and interpretations to their experiences. Following the interpretative paradigm, I thus put in place strategies to interpret the words, actions, gestures and silences that could suggest the motivations of the different participants as they made pedagogical choices in their teaching of English literature. A naturalistic approach seemed to be more appropriate in this case as it dealt with the experiences of teachers (mediated through language and writing) in their natural settings and social reality, which I, as researcher, would endeavour to understand, explain and interpret through the eyes of participants. (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

An interpretivist stance was chosen for this study, aligned with the view that knowledge and meaningful reality are "contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 2003, p. 42). Interpretivism also posits a more active and dynamic role of the participant in meaning-making, providing me with the opportunity to explore multiple perspectives and interpretations on events. I was thus able to study the

research phenomenon through the eyes of the participants rather than those of the researcher. This paradigm led me to explore and understand the subjective world of human experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) through participants' thoughts, viewpoints and experiences, as well as what meaning or interpretation they ascribed to their experiences. Interpretivism provided me with the lens I required to understand how English literature teachers taught their subject (that is, the pedagogical choices they made) as well as why they made such choices, providing insights into individuals as unique agents within their contexts.

The ontological position of relativism suggests that reality is subjective and varies from one person to another (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.110), as well as being located historically and culturally. Hoepfl (1997) suggests that the complex and dynamic quality of teaching and the behaviour of teachers as they take place in the contextual social world cannot be addressed entirely by a quantitative study. Since my study aimed to explore teachers' choice of pedagogy, and thus, aspects of their teaching, I adopted an approach that would allow me to engage with those often-intangible dimensions, encouraging teachers to share their values and beliefs pertaining to their pedagogical practices. Qualitative interpretivist methods hence not only addressed the what, but also the how and why from teachers' perspectives.

Crotty (1998) makes the link between consciousness and objects that are already endowed with meaning and suggests that reality is mediated through what we perceive. However, such a claim is problematised by the fact that reality is mediated semiotically and thus are also socially constructed. The limitations of language as a medium to communicate thoughts is a well-established debate in the literature and it is a recognised limitation that this study has chosen to use interview data as primary source. The interpretive epistemology thus construes reality/realities as being mediated through our knowledge (Grix, 2004, p. 83), and also being moulded by our participation in it (Heron & Reason, 1997). Knowledge is not only "out there" to be found but is subjectively, socially and culturally constructed. Thus, in order to access that private realm of thoughts, judgements, decisions and choices, and find out how my participants experience their realities, I felt that I needed to be invited into that realm to share those experiences. This led me to consider how I would be able to find the answers to my critical questions without being invasive or seen as a complete outsider. As an interpretive strategy, I opted to use narrative inquiry as a means of generating data around secondary school teachers' pedagogical choices. The different teachers thus represent different narrative cases, which provide singular examples of real people in real life contexts, and which would enable readers to understand the phenomenon more clearly than if it had been abstractly reported. I have chosen to frame instances of pedagogical choices within these cases, which Adelman et al. (1980) consider to be the exploration of "an instance in action".

Since meanings could be constructed differently (Crotty, 1998), co-constructors had to reach a consensus (Pring, 2000, p. 251). The researcher's situatedness and involvement in the data production could not be minimised, and the participants' viewpoints and interpretation were central to the entire process of data generation since the phenomenon could only be

apprehended from the point of view of the individuals participating in it (Cohen et al., 2007). Examples of such methodology, according to Creswell (2009), include case studies, phenomenology, hermeneutics and ethnography, with researchers relying as much as possible upon the participants. Rather than simplifying events, thick description would allow for new dimensions and layers to understand the phenomenon. Engaged in meaning-making and knowledge construction based on the experiences of the phenomenon in natural contexts (Punch, 2005), I was thus actively engaged in dialogue, questioning and interaction with participants at different stages in the research process. This led to me playing the role of participant observer and co-constructed meaning during data production sessions such as interviews, discussions and conversations.

Engaging with descriptions of experiences would either support or challenge the theoretical underpinnings of the study (Meyer, 2001). Readers could then make sense of the meaning that participants ascribe to their experiences and understand the nature and extent of the research problem through those descriptions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggest that the interaction between the researcher and his or her participants is inevitable and that context and contextual factors are essential for knowledge and knowing. Knowledge is also never entirely neutral, but shaped by values that need to be acknowledged. From past interactions with teachers, I already had some inkling that pedagogical choices were unique to the practitioner and his or her context. To understand why teachers made specific choices in their teaching of English literature, I could not simply opt to have a bird's eye view of the phenomenon but rather needed to seek individual's motivations and beliefs behind the way they taught literature.

Interpretive approaches usually generate theory from the data, even when the study's design and methodology are underpinned by theory. Since researchers cannot claim to engage in research that is completely free from their (or others') values, they acknowledge their own beliefs, values and biases in their selection of research topic, methodology, choice of analytical frame, and resulting interpretations. The choice of data production strategies under such an approach aims at gaining insights into participants' behaviour and actions and thus, these strategies do not marginalise nor dominate the respondents.

3.2.2 Narrative inquiry as methodology

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) posit that a method can be defined as "the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (p. 44)., qualitative research following an interpretivist paradigm was adopted. Certain key characteristics of the interpretive paradigm, namely, focusing on individuals rather than systems, small-scale research, subjectivity, personal involvement of the researcher, amongst others, were identified to answer the research questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Moreover, emphasis was placed upon interpreting the specific, and understanding actions and meanings rather than causes to

understand how teachers teach English literature and why they teach the way they do. The rationale behind the use of qualitative methods would be to further and deepen understanding of the phenomenon of teachers' pedagogical choice; the study therefore is not aiming to have statistical representativeness.

For the purposes of this study, I adopted an exploratory research design to generate new insights into how English literature teachers make decisions as to their choice of pedagogy, especially at upper secondary level. To contribute to a deeper understanding, I considered the case study approach to be more suitable for an exploration of a phenomenon within its context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The justification for a case study stemmed from the constructivist paradigm (Yin, 2003), which assumes that truth or reality is subjective, relative, and socially constructed (Searle, 1995). The case study provided the opportunity for the researcher and participants to collaborate on the production of data – in this case, the participants' stories, which would assist the researcher to explore the participants' actions (Lather, 1992). It would assist me in answer the "how" and "why" questions pertaining to the phenomenon (Yin, 2003), especially in this case where the pedagogical choices of teachers are also embedded within the specific contexts in which those teachers operate. Miles and Huberman (1994) define the "case", or the "unit of analysis" as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25). To ensure that the research remained manageable, it was essential to specify the boundaries of the case (Stake, 1995; Cresswell, 2003; Yin, 2003). In this instance, a single case study with embedded units (Yin, 2003) was used, where the case was teacher pedagogical choice, explored through different participants, that is, English literature teachers, and where the choice of subject area (here, English literature) and the level at which I wanted to explore the teaching of this subject (upper secondary) presented two of the boundaries (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The different participants represented the different "embedded" instances of the phenomenon under study, each bound within their contextual space. The selection of this kind of case study was motivated by the opportunities it offered to explore the phenomenon more deeply while looking within, between, and across the different "subunits" of the case, which would add to the credibility of the data.

While there might be concerns raised about using narrative cases as method of inquiry, especially since they generated considerable data from a number of diverse sources, such cases however presented interesting ways whereby the phenomenon could be studied, providing enough scope to understand its relationship with context and other factors. Data from those multiple sources were pieced together to deepen one's understanding of the whole phenomenon.

A curious phenomenon may be noted as more and more researchers try to explore the possibilities inherent in stories to give meaning to people's lives and thus start presenting data as stories, with participants and their own sense-making forming an integral part of those narratives (Riessman, 1993). The idea of narrative practices and structures being present implicitly or explicitly in our practices therefore can provide insight into the way we all see "stories" or facets of the world we live in and share. While data in narrative form tends to

follow a sequential structure, not all narratives do so (Riessman, 1993), and I decided that my narratives would also draw attention to the non-chronological, complex interaction between the individual and time. Beyond the "telling" of meaningful events, however, research narratives can provide links between different levels of context and can reveal its underlying ideologies, social structures and relations. If narratives are inspired by contexts and seek to represent them, they also serve to create new understandings of the world. In addition, narrative enquiry should not be construed as an essentialising medium that presents a very summarised point of view of the phenomenon. My take on this point is precisely to show the complexity of identity formation and the situatedness of social and professional identities through the narratives. I did not attempt to present stories with a "beginning, middles and end" precisely because I did not have access to the entire lives of my participants, and could not claim to know their entire life history; I was merely granted the opportunity to live a bit of that life alongside them and to understand what it meant to make pedagogical choices in their contexts. The "storied evidence" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.479) is not to determine the historical accuracy of the events being described but rather aim at showing "narrative truths" instead of "historical truths" (Spence, 1982)

In this context, multiple narrative units were chosen to understand the phenomenon from different perspectives and more importantly, from different contexts. Whyte (1984) compares the deep knowledge that may be gathered from one or a few cases and the broader, more general knowledge that may be derived from a larger number of cases. He suggests that qualitative analysis is not just description of what happens in a case, but venturing "from [and beyond] description to analysis to theory" (p. 229). I thus probed into teachers' experiences, views and choices in relation to the categories of teacher knowledge in the field of English literature as well as the external or contextual factors that influenced the teachers' choices. Within each case, the analytical focus was on the pattern of factors in relation to the phenomenon of pedagogic choice and comparisons made with the findings emerging from the other cases (cross-case analysis), so that similarities (or not) and patterns could be derived. The interpretivist paradigm led to close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their stories (Crabtree, Crabtree, & Miller, 1999). Moreover, as researcher, I was better able to understand the participants' decisions/actions through their anecdotes and responses. While pedagogical choice could have been studied in the light of strategies, lessons and resources deployed to teach English literature in a certain way, it was undeniable that the process whereby those strategies get 'chosen' was complex and often invisible, which necessitated teachers to articulate their views from a number of ways devised for this study, ranging from direct questioning to writing their thoughts to observation of their classes.

Given the co-constructed nature of the data being generated during the research, it can be challenging to consider how "Truth" (as metanarrative) might be "emerging" as something to be discovered from the field. This is even more apparent in narrative inquiry, where the underlying epistemology and methodology lead towards a relativistic notion of reality. Depending on the paradigm one has adopted, the looseness and flexibility of a narrative

methodology can be a strength or a weakness. After having used narrative methods to elicit responses, I, as a researcher, have become much more sensitive to the polysemic nature of language in describing experiences. At the very least, qualitative methods such as narrative inquiry take on board from the start this very uncertainty and the uniqueness of the views being shared to us; as long as the researcher can faithfully and authentically describe the processes by which he or she reached the findings, there may be "justifiability of interpretations" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p.78).

If these findings cannot be generalised or replicated, this becomes a cause for celebration of those individual voices and experiences that cannot be simply amalgamated into a homogenising whole. Teachers, as much as they might operate in similar situations, do live in micro-environments that are subject to their own distinct forces. In the narrative cases presented here, what can thus convey trustworthiness would be concepts such as believability (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), authorial honesty or authenticity (Sikes, 2012), fidelity (Blumfield-Jones, 1995) and the personal truth making, or "truth value" (Kathard, 2009) made by the participants. As an approach, narrative inquiry focuses on subjectivity and individual identity. Samuel (2009) suggests that "the life history researcher aims to develop an understanding or illumination of the specific realm under scrutiny in its complexity rather than in its reductionist abstraction" (p. 4). Far from seeking objectivity, narrative inquiry marks out the importance of meaning making as a dialogical process between the researcher and the participant in an attempt to be faithful to the interpretation and experience of the latter. Since trustworthiness is an essential aspect to the whole process of representation (and re-presentation) of the phenomenon via the people who live through it, member check and using multiple methods could assist in ensuring authenticity in the recording and reconstitution of events.

My ontological and epistemological inclinations, which stemmed from my own relationship with literature as a domain and as a subject, predisposed me to see narratives as an effective means of researching and recording the experiences of literature teachers. My experience as literature teacher had often shown me that while people might not always respond to arguments and logic, they often had emotive and empathic reactions to stories told to them. In my view, research into teacher decision-making could be carried out through other methods and choice of representations, but I felt that the narrative medium would also allow the voices of the participants to be heard, beyond the concerns of knowledge generation around the phenomenon itself. While narrative inquiry is becoming more and more popular as a mode of inquiry, for a long time, teachers have been approached to provide answers to specific questions about their practices and often reports have placed teachers in the background as their actions and behaviour were being discussed. Through this mode of inquiry, there is the possibility of understanding how "people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000, p. 488).

The choice of methodology therefore was also a means of paying due respect to the very human sources of the data, by foregrounding their stories in this work. As genre as well,

using narrative as a mode of representation was, arguably, a more empowering text than a simple report in which teachers and their decisions might be treated dispassionately. Storytelling was thus the medium via which researcher would be able to generate deeper insights into the complexity of pedagogical choices and build a sound basis for theoretical analysis. These narratives would thus not be mere accounts of lives but a "re-presentation" and interpretation of elements significant to the understanding of the phenomenon.

The narratives highlight the phenomenon as lived by the participants, thus bringing forth a sense of authenticity. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that we lead "storied lives" (p. 145) and argue that, if the world can be understood narratively, "then it makes sense to study the world narratively" (p.17). Narrative inquiry can highlight the dialectical relationship that individuals have with their contexts as well as the constructed nature of knowledge. Individuals' stories are thus an integral part of the research process and allow the researcher to establish the link between the small worlds of the individual to the larger social context.

However, despite our collective affinity with stories and storytelling, it is not always evident that a participant will share his or her personal account of making pedagogical choices. Narrative inquiry is also about deploying a set of strategies in order to engage participants in sharing narratively, so that, even if their contribution is not in the form of a story, they provide enough background material for the researcher to feel confident to write their narratives. Since knowledge production is very much embedded within its contexts, it becomes essential for researchers to foreground the different contexts in which the narratives are set.

Even if the means that I used, such as interviews, might have seemed conventional, they were, in this case, used to produce rich and thick descriptions as raw materials for the subsequent narratives. Narrative eliciting therefore entailed me hinting, inviting, requesting for narrative details such as how they felt when they faced a particular hurdle in their day-to-day teaching, or how they reacted when their students came to class unprepared. Such types of questions aimed at touching at intangible elements of the teachers' professional existence and how they interpreted this life. Some participants found themselves revealing things about themselves and the context in which they operated which they had not planned upon revealing in the first instance, and in one case, opened up personal recollections they would rather forget. By using a narrative methodology, I would be able to foreground the voice of teachers as decision-makers in their own worlds. The different narrative cases brought forth their individual characters, subjective motivations and voices. This was in agreement with Polkinghorne's (1995) assessment that "human actions are unique" (p.7).

3.2.3 Potential limitations of narrative inquiry as an approach

According to Cole and Gardner (1979) and Marchionini and Teague (1987), the researcher needs to convey to the reader the boundaries of the study. As I explored the possibility of carrying out an interpretive study, I was aware of some limitations inherent to this paradigm. While I addressed some of the broad limitations of the study in Chapter 1, I will

here discuss some of the limitations of my choice of research design and methodology and evaluate how these might impact upon the findings.

Findings are not easily transferable as they are usually grounded in particular contexts, are fragmented, and do not easily lend to generalisations. Attempting to apply the findings of one qualitative study to other situations and individuals, could potentially reduce the importance of the contextual elements that influence a specific case. Lincoln and Guba (1990) suggest, however, that the researcher should provide sufficient contextual information about the sites or cases where the phenomenon is being investigated to allow others to relate to them. It was thus important to convey how many organisations or individuals were involved in the study, the number and profile of respondents who contributed information, the instruments that were used during fieldwork, and the amount of time spent in the data generation phase(s). The specificities of the research contexts would thus inform the results of the study.

The interpretivist paradigm has sometimes been criticised for the difficulty in establishing the validity of its findings. The fact that it relies on diverse strategies to establish its 'trustworthiness' without reaching certainty or consensus can be challenging. Moreover, since engagement and interactions with participants tend to be more intimate and prolonged, there is an inherent risk to participants' privacy and autonomy. Howe and Moses (1999) argue that such contact can increase the discovery of secrets and oppressive relationships. In situations of abuse, for instance, the researcher might find himself in a moral bind and not know whether to directly intervene or reveal the identities of their participants. In addition, the more detail is provided by the researcher in terms of thick description, the greater the risk of participants' identity or context being revealed, especially when research is being carried out on very specific phenomena. In such cases, researchers would have to take the necessary steps in protecting their respondents' identities without compromising on the information necessary to the study.

Polkinghorne (2007) anticipates that most arguments that may be levelled against the “trustworthiness” of narrative inquiry will stem from those who want to know about the validity of this approach. He posits that “the language descriptions given by participants of their experienced meaning is not a mirrored reflection of this meaning” (p. 480). The limitations of language structures at conveying the depth and complexity of “felt” human meanings is one criticism levelled at the narrative genre. He then argues that, since felt meaning can be better expressed through metaphorical and analogical language, researchers could encourage participants to express the complexity of their experiences through figurative expressions (p. 481). Allusion is also made to Ricoeur (1984) who considered the narrative form to be itself a figurative, rather than literal, expression.

Since the participant can exert greater control over the nature and amount of qualitative information to reveal and remains the “gatekeeper” of his or her own interpretations, their narratives may leave out or deliberately obscure aspects of meaning-making of their experiences. I have mentioned elsewhere in this chapter of the need to trust the participants with their stories, that is to say, what they want to reveal and how much of it they want to

reveal. The fact that some participants might choose not to reveal as much as the researcher would like them to can be a source of concern. This point also raises questions about the "completeness" and authenticity of the narrated situation. Moreover, since interpretations can be subjective, it is not likely that research participants may come to the same interpretations as researchers (Rolfe, 2006). There is hence a risk in assuming that methods such as triangulation, corroboration or peer audit could lead to a shared understanding of the phenomenon. While participants play a significant part in the interpretation of the research phenomenon, they may also possess little control over researchers' interpretations. Even if participants are provided with an opportunity to express themselves, the direction and final interpretation of findings remains in the hands of the researcher. Finally, given their subjective experience of the phenomenon, participants might themselves not be aware of the forces and structures that impact upon them, and might thus provide an incomplete picture of things.

Another challenge to the use of narrative inquiry as noted by Polkinghorne (2007) relates to the readability and accessibility of the narratives. If the assembled stories cannot present a coherent picture of the participants' experience of the phenomenon, or cannot convince the reader of its authenticity and trustworthiness, then this might be a serious limitation to this approach. Since the narrative is but a simulation of the experienced meaning that has been co-created by the researcher and the participant, questions might be raised as to the degree of input of either party.

Another limitation lies in the purported objective of narrative research at describing and representing lived social experience. Polkinghorne (2007) argues that since experienced meaning "permeates through body and psyche of participants" (p. 481), participants can only articulate what they can manage to communicate via language. There is thus a greater part that remains hidden and often unexpressed. One way to address this would be for researchers to invite their participants to explore their experiences reflectively. Some of the interview questions as well as the post-observation conversations thus probed more deeply into teachers' understandings of their subject and the pedagogy they associated with it.

This resistance to expressing their self-explorations to a stranger might seem understandable but it also could be linked to a desire to project a positive image of themselves. However, depending on the relationship with the researcher, many participants are likely to be free with their views and meanings. Seidman (1991, 2006) suggests that one way to overcome this hesitancy is to carry out more than one interview to gain the trust of the participant. Certainly, I found that the very fact of having carried out the first interview opened the doors more easily for subsequent interviews or classroom observations. Some participants who had initially seemed reticent or reserved about the whole process would inquire enthusiastically about my next visit.

I thus had to be well-informed about the potential limitations and questionings which could arise out of such a methodological choice. Even if the qualitative researcher does not need to 'prove' the effectiveness of his or her instruments at generating data, and even if results

from narrative inquiry may not always be transferable nor generalizable, the stories being constructed can serve as an effective conduit for describing and analysing the phenomenon.

3.3 Section Two: Initiating the first steps into the study

3.3.1 Choosing research participants

Since this qualitative study aimed at exploring English literature teachers' pedagogical choices, the selection of participants was a crucial process. I approached a number of participants in order to engage with them deeply about their pedagogical practices. The time I was allowed for my field work, following ethical clearance as well as the limitations set by gatekeepers (for instance, the Ministry of Education, in the case of access to state secondary schools) meant that I could not approach a wide number of teachers for such type of in-depth interaction, nor could I resort to large-scale instruments such as questionnaires or surveys if I wanted to understand the phenomenon of pedagogical choice from the perspectives of teachers.

The sampling procedure was two-tiered. In the first instance, I resorted to a purposive identification of qualities that might yield sufficient variety in terms of participant profiles. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) suggest that such sampling "derives from the researchers targeting a particular group, in the full knowledge" of its non-representativeness (p. 102). The teachers concerned are selected purposefully since they "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched" (Kruger & Summers, 1988, p. 150). This is because I was interested in the pedagogical decisions of those already with a working experience and not those about to enter the field. This would ensure that, even if I could not reach out to every single profile of teacher in the country, I might still have access to participants from different contexts, with varying experiences and knowledge. This would also lead to the possibility to capture across the variations in profile, "the core experience and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon" (Patton, 2002, p. 34). It was very important that the participants be individuals directly connected with the phenomenon I was researching and who would be willing to share their knowledge (Bernard, 2017). I purposively sought out recommendations through snowball sampling based on some initial premises or boundaries to obtain a diverse set of participants. Snowballing also allowed me to expand the sample by asking a few of the participants to recommend others for interviewing (Crabtree, Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

Thus, recommendations were sought to identify potential candidates that would be ranged along the spectrum of:

a) being relatively new to teaching or having a long career in the teaching of literature;
b) being professionally trained or not;

c) teaching in the different school profiles in the country, namely state secondary schools, private-aided secondary schools, aided confessional/denominational secondary schools and private schools[21];
d) be representative of the different genders;
e) teaching in rural and urban areas.

No prior supposition was made as to the relevance of these differences as yet, except for the sake of providing a variety of teaching profiles and experiences.

The second stage in the process was to reach out to teachers I knew (current and past students who were already teaching at secondary level) to ask them if they would be willing to participate in my study, or suggest, via snowballing, recommendations as to suitable candidates for the categories created.In some cases, teachers I contacted and who could not join my study as participants were requested to recommend a colleague or someone they knew who was teaching English literature at upper secondary level. In the case of Ravin, we fortuitously met during an English language training workshop organised by the U.S. Embassy, and when I described the nature and aims of my study, and asked him if he knew of anyone who might be interested, he spontaneously proposed himself. I thus ended up with an initial list of potential candidates whom I had not known about previously and set out to make contact, explaining the thrust of my study and its implications to them. . By the time I had received ethical clearance to begin fieldwork, months after our first contact, some of them had begun to show signs of disinterest, in which case, I had to keep in touch to reassure them that the fieldwork would duly begin. Eventually, the list came down to ten participants, which I deemed to be adequate for the length of time available to me and the research design I had come up with.

The participants were chosen from those who taught English literature from Grade 10 onwards. Grade 10 to Grade 13 is a period spanning over 4 years. Most teachers of English teach language and literature throughout the whole secondary spectrum, so it would be interesting to see if they made a difference in terms of their instructional choices while teaching literature from lower Secondary to upper secondary. However, since the focus of the study was on the teaching of literature at upper secondary level, observations were carried out in classes as from Grade 10 within the chosen period. Moreover, while the three main literary genres, namely poetry, drama and prose were taught, it is often the case that teachers were allotted or themselves chose a particular genre to teach. While on the field, attempts were made to understand how teachers make pedagogical choices in relation to the genres that they taught but they were also solicited to reflect upon the texts or genres that they did not currently teach as well.

One of the ten eventually dropped out, by the time I started fieldwork, and I deemed that there was sufficient variety in terms of participant profiles, and therefore no need to replace that respondent. Even across the nine remaining participants, although all of them had different

[21] See **Appendix 7B** for a brief description of those different types of secondary schools in the Mauritian context.

careers and experiences, there was still some overlap in terms of school and experience profiles for some, and when I had completed fieldwork and started working on narrative representations, I eventually deemed that eight of the participants provided deeper insights into the phenomenon of pedagogical choice. One remaining participant had provided valuable insights but our interactions had not been so deep and information-rich. The data generated from this participant was not discarded, however, out of respect for the individual cases I had co-constructed, and they served to consolidate the findings from the different narrative cases as well as data analysis.

3.3.2 Initial procedures and gatekeeping protocol

Initial procedures before fieldwork entailed the elaboration of a suitable methodology as well as appropriate tools to generate answers to my critical questions. Letters to Ministry of Education and the Bureau D'Education Catholique (BEC)[22] were written to request for access to State secondary schools and Confessional schools respectively. In the case of parastatal schools, a letter was written to the Director of that institution to request for the same. For all the schools that were to be visited, permission was sought from heads of schools and departments about the study. Letters of gatekeeping were sent to the heads of schools to request entry in the schools and permission to carry out the study. Assurance was given to all parties concerned that the study would not impinge negatively upon the work in progress in those institutions. Visits (if/when granted permission) would be carried out depending on the availability of the teachers and if needs be, arrangements could be made to meet the teachers outside the workplace to ensure that the interviews were carried out without any stress or pressure. I also personally reached out to the potential respondents so that they would hear about the research from me rather than learn about it in a letter. While discussing with potential participants, I stressed that this research would not be a one-sided matter and that the findings from this study would eventually be communicated to them. The participants had the freedom to voice out if they did not agree with the proceedings. Moreover, I also undertook to reassure them that I would be at their disposal at a later stage should they require my services.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are essential to the research endeavour and process (Creswell, 2016). While research in educational contexts in Mauritius is not an entirely novel experience, they have not been that common either, and there were some potential school administrations and teachers who initially thought of my research project as a means to judge the work they were doing and report back to higher authorities. It was essential, by disclosing the purpose of my study and my positionality, that participants did not feel pressured or surveilled. Since I

[22] The *Bureau D'Education Catholique (BEC),* or Bureau for Catholic Education, is now known as the *Service Diocesain de L'Education Catholique (SEDEC)* – or the Diocesan Service for Catholic Education. The change in appellation occurred during this study and had no incidence upon gatekeeping procedures.

aimed to engage deeply and at length with the different participants about their pedagogical choices, I anticipated that sharing their experiences and explaining their beliefs and values could potentially place them in a vulnerable position. For the proper running of the research, I made sure that the rights, needs and desires of the participants were respected, as posited by Creswell (2016). As much as literature was a special domain to myself, I was mindful of Silverman's (2000, p. 201) note of caution that such research involved accessing the private spaces of my participants. Cultural sensitivity as well as tact would be ethically appropriate in those contexts which are often value-laden. Moreover, I had to ensure that my presence, unlike visits to classes by heads of departments, school administrators, or Quality Assurance officers, was not perceived as a means to evaluate and judge the teachers in question.

Inspired by the Belmont Report (1978), this study adhered to the three fundamental principles of *respect for persons*, *beneficence* and *justice* in the following ways:

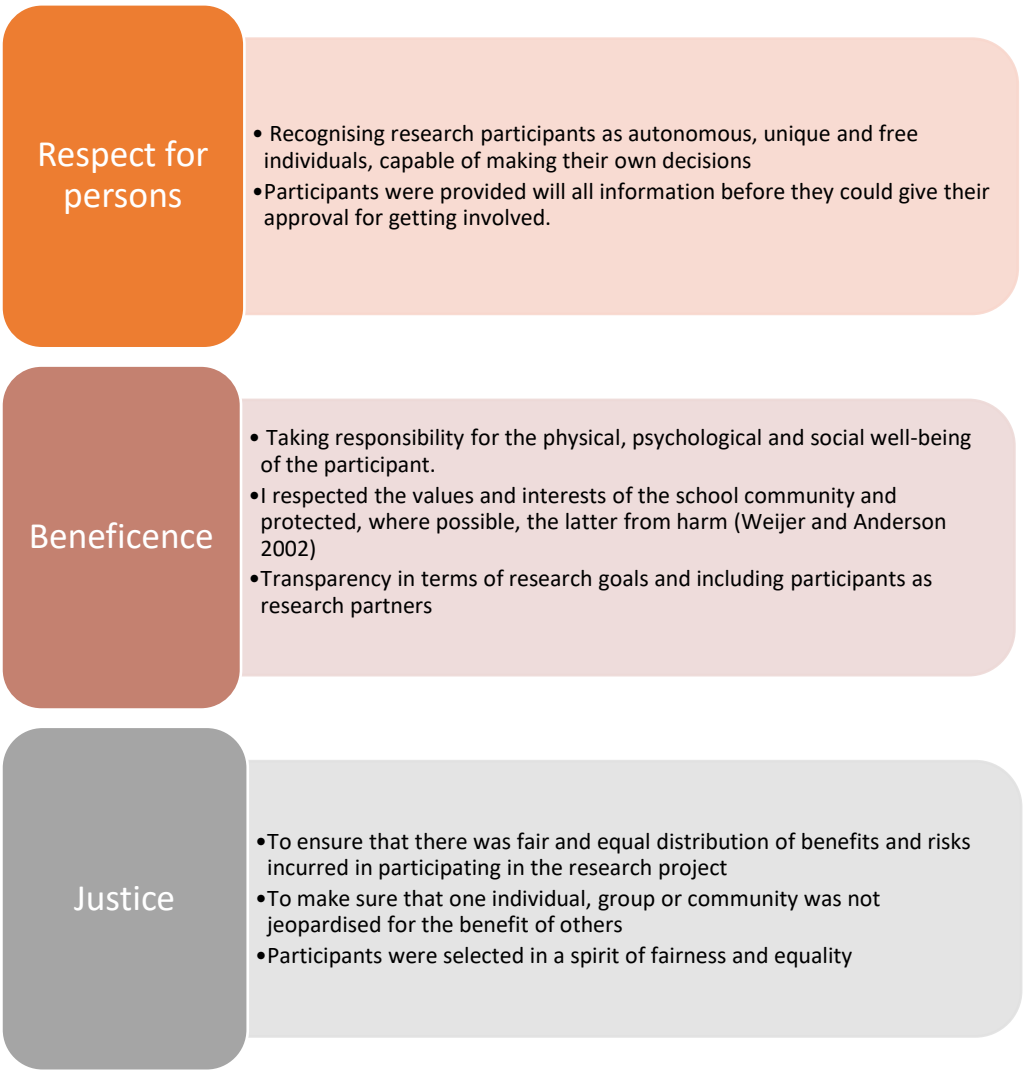


Figure 3.2: Belmont Study Principles

In line with these principles, I also considered the recommendations made by Miles and Huberman (1994) before, during and after the entire data production process:

a) Informed consent

Informed consent represents the bond of trust between the researcher and the participants since it reassures the participants that their well-being is central to the research process and that they have a voice (Mandel and Parija, 2014). Explanation letters as well as informed consent forms were prepared for participants, school managers, students and their parents (See **Appendices 1, 2 and 6**) and submitted to relevant gatekeepers to determine access to the different schools. The information letter and consent form provided the participants with relevant information, and they always had the option of asking for further clarifications, as a few participants did. I personally met potential participants to provide the information and brief them further before requesting them for their consent. As part of the protocol for informed consent, the potential negative effects of my presence in the classroom or while using other data collection methods was outlined to the participant as well as to students who would be in the classes.

b) Harm and Risk

As pointed out above, great care was taken to ensure that participants were not at risk as a result of participating in the research. For instance, one participant, Sam, felt that he would be more comfortable sharing his story and views from his home, while a few asked to use an empty classroom in their schools to discuss with me. Since I was exploring teachers' decision-making in the classroom, I tried to avoid being a potentially disrupting/intrusive presence in the classroom. I tried to be as unobtrusive as possible and discussed with the participant about how I was to be introduced in the class. Eventually, once the school authorities were satisfied that I would present neither threat nor hindrance to students and classes, I was assured that there was no need for a consent form for students, which I had prepared and submitted to the gatekeepers and participants (see **Appendix 6**). I was informed that given the focus of my study was on the teachers and their pedagogical practices and that as a researcher, I had no intention of contacting the students or interfering with their learning, I would be getting the green light to proceed with the study.

c) Honesty and trust

Inherent to the data production process was the need to show to participants that the means used to generate data and analyse it were trustworthy. I believe that trust is of utmost importance in such research, especially as one ventures in the field and relies upon others for information. To ensure that I was being faithful in recording the data, I sometimes would pause during an interview to clarify a point or a term used by the participant or elicited further explanations to avoid any doubt once I would start transcribing. I also ensured that participants could have access to the transcribed interactions. In one case, one participant retracted a statement, which was thus taken note of and deleted from that transcript. A critical peer assisted me in looking at the transcribed notes and interviews to make sure I was being 'faithful' and authentic to the recorded interviews. The critical peer was also involved in stimulus recall

conversations, where I would discuss issues encountered in the field, which would be further probed through questioning and cues from the peer. Finally, once the narratives were constructed, participants were called upon to corroborate the narratives' authenticity in depicting their experiences, and invited to add or modify the narratives. All these steps ensured that the participants knew who they were dealing with and had no qualms that their data was secure.

d) Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

I took great care in ensuring that my interviews and visits to the school were properly authorised and that I was not disrupting school or class routines with my visits. Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015) argue that it is difficult to maintain anonymity, especially when producing data in a small setting, or from a specific group of people. Participants were reassured that profiles and names would be kept anonymous and confidential and that there would not be information in the study that could lead anyone to identify them, their specific school or department. For the purposes of data analysis, data sets were coded alphanumerically (See **Appendix 12**) and in the narrative representations synthesising the data, pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of participants. Schools were defined by the characteristics (for instance, State, Parastatal, Confessional, or Private-aided school) which determined their purposive selection for this study but will not be called by name or identified by regional markers other than broad ones (i.e. rural or urban). They were also informed that the data being generated would be for the sole purpose of the academic study and that it would only be stored for a limited amount of time before being destroyed. All physical data was kept in a locked filing cabinet only accessible to me. Electronic versions of the thesis, transcripts and other raw data were password-protected. Documentation (including signed informed consent forms) pertaining to participants' identities were stored separately from the data. The researcher scheduled the destruction of the research data in three years' time after the completion of the thesis, with physical paper files to be shredded and electronic files to be permanently deleted, with no back-up.

e) Voluntary participation in the research

Participants were reassured that the research would benefit greatly from their voluntary input and that they were free to retract from the offer to participate in the research, or at any other subsequent moment in the process. It was not easy for a teacher to explain and justify his or her pedagogical choices. It is understood that there would be questions that might be left unanswered especially if the respondent felt one was investigating his or her professional life. Great care was taken not to establish a vertical hierarchy with the respondent having the impression that a lecturer in his or her own field was coming with a judgemental stance. As researcher, I therefore ensured, especially in informal talk and semi-structured interviews, not to pressurise the interviewee or not to ask too many questions, giving space to the respondent to think and reply. Interviewees were also given the chance to verify the statements at drafting stage (respondent validation and corroboration of narratives).

3.4 Section Three: Designing a data production plan

3.4.1 Unfolding the different phases of data production in the field

The qualitative processes I adopted in this study were interactive, overlapping and complementary, and sought to reach a state of data saturation. While there was a chronological plan of engagement with participants in the field, with a timeline, within each context, however, some leeway was allowed to adjust to the participants and the limitations imposed by the institutions and structures they worked in. It is also important to say that data analysis as a stage did not come at the end of the data production process but was, in fact, already taking place, with data production informing and being informed in return by analytical processes.

Table 3.1 describes the planned schedule of interactions within the field. The following phases can be noted:

Table 3.1: The different stages of fieldwork

Data Production Plan		
Phases		Sequence
Phase 1	• Scoping the Field • Identification of Participants	• Document search • Snowball sampling
Phase 2	• Piloting the data production tools • Application for Ethical Clearance • Gatekeeping and Contact with Participants	• Trialling all instruments • Making amendments to instruments where applicable • Participant Data Sheet and Securing Consent/Addressing Gatekeeping issues
Phase 3	• Entering the Field	<u>Stage 1:</u> • Semi-Structured Interview (audio-recorded) • Write-up 1 (or integrated within interview)

		Stage 2: • Observations of literature classes • Post-observation Stimulus Recall Interview with teacher (audio-recorded) • Classroom Artifacts (where available)
		Stage 3: • Video Vignette Stimulus Response and Conversation (audio-recorded) • Write-up 2 (or integrated within conversation)
Phase 4	• Disengaging with the Field	• Wrapping up data production • Checking data sets
Phase 5	• Analysing the data	• Transcribing interviews and observation notes • Writing of narratives • Return to field/participations for additional information/corroboration of transcripts/narratives • Data analysis

Phase One marked a series of strategies aiming at partly answering the first question, namely about current English literature teaching methodology, through a document search. This allowed me to scope for and identify relevant resources and tools that would be used to teach texts under study, and which would be available to the English literature teacher. Current literature teaching methodologies and practices at the core of the teacher training dispensed at the Mauritius Institute of Education were also considered by consulting module information sheets of literature and literature teaching modules. Guiding documents like the National Curriculum Framework (Secondary) as well as the UCLES syllabi for GCE O'Level and A'Level Literature in English were consulted.

Phase Two consisted of a *pilot case study* carried out with one participant. The aim was to use the pilot study to refine data collection plans concerning the nature and content of the data as well as the procedures that would be set. It was also used to anticipate certain reactions from future participants and help to work out the smooth running of data collection tools such as interviews, for instance, which needed to be carefully organised. Moreover, although findings from the successful completion of a pilot study did not necessarily mean that they would be replicated elsewhere, they shed light upon possible ways respondents could interpret and react to the questions and tasks set to them. Ethical problems or procedural difficulties were thus also anticipated during the pilot study and addressed upon later entry into the field.

Phase Three marked my entry into fieldwork following ethical clearance from UKZN (see Appendix 4) and authorisation from the Ministry of Education (see Appendix 5) to start data production and have access to selected schools. The following instruments were used, namely, semi-structured interviews, narrative conversations, classroom observation of English literature classes, the study of their lesson plans and learning materials, and participants' reflections, beliefs and reactions noted in participant write-ups (in response to film vignettes) and researcher observations. Data saturation was therefore ensured in the integration of data from various sources and methods, which reduced to some degree, the risk of bias or the limitations of one particular method.

Phases Four and **Five** marked a period of disengagement with the field as I started transcribing and transcoding the data. Many of my participants, who had grown familiar by then, thought it was the end of the adventure. I assured them that the fieldwork was but the tip of the metaphorical iceberg, and that they had not seen the last of me, as I would come back to corroborate the transcripts and narratives. The processes involved in those two phases are outlined in more detail in Section 3.5.

The different phases, rather than being chronologically sequenced after one another, in fact informed each other; in some cases, the next phase proceeded at a faster pace because the teacher wanted me to visit often and soon; in one particular case, the fact that one participant's class was taken up with school events delayed the process. Each case has its own flavour and characteristics, and I found myself already making mental comparisons in terms of my critical questions as I moved from one school to another.

3.4.2 Meeting the participants

As pointed out in the previous section, it was important for me to identify as wide a variety of teachers as possible, and I made use of both purposive categories and snowballing as methods of obtaining suggestions for potential participants for specific categories of teachers. Once we got into contact, and all gatekeeping processes had been covered, the participants were apprised about my study and invited to sign the informed consent form. I afterwards proceeded to gather relevant background information in a participant information sheet (see **Appendix 11a**) which might assist in answering my critical questions. For instance, would experience, professional training, student profile or even location make a difference in the types of pedagogical choices a teacher would make? This information about the different participants, the schools they worked in, as well as some biographical details are provided in the table below. Pseudonyms were proposed to replace the actual identities of the participants, but no names were deemed to be necessary for their respective schools, given that the narratives were mostly situated within classroom settings.

Table 3.2: Profile of participants

Pseudonym	Description of Participant	Description of School
Smita	Age: 29 Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MA English Linguistics, Educator's License Classes Taught: Grades 7-13 *Texts taught:* God of Small Things The Birthday Party	School: Private – Confessional Urban Girls-only
Ravin	Age: 56 Teaching Experience: 32 years Highest Qualification: B.Ed Classes Taught: Grades 10-13 *Texts taught:* Songs of Ourselves Wife of Bath As you Like It A Passage to India	School: Private Rural Co-educational
Kishan	Age: 28 Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MSC Educational Administration and Technology; PGCE Classes Taught: Grades 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 *Texts taught:* Songs of Ourselves Stories of Ourselves Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf A Midsummer Night's Dream All My Sons As You Like It An Ideal Husband God of Small Things	School: Private Rural Boys-only
Vimla	Age: 36 Teaching Experience: 13 years Highest Qualification: MA English Classes Taught: Grades 9-13 *Texts taught:* A Midsummer Night's Dream	School: Parastatal Urban Co-educational
Sam	Age: 60 Teaching Experience: 35 years	School: State Urban

	Highest Qualification: MA English Classes Taught: Grades 10-13 *Texts taught:* Nervous Conditions(F4/5) As You Like It (F6)	Girls-only
Vedika	Age: 30 Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MA English Cultural Studies Classes Taught: Grades 7-13 *Texts taught:* A Midsummer Night's Dream	School: Parastatal Rural Co-educational
Sharda	Age: Undisclosed Teaching Experience: 25 years Highest Qualification: BA, B.Ed Classes Taught: Grades 9, 11, 12 *Texts taught:* Songs of Ourselves – Paper 3	School: State Urban Girls-only
Rita	Age: 54 Teaching Experience: 23 years Highest Qualification: PGCE, PGDHR Classes Taught: Grades 7-13 *Texts taught:* King Richard III An Ideal Husband	School: State Urban Girls-only

3.4.3 Instruments for data production

The previous section outlined the reasons for establishing research on a qualitative paradigm that reflected my worldview and values as researcher. The interpretivist methodology I adopted in order to research the phenomenon of pedagogical choice was narrative inquiry. In order to co-construct a narrative data set, I chose methods which would allow me to dig deeper into teachers' decision-making experiences in their teaching of English literature and generate knowledge across different contexts.

Table 3.3: Identifying instruments for specific research questions

Research Questions	Source(s) of Information	Instruments	
How is English literature taught in upper secondary English literature classes?	Teachers Classroom Context NCF documents / UCLES syllabus documents	Semi-structured Interview	Appendix 11b
		Classroom Observation	Appendix 11c
		Vignette (Video clips) conversation	Appendix 11e
		Write up 1 and 2	Appendix 11f
		Documents (National Curriculum Framework, etc)	Appendices 8a, 8b, 8c
		Classroom artifacts	
What factors influence teachers' choice of pedagogy in upper secondary English literature classes?	Teachers Classroom context Documents (National Curriculum Framework /Lesson Plans/resources)	Semi-structured Interview	
		Documents (National Curriculum Framework, etc)	
		Classroom Observation	
		Post-observation Stimulus Recall Interview	Appendix 11d
		Classroom artifacts	
		Write-up 1	
		Vignette conversation (Video clips)	
Why do English literature teachers use their chosen strategies in their classroom the way they do?	Teachers	Semi-structured Interview	
		Post-observation Stimulus Recall Interview	
		Vignette conversation (Video clip)	

The following instruments (See all sub-appendices under **Appendix 11**) were trialled and then used at different stages in the fieldwork stage:

3.4.3.1 Interviews

The interviews with the teachers ranged from semi-structured interviews to informal conversations, depending on the context and point in time during the research project. They also took place in a variety of settings, depending on the comfort of the participant. The first interview was also the longest in most of the cases and aimed at obtaining as much information about the participant and his or her relationship with the phenomenon of pedagogical choice as possible. Since it was also one of the first contact moments with the participants, I found that having a number of questions at hand was very convenient for those who were not at ease with open-ended narrative probing questions or comments. That first set of interviews also served to break the ice with many of the participants, and I found that my subsequent interactions (other interviews, classroom observation, and stimulus-response vignette discussion) went much smoothly after the first encounter. Given that not all those encounters were taking place necessarily in the same week, I found myself returning to my initial questions and reworking them in the light of the responses received so that they were more effective at generating the kinds of responses required by the study.

In the semi-structured interviews, I wished to cover a number of themes, issues and questions. Since the procedure was less rigid than a structured interview, I could conduct the interview in the order that I wanted, rephrased some of the questions or even elicited more information from the respondent (Corbetta, 2003). This further probing added new dimensions to the data being covered, and enabled me to ask questions that had not been considered or planned (Gray, 2013). It also seemed more natural in the light of the evolving conversation between the participant and the researcher. Yin (1994) argues that interviews can be subject to poor recall and bias; indeed, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) suggest that bias within interviews can be due to "the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions" (p. 121). The researcher and participant co-created meaning in this dialogical exchange, and field notes prior to, and after the interview, helped to map out the thoughts and feelings of the researcher as this particular instrument was being implemented. These notes, accompanied by the transcripts of recorded interviews, would facilitate a deeper comprehension and clearer audit trail should the data or its source be questioned.

I also learnt in the interim between the first two to three interviews to really let the participant take over the conversation and let them really use the platform to provide me with the answers I was seeking. One participant, Sam, in fact, decided that he would go through some of the pointers I had earmarked to ask and choose which questions to answer. This initially surprised me, as most of my interviewees had required me leading them into the

interview. However, doing this meant that this participant wanted to assert control over the interview and wanted to participate in his own terms, which was very much what I was looking for in this exercise. This meant that I had to take great care not to direct participants towards expected answers through my questioning but to leave things open to note the participants' reactions. Each interview brought about opportunities to reflect upon my own methods and the data I was generating together with the participant. Thus, despite having more or less the same questions informing them, the way I carried them out, as well as the degree of confidence I had differed from the first to the last interaction with participants. The research interview provided a unique vista into the participant's mind, that is, the person's knowledge, values, beliefs and preferences, which were shed more light upon the phenomenon of pedagogical choice.

With the semi-structured questions, I asked some initial basic questions, after which I was able to expand on the meanings shared by the participant by probing further. Through such eliciting, participants were able to share their own stories through which they also addressed the issues I wanted them to talk about more. During the interviews, I paid attention to the direction and amount of detail of the sessions and closely monitored the duration of those sessions. In many cases, I could carry out the interviews in the slots that the participants could provide me, whether they were the 35-minute class period during which they were free to answer my questions, or the conversation we had as we moved from one building to another at the end of a classroom observation (in which case, the interview was carried out informally on the street, or the two participants who decided they felt more at ease meeting me in their own houses for the first interview.)

During the interviews, I was mindful of Hitchcock, Hitchcock, and Hughes' (1995) recommendation that rapport, empathy and understanding be established between the researcher and the participant. Moreover, I was also aware that the meaning making process was dynamic and would not be fixed in time and space (Mishler, 1986, p. 64). I realised that meanings would be very much grounded in the speakers' specific contexts and situation. Paterson (1997) argues that the outcome of the interview rests upon the interpersonal skills of the interviewer. He recommends that the skilled interviewer should display genuineness, respect, trust and empathy and warns against power conflicts in such rapports. At the same time, Mishler also warns the interviewer not to assume that both researcher and participant belong to the same 'community of meaning' (1986, p. 65), that is, that both understand the questions the same way, or that what they say mean the same thing to both parties. Interviewers must thus be sensitive to the discursive nature of the interview.

The participants were aware that I was involved in teacher training but since I was not engaged in any judgemental discussion of their practices and kept my tone curious and interested, I managed to avoid any overt power conflict. I would however be naïve if I expected that my presence did not, in some way or the other, impact upon the entire process. My very presence in the classroom, for instance, made the teachers self-conscious. I could not pretend to be some invisible 'fly on the wall'. Some of the participants may have expected, despite my assurances, that I might be commenting on their practices but they were subsequently pleasantly surprised that I was 'on their side' in trying to understanding their practices and

choices in teaching. The fact that these uncertainties were put to rest during the first interview itself set the tone for the remaining interactions with the participants. Most of the participants felt more at ease with me and looked forward to seeing me for the next phase of classroom observation.

The interviews lasted between twenty minutes to more than an hour, and were mostly in English, in spite of other options such as French and KM. I was mindful that the language we would use upon greeting each other might impact upon the way the rest of the interviews would go. In fact, I made it a point to open up the conversation by inviting them to use the language each participant felt most at ease in. In the face of my questions, however, most of the participants responded in English. As far as possible, I attempted to reduce my role as interviewer to allow my participants more freedom in responding in their own voice but paradoxically, my participants seemed more at ease the more I got involved into the conversation. These interviews were recorded on my phone or a digital recorder, with the permission of each participant. This was done principally to address issues of bias and poor recall, and was of great help when it came to transcribing the data, and when my critical peer wished to listen to extracts from those interviews. I had one incident when my phone stopped recording and I lost much from that interview, even if I had jotted down notes while listening to the participant. The participant kindly offered to redo the interview at some other stage, which we did, but this incident really brought forth the realisation that unplanned incidents could impact upon the process of data production. I therefore started carrying an additional recorder, just in case the same incident ever repeated itself. Fortunately, this did not occur again. Incidentally, this incident also gave me insights into the context, situation and moment that make an interview what is was. The next time we tried the interview again, some of the answers given were expressed differently. The interviews were all transcribed later on but notes were often kept during and soon after each interview to note down first impressions and reactions to the information generated.

In this situation, where narrative interviews were being carried out to generate rich data for eventual narrative experiences of teaching, it is important to pay attention to the way the interview itself was negotiated. Gatekeeping as well as icebreaking manoeuvres were made so as to approach the participants and secure their interest in collaborating with me. It was important for me to share my own interest and positionality with respect to the research phenomenon, and to assure the participants that I would be researching with, instead of on, them. This proved to be challenging structurally at first, since access to schools implied gatekeeping at different levels, even though I managed to meet with the teachers outside school. Even then, the teachers were aware that they were going to contribute to accounts of their professional practice that would be relevant to peers and other stakeholders, as I had discussed with them. There was possibly a tacit understanding that they were also operating, as Doecke (2004) puts it, “as a discourse community” where “they were operating within a set of protocols that produced a certain type of knowledge” (p. 296). Doecke (2004) suggests that being placed in such a situation entails some degree of reflexivity for teachers who may have to carefully weigh what they are saying with respect to their professional identities. The validity of claims

made under such conditions, especially with respect to the position that I hold as teacher educator, would thus be subject to scrutiny, but as pointed out before, the aim of the study was not necessarily to obtain a strict version of truth, but experiences that had 'truth value'. Doecke et al., (2007) argue that the dialogic co-construction of teachers' professional practice is the product of two perspectives, that is, what the teacher-researcher tells, and what the university-researcher notes down. They argue that "both are 'true', both are 'false', neither is complete, and both are partial." They suggest that these contradictory 'stories' might never merge but rather come into dialogue with one another. Thus, it was quite possible that interactions with teachers would be, at least to some extent, be performative, despite all our best intentions, on both sides, as we negotiated with a new mode of operating with one another.

This raises questions as to the actual nature of the co-construction of meaning that I was involved in, and requires me to step back to assess the weight of my positionality as I engage with teachers. Was I the right person to be carrying out interviews with teachers, and what kind of answers would I be generating by being who I was in that interview context? Would there have been different responses had I used a different instrument or been someone else? I was thus aware that some (if not all) my participants were not only responding to me as a person, but also as a lecturer in English, and as a teacher educator. This could perhaps explain the relative silence of the participants regarding the impact of teacher training, which I note in subsequent chapters, for instance, and meant that I had to check, later on, if my participants had had teacher training or not. Had I been responsible for this silence, or was I unable to decode the silence which our interaction on the matter of teacher training brought about? I admit that these were questionings that did not come to me as I began my initial interviews, but this awareness slowly settled in the more I interacted with the eight participants, leading me to bring in more of myself into the discussions, and opening myself more, thus dropping the teacher trainer hat I may unconsciously have been wearing, or been perceived as wearing by the participants.

3.4.3.2 Classroom observations

Following the interviews, I corroborated the data from each participant with non-participant observations in the classroom. Classroom observations were one important way of seeing pedagogical decision making in practice in the form of a lesson carried out and the discourse surrounding the teaching of a prescribed textbook. Observation, according to Blommaert and Jie (2010) could refer to anything that is registered by the researcher, and it was felt that these contextually relevant observations would enable the researcher to understand the pedagogical choices of teachers, namely in the steps taken by the teacher to achieve his or her overall lesson aim. Observation data can range from quantitative to qualitative information and there are a number of ways to record data. However, here more than the frequency of certain teacher instructional strategies (amongst other observable factors), it was the very choices made within the class and how meaningful they were in terms of the overall aim of the lessons that would be taken into consideration. Observations were recorded against a checklist

of pedagogical behaviours and actions within the classroom and personal impressions of the lesson from the observer will also be recorded. For this purpose, an observation schedule was devised, which Croll (2004) describes as predefined systems for categorising and recording behaviour and interactions as they happen, along with the criteria for carrying out the observation and classifying events in categories.

I made use of the TDOP, the Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol (see **Appendix 11c**), devised by Hora and Ferrare (2010) (and its revised version, the RTOP) to help me take down notes while observing. I had realised, from the way the TDOP was structured, that it could be quite effective for a quantitative record of teacher behaviours. However, in my case, it was not necessarily the number of times a question was asked which was of prime interest, for instance, but rather how the teacher addressed the question and turned it into a teaching and learning moment. I also realised that while looking for the right symbol in the complex teaching dimensions key sheet and then circling the right symbol on the record sheet, I could actually be missing important moments of observational data. I therefore resorted to noting down descriptions of the events, especially the 'teaching moments' and the 'pedagogical moves' in the lesson, using the TDOP observational code bank only as reference. While observing I also kept in mind Shavelson's (1976) notions of the teacher as *planner*, as *technician* and as *evaluator* as well as Shulman's (1986) description of pedagogical content knowledge. From the collected data, correlations were later on made with the existing models of teacher knowledge and teacher choices. As an 'outsider' to the classroom, I was aware that there would be a network of forces and influences at work and that I might not be able to discern the specificities of that classroom ecology. All the classroom observations were immediately followed by either semi-structured interviews (see **Appendix 11d**) or informal conversations, using stimulus-recall elicitation to obtain some information about the lesson just observed. Having that conversation after the session rather than before placed the participant in a more receptive and less stressful mood, and the fact that teachers are not always free after a working period meant that sometimes I had to secure some minutes as the teacher would walk from one class to another, or even from one building block to another, and catch some impressions of the class just observed.

3.4.3.3 Video vignette conversations

One of the instruments used in the data production phase was the use of video vignettes (see **Appendix 11e**). Besides the semi-structured interviews and the unstructured conversations I had with the participants, which already provided rich information when teachers were probed for narrative information, I wanted to get the participants' opinions on specific aspects that were related to their teaching context, but without necessarily having to question them directly. While still devising my instruments, I had attended a workshop by Srilata Ravi, where the film vignette was used to elicit responses from us about Mauritian culture and inter/transculturalism. I felt that it was an interesting coincidence that someone else was also using this tool to obtain rich information from individuals. Subsequently, I read Reginald Dudley Forde's (2010) thesis, where he describes his use of the film vignette as well. However, he tried it with different focus

groups whereas I had planned to obtain individual responses from teachers. Moreover, the fact that there would be only one individual at a time made it clear that I could not overstretch this exercise – so three short movie clips were chosen to represent teachers of English literature in specific situations in order to elicit personal, empathic responses. Stimulus through the use of vignettes enabled me to elicit teachers' responses to specific fictional teaching situations presented in chosen film clips representing English teachers. Vignettes were simulations or fictional representations of real events which enabled me to elicit subject's knowledge, attitudes or opinions according to how they claimed they would behave in the hypothetical situation presented to them.

Vignettes can help to build rapport with participants, encourage them to share their thoughts and beliefs and assist in the investigation of potentially sensitive topics (Barter & Renold, 1999). The following considerations (Barter & Renold, 1999; Seguin & Ambrosio, 2002, Wason, Polonsky, & Hyman, 2002) inspired the creation and use of the vignettes:

- They must appear realistic to the participant.
- They should reflect issues that occur with some frequency in the participants' lives.
- They should be easily understood by participants, with an easily distinguishable plot.
- They should provide sufficient contextual information for the participants to understand the situation but also allow for discussion.
- They should contain unresolved issues or present a conflict that might elicit a reaction from the participants, but worded or presented in such a way as not to influence the participants' answers.
- They should contain some or all the different aspects or variables being explored in the study.
- They should be presented in an appropriate format (Wason, Polonsky, & Hyman, 2002) and should be accessible to the target audience (especially if they are children)

Krosnick (1991) identified a common response among participants which he named "satisficing", which is reminiscent of the similar term encountered when discussing models of decision making (Simon, 1956). He suggested that when participants respond to vignettes, they must interpret the meaning of the story, refer to their prior knowledge for relevant information, integrate that information into their own assessment of that story and communicate their opinion so that their meaning is clear and precise (Krosnick, 1991). When the participant has correctly gone through that process, Krosnick refers to this as "optimisation". On the other hand, if the process did not go as planned, then satisficing has happened. Krosnick (1991) identifies the following as possible responses when the participant is not motivated or responsive: selecting the first acceptable or logical answer, saying that they do not know what to say, or "mental coin-flipping." To minimise the risk of such kinds of responses, I followed Stolte's (1994) advice about setting up vignette reactions in quiet settings that were free from distracting elements, and after having duly explained the requirements of the activity and provided encouragement for the effort they would make.

Therefore, I selected a few films which, in my view, represented English literature teachers in different contexts. While I was aware that these films might be culturally and

contextually very different from their experiences, I hoped to be able to elicit some reactions to the clips I would show. I finally settled onto four small clips from four different films, as shown below:

Table 3.4: Selection of film clips for vignette conversation

No.	Title	Year	Director
1	Up the Down Staircase	1967	Robert Mulligan
2	Dead Poets Society	1989	Peter Weir
3	Dangerous Minds	1995	John N. Smith
4	Freedom Writers	2007	Richard LaGraveness

I opted to play any two to three clips with the participants, depending on their level of comfort and the time at their disposal. These clips lasted between five to ten minutes each. After having briefed the participant that we would be watching some clips together and that we would talk afterwards, we sat down to watch the clips. In between those clips, we stopped to discuss the teachers' reactions to the clips and how they related to what they were seeing.

Such use of vignettes allowed me a relatively 'safer' entry into the subject being investigated, since the respondent would relate to the audiovisual material presented and not necessarily make correlations to himself or herself as being directly under scrutiny. It also allowed the focus to be broadened from the personal experiences of the teachers to more abstract concepts (Smart, Neale & Wade, 2000). The teachers were thus invited to share their views on those clips and state what they would do in the same situation. These vignettes enabled me to tap into teachers' attitudes and beliefs concerning the teaching of English literature and allowed me to see how the different profiles of the respondents impacted upon their interpretation of those scenes. Carroll (1999) suggests that this method elicits a stronger emotive rather than intellectual, response to the content being presented, with the respondents identifying with the situations being presented. This method also had its challenges, however, as it could be difficult to make the correlation between the responses and actual practice. Care needed to be taken to ensure that the respondent did not feel a need to provide socially-acceptable responses. Overall, however, I felt that teachers were very responsive to the clips and were able to make connections or contrasts with their own situations as literature teachers in Mauritius.

3.4.3.4 Researcher diary

I also kept research notes in a reflective diary (see extract in **Appendix 15**), raising issues which cropped up as I interviewed each participant, and also reflected upon the ways the tools were administered. Even though I was not aiming for reliability in its strictest sense, using the researcher diary was a means for me to ensure "disciplined subjectivity" (MacMillan & Schumacher, 1997), that is, rigorous self-monitoring, continuous self-questioning and

revisiting and re-evaluating each step of the research process. The diary would not only be a log of dates, times, places, persons and events pertaining to the research phenomenon, but would also note the decisions, judgements and ethical dilemmas addressed by the researcher at different moments within the research process. Cassel and Nadin (2006) make a case for the use of the reflective diary in research, arguing that reflexivity not only allows the researcher to take stock of the research process but can also have an impact upon methodological and analytical decisions that he might take. Such records could later on serve as an audit trail for other researchers. They posit therefore, that the researcher needs to reflect upon the range of factors that impact upon interpretations that are gathered, such as one's epistemological standpoint, one's thoughts and feelings about the progress of the research, the encounter with participants and contexts amongst others. Keeping such a diary enabled me to explore, and possibly question, my own beliefs about the nature of research.

3.4.3.5 The Write-ups

After the piloting of instruments, I had initially felt that there was one dimension missing, namely teachers' conceptions and beliefs about English literature, which my interview or conversation questions could not entirely capture. I therefore introduced a small reflective piece (see **Appendix 11f**) which was in two parts and which invited participants to write at their leisure: In the first instance, they would be free to write down whatever they wanted about their definition of English literature, what they understood about its teaching and what it meant to them. In the second instance, I provided a hypothetical situation, using a well-established strategy in literature teaching, an empathic task, where they had to think of sharing some advice to a new teacher of literature entering the field. The participants would thus have to tell them something that they now knew about teaching English literature and which they did not know when they started off. Since these write-ups were conceptually extensions of the first interview, I thought of inviting participants to send me their reflective write-ups. However, after some trialling and with some feedback from actual participants, I understood that most of the participants would gladly answer questions orally but found it a hassle to sit down and write their thoughts down. Out of respect for their time and the opportunity they were providing me to interview them, I incorporated those two questions within the semi-structured interview, where possible. As an instrument, however, it went through a number of changes, highlighting the dynamic and dialogical nature of the data production process. My participants felt free to voice out when they felt I was asking too much of them and were very happy in providing me the same answers in a format that they deemed satisfactory.

3.4.3.6 Class artefacts and documents

In the course of the research process, a number of artefacts were consulted. These refer to printed documents that can provide more information on the participants and their pedagogical practices. In the case of this study, documents such as the NCF and syllabus documents from UCLES pertaining to the literature examinations at O'level and A'level were

consulted. As a matter of interest, there were few local documents that could assist teachers in making their pedagogical choices at upper secondary level. Given the orientation towards literature and literature teaching at lower secondary tends to be still largely centred around text knowledge, there is a noticeable gap between the NCF document and the UCLES curriculum documents. Other artefacts pertained to the participants' own practices in class and included notes, lesson plans, and any other resource which the teachers deployed in their day-to-day teaching of literature. It was noted that in many situations, the teachers did not necessarily have a lesson plan at hand, since they had already worked out how to approach their classes on a specific day. Ravin, on the other hand, did not hesitate to show me his lesson plans which he had noted down in a special diary issued by his own school to staff. Therefore, while I could consult the lesson plan, it still remained a school document that I could not photocopy at the time or photograph. Other artefacts consisted of handouts, or even book covers, which some teachers used to elicit responses to literature.

3.4.4 The pilot study

A pilot study was carried out with a teacher whom I had met and who had been interested in helping me try out the instruments I planned to use during fieldwork. Given that ethical clearance for my study had not been granted at that stage, I took matters up with my superiors in my workplace as well as the school administration to explain the purpose and relevance of the activity. While there had been no real need to 'test' the different instruments, given that I would expect to adapt those instruments to the various contexts, I still felt that I needed to try those instruments, especially at a time when most of my colleagues engaged in quantitative, large-scale surveys instead of qualitative one-on-on data production techniques.

The pilot study lasted over 3-4 months since my pilot participant was not always free to receive me. However, I feel that trialling out the instruments at least once before actual fieldwork was a useful exercise for me, and I eventually modified these instruments with additional insights gained from real-life engagement with a pilot participant. These insights range from the content of the questions I was asking, to the duration of the exercise as well as ways of interacting with participants. A longer report, written soon after the pilot study was completed, is presented in Appendix 10 and addresses some of the changes that were effected to finetune the research instruments.

3.4.5 Validity issues: Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

A narrative researcher is often questioned about the validity of the narrative approach and the ensuing data analysis (Loh, 2013). The reliability of methods used to collect stories, the use of stories as data, and even the truthfulness of participants are sometimes questioned. In this section, I will address ways by which I acknowledged my own subjective input and how

I ensured that the instruments, data generated and ensuing analysis could be deemed credible and trustworthy. Even if a temporary theoretical lens had been generated from a close review of the literature and existing theories, it was very important that I do not pre-empt the findings of my study, especially since I was expecting meanings to emerge from the process.

3.4.5.1 Establishing the trustworthiness of the study: some core concepts

Evaluation criteria such as reliability, validity and objectivity, which are often used in positivist, quantitative, or scientific studies, do not easily fit with the qualitative paradigm (Merriam, 1998, p.199), where the researcher is engaged in interpreting the research phenomenon and the meaning participants ascribe to it. Guba and Lincoln (1981) and Cresswell (1998) propose four strategies to establish trustworthiness as measure used to evaluate the quality of the research so that the data and its analysis are believable and authentic in qualitative research, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These are proposed in lieu of internal validity, external validity or generalisability, reliability and objectivity.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent the data and data analysis are trustworthy and believable. Since qualitative research entails subjectivity and the possibility of multiple realities or interpretations of meanings, what is valid for the researcher may not be so for others, since the latter may have their own personal constructions of reality (Smith and Ragan, 2005). The results of a qualitative study, therefore, might not be easily compared to a standard of objective truth. Credibility can be ensured through the adoption of methods and measures that are well established in qualitative research, by displaying familiarity with the culture and values of participating organisations prior to data generation, and by what Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider as "prolonged engagement" between the researcher and the participants so that greater understanding of the context happens as well as the establishment of trust between the two parties. They however also warn of the risk for the researcher to be so immersed within the context and culture being studied that their professional judgements are compromised. Moreover, they recommend random sampling of participants, which could defuse any potential charge of researcher bias in such a selection. In certain cases, therefore, it might be advisable to have a heterogeneous sample that would show signs of similarity, dissimilarity, redundancy and variety, especially when a larger group is concerned. This would ensure that the sample would be a representative sample of a larger population (Bouma et al, 1995). However, such a selection would also mean that the researcher would have no say or control over the choice of respondents and could incur the risk of non-responsive participants. Lincoln and Guba also consider that member checking or inviting feedback and interpretations from participants on the data could lead to greater credibility.

Transferability

Transferability, which is similar to generalisability, refers to the way research findings may be transferred to new individuals, situations or contexts beyond the one actually under study. One way to address this is by describing in detail the research context, assumptions and methods in this study. Providing in-depth descriptions of the various sites of the phenomenon would thus assist the reader in applying the findings to contexts with which they are familiar. In addition, providing thick descriptions and appropriate justification on the choice of methodology and research instruments as well as the various processes integral to the generation and analysis of data can assist the reader in connecting with the meanings that have been created in the course of the study. Even when accounting for multiple interpretations, I ensured that the rich descriptions of the situations under study were presented in the study. For instance, in Chapter 1, I provided information about the Mauritian Education context, the different kinds of secondary schools in place as well as the profiles of the participants.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998, p. 205) with similar subjects in a similar context. The researcher has to describe the varying circumstances that can impact upon the research outcome, even though such descriptions are often affected by unpredictable human behaviour and the highly subjective nature of interpretation. Thus, one is not necessarily guaranteed the same interpretation of events, should the same study be carried out in a different context or by a different researcher with different participants. Qualitative data is therefore strongly influenced by the subjective interpretations and experience of the researcher. Merriam (1998) thus proposes that, to ensure reliability in qualitative research, results should be consistent with the data produced. To ensure this consistency, the assumptions and theory underpinning the study should be made explicit and multiple, overlapping methods of data production and analysis could be used. Seale (1999) posits that an audit trail to explain how data was produced should be maintained, which would entail the researcher keeping careful and detailed records of information, decisions and methods implemented during the research as well as the analytical steps that led to the findings.

Confirmability of the findings

Confirmability is the extent to which the research findings can be corroborated by others. Seale (1999)'s proposal of an audit trail could assist in establishing confirmability and that data could be archived in a way that is easily retrieved should findings be questioned or challenged by other researchers. Table 3.5 below illustrates how I attempted to establish confirmability of findings.

Triangulation

Despite considerable scepticism at the use of the term 'triangulation' within qualitative research, and great debate as to whether qualitative researchers are satisfied with this method, it is understood that it involves the deployment of various methods and measures in order to address issues pertaining to bias and validity (Blaikie, 2000; Cresswell, 2003). Yin (2003) argues that using multiple sources of data could assist in confirming the validity of the processes as well as the findings. Multiple sources, participants, theoretical perspectives and methods could help garner diverse perspectives on the phenomenon under study and validate the findings. Triangulation is also a means of addressing potential weaknesses of certain methods through the support of other methods, provided the latter do not contain systematic error themselves. However, Richie and Lewis (2003) argue that triangulation generates a sense of security by providing a fuller picture of the research phenomena, while not necessarily achieving greater certainty.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) equate triangulation to a form of *crystallisation*. In this process, the same story is told through data generated from different sources, or different aspects of the study are highlighted. Borkan (1999) suggests an extended version of this process, called 'immersion/crystalisation', where the researcher immerses himself deeply into the details of the data, and crystallisation, where the researcher temporarily suspends the active analysis to 'notice' patterns or themes coming out from the first process. The various instruments deployed at different stages of the research process aimed at creating saturation in terms of information received from participants, who were the different subunits in this narrative case study. The interviews were followed by observation of classes, which in turn, were followed by post-observation conversations, where participants were invited to talk about their pedagogical choices. Great care was taken not to ask the same questions but to address the phenomenon of pedagogical choice from a variety of angles. For instance, talking about students often brought teachers to comment about parental involvement and I then required minimal probing to invite participants to expand on this subject, which might have required additional questions in other circumstances. In my view, the overlap of these various instruments and the raw data resulting from these provided a state of saturation, suggesting that information was being confirmed from more than one quarter.

Positionality was also an issue as there is always the risk of bias, due to my own assumptions and standpoint regarding the teaching of English literature. It was evident that, given my background as teacher educator within the field of English language and literature, I would not be dispassionate about the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that bias is inherent to research and that it needs to be acknowledged and addressed. They posit two forms of bias, namely the effects of the researcher on the study participants, and the effects of the study participants on the researcher, which leads Onwuegbuzie et al. (2010) to articulate the need to 'debrief' the researcher. This led me to think of recording the interviews (with permission from participants) as well to be able to analyse them at a later stage. Care was taken to ensure that observations were as unobtrusive as possible. Prior authorisations from heads of schools and participants were requested before visits and interviews were, as far as possible,

carried out in a place that was neutral and not threatening.

The critical peer

'Debriefing' took place through the assistance of a 'critical peer' who was cognisant with the aims and questions of the study but not directly involved with it. The critical peer, who was also a colleague, was confidentially briefed about the objectives and critical questions of my study, invited to audit the different instruments I had designed for data generation in the field, and subsequently granted access to recordings of interviews and transcripts to ascertain if the process of transcription had been accurate. The critical peer was thus enlisted to debrief me with regards to impressions, meanings and potential biases that I may have in the process of generating data and was later on invited to read through the narratives generated in the first level of analysis to determine their trustworthiness.

Participants' personal data was not divulged to the critical peer. Given that I also had personal logs and notes pertaining to specific meetings with participants, where details about the participants' behaviour as they answered specific questions were noted, the debrief also involved deeper discussions about my interpretation of those dialogic moments with participants. The aim of such discussions was to ensure that I could mediate those interpretations with an outsider perspective from someone disconnected from the process of generating data, especially when participants' responses also included prosodic features such as pauses and changes in pitch or volume, or paralinguistic features such as their use of body language during the course of interactions, and even the use of humour, which might change the meanings to specific statements made to me.

3.4.5.2 Actions taken to ensure trustworthiness of the study

Having outlined those core elements, this section presents the different steps that a researcher could take to ensure trustworthiness in research. Table 3.5, adapted from Merriam (1998) and Shenton (2004), outlines the measures I took during my study.

Table 3.5: Measures taken by researcher to ensure trustworthiness (adapted from Shenton, 2004)

Quality criterion	**Possible provision made by researcher (proposed)**	**Measures taken by researcher**
Credibility	Adoption of appropriate, well recognised research methods	Use of narrative inquiry and known methods (interviews, observations, conversations, artifact and document study, stimulus recall…)
	Development of early familiarity with culture of participating organisations	Schools and teachers were contacted prior to fieldwork so that I could find out relevant information about the school culture.

	Random sampling of individuals serving as informants	Categories were purposively chosen; snowballing brought in the element of randomness with others recommending people that they felt "fit" the categories.
	Triangulation via use of different methods, different types of informants and different sites	Saturation on the phenomenon was achieved across the subunits (different participants in different schools) and within each subunit through the use of multiple instruments (interview, observation, stimulus recall, vignette…)
	Tactics to help ensure honesty in informants	Informants were briefed about nature and purpose of study so that potential benefits and challenges stood out. Participants were given the opportunity to voluntarily be part of the study or to refuse, so that only those who were genuinely interested should take part and be ready to share information willingly. Even after accepting to be part of the study, they were also informed that they could withdraw completely at any point in time. While one or two participants initially started justifying their actions, I encouraged everyone to be honest and frank from the beginning, and indicated that no judgement would follow since there was no right or wrong answer to my questions. Whatever they would say would remain in confidence and not be reported to their heads of department or school principals/rectors.
	Iterative questioning in data collection dialogues	In the rare case that 'suspect' data might be introduced by some participants, the fact that some of the instruments had overlapping questions (framed slightly differently) and corroborated by non-participant classroom observation, to prevent such situations from happening. Iterative questioning (through rephrasing) and probing were also used to elicit more detailed information and detect contradictions.
	Negative case analysis	Given the complex nature of decision-making, there were no real outliers; rather a continuum of choices which were analysed in Part Three of the thesis. The findings of the study indicated a diversity of pedagogical choices and

		"choicing"; these constructs were plotted alongside the continuum.
	Debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors	Research design and instruments were discussed with the two research supervisors. Implementation of those instruments were also thoroughly discussed. Further discussions were held about findings and potential directions the thesis would take.
	Peer scrutiny of project	A critical peer was invited to audit the research instruments and data produced and to debrief researcher after interviews. This brought in an outsider perspective that was refreshing especially since the critical peer could challenge certain assumptions made by the researcher, who might be too close to the research project to see inherent biases at work.
	Use of "reflective commentary"	I kept record of initial and ongoing reflections on the research process, patterns I started to notice, and the generation of themes and theory as I proceeded with the study. Comments on the effectiveness of the instruments and techniques used were then later on ploughed back into the methodology chapter (**Chapter Three**) as well as the concluding chapter (**Chapter Nine**). This kind of "progressive subjectivity" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) as I recorded my own understanding of constructs, and my analysis of the methods I used, was important in ensuring credibility.
	Description of background, qualifications and experience of the researcher	It is very important for the research community and readers of this work to not just have trust in the methods employed in this study but also to have trust in the researcher. It is however debatable how much information about the researcher should be included in a research study. In a qualitative study such as this one, where it is understood that the researcher is an integral part of meaning-making, I included some information pertaining to my positionality and how this might impact upon the phenomenon, the research process and outcomes. Some biographical information pertaining to my background and experience have thus been included in the Prologue to the thesis as well as in Chapter One.

	Member checks of data collected and interpretations/theories formed	Transcribed data and narrative representations of the data were made accessible to the people who contributed to them, in order for them to decide if (1) their words had been recorded as they intended them and (2) the results were authentic and plausible. Corroboration of narratives was effected (see **Appendix 22**). This is in line with what Van Maanen (2011) suggests in terms of making sense of field data by verifying what every item of information might represent in terms of contextual meanings for the research participants.
	Thick description of phenomenon under scrutiny	Use of researcher diary/log; descriptive observation notes; transcribed interviews and narrative representations of phenomenon of pedagogical choice – such detailed descriptions contributed to promote credibility as they describe actual situations and contexts studied.
	Examination of previous research to frame findings	The literature review chapter (**Chapter 2**) as well as **Chapter 7** address the link between the phenomenon and past/ongoing research.
Transferability	Provision of background data to establish context of study and detailed description of phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made	The phenomenon and its significance in the local as well as international contexts was specified in the introductory and concluding chapters.
Dependability	Employment of "overlapping methods"	Triangulation through the use of multiple techniques and instruments to confirm findings: Participant profile sheet Semi-structured interviews Unstructured, narrative interviews and conversations Video-vignette stimulus recall conversations Class observations and post-observation stimulus recall conversations Classroom artifacts (where available) and lesson plans
	In-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated	Instruments and procedures for implementation were described in Chapter Three and in the Appendix
	Long-term observation	This varied from school to school but as far as possible, researcher requested participants to have several lesson observations.

Confirmability	Triangulation to reduce effect of investigator bias	(as mentioned in an earlier section) different instruments were deployed in the same case and across the subunits of the case to obtain a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon of pedagogical choice.
	Admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions	The researcher admitted his positionality in relation to the research phenomenon and showed how he used his interest in the subject to facilitate the interaction with participants rather than force his viewpoints on the latter.
	Recognition of shortcomings in study's methods and their potential effects	The limitations sections in Chapters One, Three and Nine address the different limitations and delimitations of the study.
	In-depth methodological description to allow integrity of research results to be scrutinised	The different analytical processes were described and justified in the methodology chapter.
	Use of diagrams to demonstrate "audit trail"	The list of appendices as well as data production plan list the different instruments as well as timeline for the fieldwork and ensuing analytical work.

3.5 Section Four: Data analysis

In this section, I will address the different stages of data analysis that I undertook once the fieldwork was completed and raw data was available. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) refer to data analysis as the "process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, filed notes, and other materials accumulated to increase understanding of them to enable the presentation of what was discovered" (p. 157).

There were three different phases of data analysis in my study, with increasing levels of abstraction, as illustrated in Figure 3.3 below:

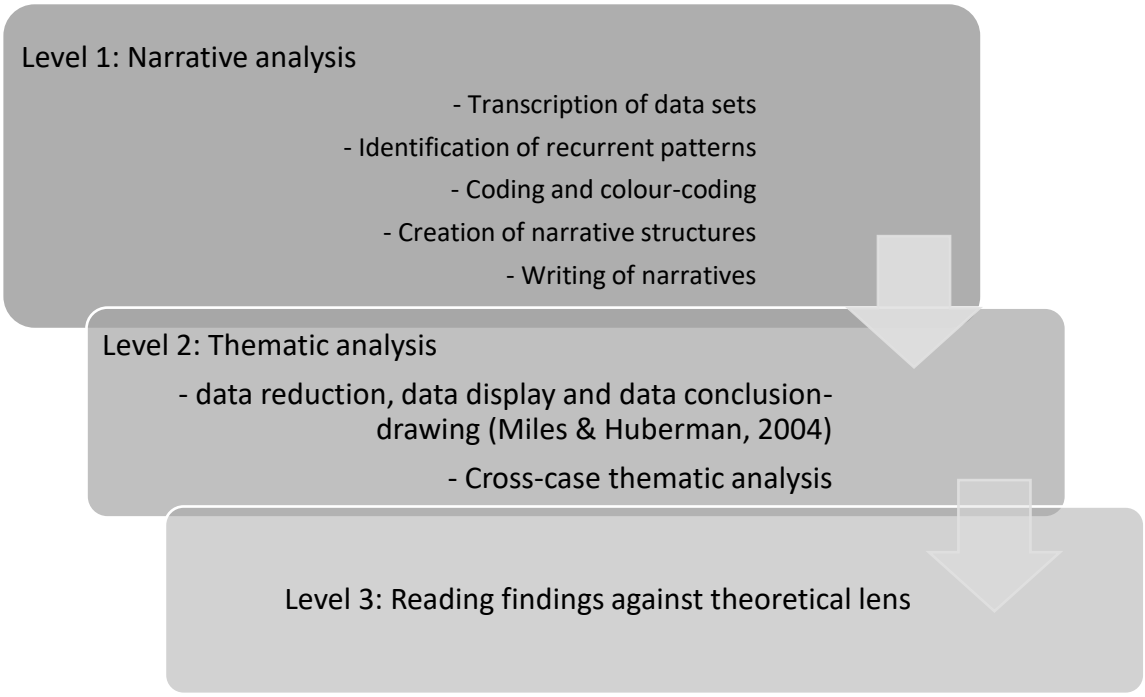


Figure 3.3: Analytical framework

Level 1 consisted of a narrative analysis. At that stage, I synthesised the information from the various instruments and resulting data sets to create the storied narratives of pedagogical choice centred around each participant.
Level 2 involved a thematic study of the narratives, carried out in a cross-case analysis. Patterns and trends in themes were thus identified across the various narratives.
Level 3 involved analysing findings in the light of existing literature and the temporary theoretical lens.

3.5.1 Level 1: Creation of narratives

3.5.1.1 From raw data to transcript – a first level interpretation

The following Figure 3.4 represents the different stages involved from generating the data to representing it as narratives:

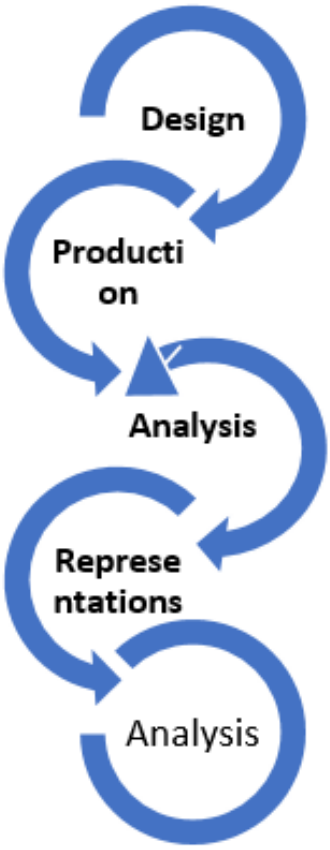


Figure 3.4: From raw data to narrative

Each participant was attributed a physical and an electronic folder assigned with an alphanumeric identifier, until it was renamed with a pseudonym later on. In each folder, when the different information around the participant and his or her context was generated, separate documents were inserted for every instrument used. Each interview or conversation was followed by a phase of transcription on the same day since I preferred to have the data fresh in mind alongside my own notes, which I also wrote immediately after the interviews and other encounters. All my recordings had been done on the recorder on my phone, and had been backed up on my computer the day they were produced. I would play the recordings on my phone or on my computer, playing with speed settings, for instance, to slow down the pace so that I could type alongside or stopping and rewinding whenever there was a long sentence or something said too quickly. I was thus able to go back and forth with the recorded audio files so make sure my transcripts were accurate. Listening to the interaction not only allowed me to reminisce and re-immerse myself in the situation, but also familiarised me with the issues we had discussed. I had to be careful about "listening fatigue", that is, the risk of missing out crucial information. To counter this, I would replay the audio files while reading the transcript to see if any piece of information had been omitted by mistake. At first, I was waiting for the whole transcript to be ready to start colour-coding but as I proceeded with my other data

production tools, and had to find the right pace to work on the transcripts, I started colour-coding sections I found significant to the phenomenon and the research questions as I was typing out the transcripts.

Although typing out the transcripts was time-consuming, I preferred to handle this process myself as it allowed me to immerse myself in the data and get a feel of the phenomenon. Once I typed out the transcripts, I read the responses a few times to better understand the phenomenon from their point of view. Afterwards, I gave myself some time to reflect upon what I had read. I inspired myself from Strauss and Corbin (1998) who suggested that the researcher asks himself or herself questions relating to the researcher's awareness and sensitivity to the situation at hand, theoretical questions and pragmatic, methodological questions pertaining to whether I was interpreting the data correctly.

Language issues

In a multilingual society like Mauritius, where people are likely to shift from one language to another, especially in informal contexts, I had planned to leave it up to the participants to respond in whichever language they felt more at ease in. Given that both I and the participants were aware that we shared at least two languages and could use any of them to discuss, I had planned on shifting languages as per the situation. Most of my opening statements were either in French or in English, and with time, some of our subsequent encounters would start off with greetings in Kreol Morisien. My questions, which I had carried along with me, were typed in English but I could easily switch to French or Kreol if our conversation started that way. Most of the participants, however, responded to my questions in English. When I casually mentioned that we could use any language that was accessible to both of us, one participant laughed out loud and said, "I am an English teacher. I want to use English!" This does not mean that our interactions took place solely in English. There were a few instances when the participant would shift to Kreol to mark a personal comment being made to me, to indicate the use of humour or irony, or to repeat something that one of their students might have repeated. These were duly transcribed in Kreol Morisien later on in the transcript with what I perceived to be the literal and intended meaning to the statement. In cases where Kreol has been used, I had to make sure to provide a translation rather than just a word-for-word transliteration, which might be far removed from the meaning and context in which the word or expression was used. There was however not much ambiguity in transcribing and interpreting most of the interview raw data later on.

3.5.1.2 Identifying patterns and thematic categories in the transcripts

Now that I had the transcripts, I started looking for elements that I could code. According to Saldana (2009), a code is "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salience, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.3). Coding is very much determined by the researcher's analytic lens (Saldana, 2009, p.6) and is often a "judgement call" since it involves "our

subjectivities, our personalities, our predispositions, [and] our quirks" (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004, p. 482-483). Coding was thus a means of identifying patterns in the data and to look for reasons why these patterns were there. Glesne (1998) described coding as "progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collective data (i.e. observation notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose" (p. 135). I looked at all the transcripts from the different instruments and identifying key elements that seemed to stand out in relation to a-priori categories stemming from the literature. I used felt pens and fluorescent markers to colour-code the physical transcripts. Different colours were used for different ideas. Subsequently, those sets of coloured data were assembled together to form the second level data set for specific elements. Having done so for a few participants, I found that the process was becoming tedious and decided to work directly on electronic copies of my transcripts. I used colour highlights to mark selected parts of the transcripts and collated similar items together within a document as categories being generated by this analytical reading process.

This matrix allowed me to integrate data from different sources so that I could easily track their source and at the same time having the relevant information at hand. Having such means to categorise the data assisted me considerably, given the extensive amount of qualitative data produced. Otherwise, the novice researcher that I was could easily have been submerged by the amount of information at my disposal. Having well-defined codes assisted me in categorising and making sense of the data, and even provided insights, even at an early stage, as to how to proceed with an eventual cross-case comparison across the different subunits of the case. Later on, some categories were amalgamated under bigger ones, while others were set aside as they were not directly relevant to my research questions. This followed the interpretivist methodological approach of this study, where categories were generated from the data rather than being pre-empted from existing literature.

Even as I was working on generating categories from the raw data, I was mindful that themes, in fact, did not emerge from the data by themselves but were rather the product of my own perspectives, experiences, and knowledge. They also came out of the refinement and narrowing down of the research phenomenon as well as the choice of qualitative, interpretivist paradigm to understand that phenomenon. It was important, therefore, to maintain a state of reflexivity towards the entire transcription process and note down at what point I was actively contributing to the construction of thematic categories.

Care was taken in ensuring that the transcripts were faithful to the participants' voice and what was said during the interviews. Member checking as well as the critical peer were essential in verifying the data. Participants could review, clarify or comment on their transcripts if they felt there was something missing or if they now felt something they said should not be there. In one occurrence, one participant requested to have some sentences deleted from the record, which I did in her presence, although she specified that had been nothing wrong with the transcription. Since I was ethically bound to respect my participants' wishes regarding the information they were sharing with me, it was not an issue therefore to delete the extract.

Following the philosophical outlook adopted right from the start, I understood that the issues identified from the raw data could have been interpreted differently by other researchers. Sikes and Goodson (2003) suggest that "as people, as social beings, located in space, time, cultural milieu, researchers have been influenced by the particular understandings about, and interpretations of the world to which they have been exposed" (p.34). The researcher is very much "part of the social world we are studying" (Golbart & Hustler, 2005, p.17) and thus an integral element to the analytical process. The implication that the researcher is also an authorial voice to be reckoned with is taken into account in the narrative structure used for the narrative representations. I admit, by including myself as one narrator in the accounts, that events have been interpreted by myself, and that a great deal of what is presented as "recalled" event, even when triangulated, is the fruit of my memories and my understanding.

3.5.1.3 Writing the narratives

While I was familiar with literary texts and narratives in general, the inspiration for using them in educational research arose when a visiting academic from the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) came for a workshop at my workplace, almost a decade back and spoke about life history research. I recall being amazed at the time that this could be considered research, since I was a newly appointed academic in a teacher training institution and most of my peers were barely foraying into qualitative studies at the time. I read up about it, and was amazed when I noticed the scope of qualitative research. Yet, in my mind, despite perhaps the rise of more novel qualitative methodologies in the field, I had an affinity for narratives. When the time came to identify which methodology I would use to generate data, I chose narrative inquiry as research methodology, but even then, I felt I had to prepare myself carefully. Numerous questions came to my mind:

- What story was I going to tell?
- What genre would I adopt?
- From whose perspective would I frame this story?
- Could I presume to use a first-person narrator when all I had was some snippets of someone's life, however rich and thick the data was?
- And if I did manage to write those narratives, how would I ensure that I was representing the voices of my participants?

While I was excited about this new form of writing, I was also very much conscious of the responsibility that I now had in representing the personal meanings and "truths" of the participants.

Narratives allow one to order a series of actions and events in a sequence (Ricoeur, 1980) in order to make sense of disparate events. Bruner (1986) suggested that the world could be understood either through narrative or paradigm. Cohler (1982), quoted in Mishler (1986) considers personal narratives as "the most internally consistent interpretation of presently understood past, experienced present, and anticipated future" (p. 68). Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that people without narratives do not exist and refers to the narrative turn as the shift

toward normalising and legitimising people's stories as important sources of empirical knowledge, which contrasted with commonly held beliefs about knowledge and the production of knowledge. Narrative inquiry was thus used to study the experience of teachers as stories, and as a way of thinking through storying (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) especially when trying to understand the actions of others. Narrative inquiry engages the researcher and the participant in the co-creation of the participant's experiences, providing a moment when researchers are permitted to share part of the life their participants live.

In educational research, narrative research is now being increasingly used to generate narratives of experience (Gudmundsdottir, 2001), which are themselves often used in a variety of qualitative research studies (Cresswell, 2016). Some consider it to be the phenomenon as well as the research method (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Gudmundsdottir (2001) suggests that the act of storying is akin to ventriloquism, where one single voice actually transmits "a heteroglossia of culturally situated voices" (p. 235). The storyteller thus is deeply embedded within his or her context, and the subtle, complex details of how this person interacts with his environment can be effectively demonstrated through narratives. Heikkinen (2002) suggests that, like most people, teachers narrate their stories of experience to themselves and others, and that the retelling changes given their own perspectives and experiences have changed over time. In that sense, narratives cannot be static or reductionistic but rather allow us to engage with teachers and their teaching in process and in context. Interestingly, this suggests that teacher knowledge and identities are constantly being revisited and that one's narrative of the self is likely to be protean and ever-evolving. The data generated through narrative interviews thus accumulate an amount of sense impressions, memories, emotions, and dialogues which represent the participant's values and experiences as well as those of the researcher with whom the stories are being shared. Parr et al. (2015), however warn about narrative research that ultimately gloss over the individual narratives but instead are used to broadcast a narrative of success or productivity. They also suggest that packaging life experiences as "stories" can, in popular discourse, lead to certain authentic experiences being undermined and underrepresented, given the stereotypes that are usually associated with "stories". Doecke et al. (2000), while recognising the "inescapability" of narratives as a means of conveying teacher experience, nevertheless warn about using conventional story structures, that is, stories of events that happened, which are not always suitable to generate knowledge about teachers and teaching. Thus, they suggest foregrounding the narrative situation and reconceptualising the narrative as discourse, with its own sets of socially and culturally enforced norms. This foregrounding would also allow researchers to be upfront and explicit about the relationships that enable such sharing to happen. They also stress upon the fact that a number of teacher narratives nostalgically or romantically tend to convey the "good teacher" narrative (p. 345), and they highlight the fact that teachers' narratives of experience can be heterogeneous and can often be subject to their own silences, which need to be acknowledged and negotiated by the researchers. Doecke (2004) additionally suggests that any worthwhile knowledge cannot just be told "as it is" (p. 296) but should rather be mediated, hence their use of more than one narrative voice. This is one aspect that I have explored in my own set of narratives (See Chapters Four and Five) where I signal my own presence within the data production process.

There are different approaches towards the analysis of narratives, ranging from a content analysis that focuses on events, actors and their characteristics, to the analysis of the form and structure of narratives, the analysis of themes (Riessman, 2005). While there is a tendency to move towards theoretical abstraction across some other qualitative methods, narrative inquiry highlights the individual experiences and other influences that make

individual stories unique to the individual being represented. Even though greater abstraction may be reached eventually, the narratives generated do not lend themselves to generalisation but instead celebrate the individual. Being able to engage in this process of storytelling allows the participants to socially and culturally situate themselves (Stapleton & Wilson, 2017). Kurtz (2014) considers stories to have three dimensions, namely, form, function, and phenomenon. Through these three dimensions, a participant could thus narrate how their beliefs, choices, and actions have led to specific experiences. On the other hand, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) consider stories as narratives within a three-dimensional space that consists of personal and social interactions, time as a continuum and place or situation. Given that there is no fixed way of representing and analysing narratives, it is often the researcher who chooses how to represent the generated data (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Riessman, 2005). The method I opted for was that of restorying, where I created stories of teachers' experiences from the data generated from the different instruments I used in order to reorganise and analyse the main components of the story within a set order (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

An emergent design characterised the unfolding of the research, leading to ongoing analysis ''so that both the research procedures and questions can be adjusted in an iterative fashion in response to what is being learned in the field'' (Morgan, 2008, p. 246). This provided me with a degree of flexibility in terms of which instruments to apply first, and which questions the participant (and I) would feel more comfortable answering, while at the same time, yielding deeper insights into the richness of the data being generated. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) suggest that researchers should devise their own inquiry procedure and process. Thus, this is how participants were invited to ''describe when events occurred and the effect the events had on subsequent happenings'' (Polkinghorne 1995, p. 12). The use of direct quotations from the participants within the narratives allowed me to provide voice to the participants and their experience (Lincoln & Guba 2000). I had to ensure that the authoritative nature of my voice as researcher would not overpower the storied lives of my participants and that my data production and narrative representation of the data did not lapse into solipsism and narcissism. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It was thus crucial to ensure that I involve the participants fully into the process through conversations and chats before we engaged in interviews since we would be co-generating narratives based on their experiences.

Firstly, I had to think of what the narratives as a body of texts would do. Would they just be a synthesis of all the data accumulated so far, or stand higher as a level of analysis? The more I immersed myself in the data, the more I could sense each participant's individual stories. Yet, I also wanted to foreground the phenomenon of pedagogical choice and show to what extent the protagonists of those narratives, my participants, were influenced by a number of factors. Each participant's profile was the product of an iterative process where all the instruments used contributed to what I now knew about those individuals. Narrative analysis thus seemed a good choice for a first level analysis of that complex data.

Using narratives to represent the lives and experiences of teachers presented a number of issues. For instance, I needed to be clear about the aim of the narrative, its theoretical grounding, the structure that I adopted, its intended audience, its style and voice (Reddy, 2000). Given Polkinghorne's (2007) suggestion that narratives should retain figurative meaning, I also wondered how to reconcile narratives about teachers and artistic effects. I had many conceptions and prior knowledge about genres to choose from, yet I finally settled down on a

simple narrative text that one could call a 'slice of life' narrative. From my understanding, slice of life narratives represented a moment in the life of the protagonist. They could, like traditional short stories, contain a plot, with a beginning, middle and end. However, I was troubled by the finality conveyed by such kinds of stories that aimed to sum up everything within a short span. I did not really know much about my participants' past, nor did I know what would happen to them in the near or distant future. What I did know, however, were those moments that they shared with me, whether while narrating their life stories, or while teaching in class.

I thus decided on the following structure which I would use throughout all the narratives: the slice-of-life of a teacher in class. Since my research did not only focus on pedagogical choices in the literature classroom, I did not want the narrative to be dominated only by moments spent in class. I thought about my own positionality with regards to these teachers and how my study was trying to explore what made them teach the way they do. How would I feature those moments where teachers reminisced about their own encounters with literature? Surely a teacher would not speak aloud in class about the accountability culture he or she was facing, for instance, in making specific instructional decisions. However, there were moments during our interactions as researcher and participant where such discussions took place. I thought of integrating those moments of sharing within the narratives, which would feature at specific points within the narratives and help to explain why teachers made specific choices.

Now that I had that rudimentary blueprint in mind, I set out to write one narrative down. This was quite challenging as I was trying to distil the essence of what had been shared with me into something new, but still with "truth value". While I was researching on coding, I encountered the term "transcreation", a term that is used in advertising to refer to the (creative) adaptation of a message or text from one language to another while retaining its intent, style, tone and context. In *transcreating* those narratives from the disparate sort of data, I was moving much beyond coding and translating from the oral medium to the written transcript; I was actually recreating my memory and understanding of the participant, based on the sum of all the data he or she had consciously or unconsciously provided me. The classroom events I was describing in some narratives could be at the same time fictitious and yet equally authentic and would serve as the participant's research story, which aimed to answer the critical questions with an answer in narrative form. I was reminded of Polkinghorne's use of the term "simulation" (2007, p. 482) when referring to participants' meanings since the narratives were, in fact, an impression of the researcher's impression of the participant. I was also reminded of this quote by Samuel (2009):

> "The life history researcher aims to develop an understanding or illumination of the specific realm under scrutiny in its complexity rather than in its reductionist abstraction; she does not expect to provide an explanation of the truth regarding that realm. The interpretative and critical framework is often offered as multi-dimensional illuminations of the phenomenon being investigated. The life history researcher's goal is to be generative of alternative ways of seeing, knowing, understanding and interpreting life experiences. To research is to look again with new eyes." (p. 5)

The narratives were structured in thin chronological sequence of events lasting over a lesson or two and mostly taking place in the literature classroom. There were no real introduction nor conclusion as I did not want to imply that the teachers' stories needed any kind of resolution. I also took care not to write a narrative that required a climax or which focused only on critical incidents. Instead, I opted for a description of a regular day, with the pedagogical strategies that any of the participants would have normally resorted to. The literature I had consulted had obviously also primed me for situations of uncertainty, or stress, or moments where in-the-moment decision making had to take place. However, I wanted those incidents, if they did occur, to be something any teacher in their situation could have expected to experience. In between, the interludes (indicated in italics) represented moments of recollection and reminiscence that remind the reader that the data behind the narrative came from such a meeting between the researcher and the participants. Such interludes, which often take place in different settings, are a flashback for the researcher, rather than the participant, whose main narrative is also a narrated remembrance of choices made a while back. In fact, the flashbacks are actually *flash-forwards*, namely visions of the future moment, after the class events have taken place, when that participant would share those moments with me. Who, however, is doing the act of "remembering"? I wanted the narratives to openly acknowledge the constructed and collaborative nature of meaning-making in qualitative research and to show that these narratives were not only storied information volunteered by the participants but also how they have been "seen" and understood by the researcher. Samuel (2009) comments that the storyteller

> "creatively chooses the kind of relationship she shares with the listeners of the tale. The teller decides how she wishes to be seen. In this sense, the listeners/audience co-construct the tale and the telling. The ensuing narrative text represents that lived moment of the composer fictively, actively and creatively engaging with choices about how to represent the relationship between herself as composer and the audience whom she has conjured up as the prime listeners of her tale, balancing the memories and interpretations of her experiences." (p. 3)

I therefore created the narrative based on the knowledge, experience and theoretical stances I had acquired so far. Since the narratives could not contain elements that might reveal the identity of the participants or the name and whereabouts of the schools, more descriptive details about the context were given about the conditions in which the teacher operated, the kinds of students he or she worked with, the biographical information each teacher gave and the teaching moments that happened. These "social, personal and temporal lenses" chosen by myself assist in showcasing "some specific dimensions of social reality that she wishes to illuminate" (Samuel, 2009, p. 4).

It is important at this stage to re-state my positionality in relation to the phenomenon. My objective in creating those narratives was to highlight the similarities and differences in the choices teachers make and I tried to explore how and why teachers made those choices in the contexts and spaces they lived and made meaning in. Steeped in the interpretivist worldview, I was therefore interested in communicating the "truth-value" (Kathard, 2009, p.29) of the experiences that were being shared with me. I tried to address that in terms of the plausibility

of the narrative plot, which is the result of my own deep immersion in the data. Part of the authenticity was expected to stem from the use of actual words and expressions from the participants concerned. The other challenge stemmed from expecting readers to read the social story as well as the personal story and see to what extent the personal and the social are enmeshed together. To address this, I tried as far as possible to locate my participants within their specific contexts and to show the impact of such contexts upon their behaviour and actions.

The issue of *voice* and *voicing* was very important to me. To me, the notion of a narrative account initially made me think of autobiographical texts where there was a first-person narrator, from whose viewpoint the story was told. Such a viewpoint would facilitate the readers' suspension of disbelief and assist them to relate more quickly to the participant. I dabbled with both types of voices to see which one sounded more authentic and representative, in the light of what I wanted to convey. While I initially preferred the first-person narrator, I felt that eight narratives written in the first person might cause some degree of confusion, especially if I was not too skilled at providing enough distinguishable contextual detail. Moreover, I felt that one could provide a subjective point of view even with a third-person narrator and finally opted for that choice. I opted for a limited third-person narrator (who would be able to speak out his or her thoughts to the reader but would not be able to do the same for the rest of the other characters – as an omniscient third-person narrator might do). Using the limited third-person narrator was a means for me to also to subtly highlight the understated presence of the researcher behind the scenes, even while foregrounding the voice of the participant.

Close attention was paid to presentational and representational elements (Kathard, 2009) in the research narratives to ensure that they fit the context. Observation sessions assisted me in getting the mannerisms and ways of speaking of the teachers concerned. In some cases, I made the choice of retaining specific quotes which, to me, strongly related to at least one of the research questions. Beginning the slice-of-life narratives *in medias res*, or "in the middle of things", defied conventional action plots, shifting from one temporal and spatial site to another in the flashbacks/flash-forwards, and shifting from present tense to past tense were attempts at adding layers of literary artistry, which according to Blumfeld-Jones (1995) would enhance the fidelity of the narrative. I wanted the stories to be "alive" but was also aware that such techniques brought those narratives very close to the borders of the fictional, due to being co-created by the participants and the researcher, the former being the storyteller, and the latter being the scribe/author.

As researcher/storyteller, I was not always in a position of power; I was also bound by the social conventions of storytelling, that is, how stories are "told, read and listened to in the cultural context" (Samuel, 2009, p.4). The other risk that the storyteller could face was being interpreted in a variety of ways, thus facing the possibility of not being able to convey the participant's "truth", or even not convincing the participant who does not see himself or herself in the story. Could the text be read independently from its author's meaning? I recalled Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1977) from my literary theory classes and I asked

myself, “Can I still hold onto my interpretation of the participant’s life, even when the latter dissociates himself or herself from it?” Unlike literature, where the object of study is the literary text, here I had to deal with human beings with whom I was ethically bound. This meant that the researcher had to work dialogically with the respondents and ensure that they too saw themselves in the bigger picture.

3.5.1.4 Planning the narrative structure

The research design led to the data production stage, where rich data was elicited from the different participants. Transcripts and raw data were scrutinised for patterns and themes, which were subsequently ploughed into the creation of the narratives.
The following extract shows the background work and the details I wished to include in the narratives

Table 3.6: Example of planning for the narrative

Teacher (Pseudo) and Profile	**Location (Class/Flashback)**	**Basic Class Scenario (inspired from interviews and classroom observations)**	**Teacher behaviour/actions to be highlighted + Impressions from observations (subjective)**	**Theme(s) to be highlighted in the light of Pedagogical Choice**	**Narrative Devices Used**
Smita Age: 29 School: Private - Confessional Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MA English Linguistics, Educator's License Classes Taught: Grades 7-13 *Texts taught:* God of Small Things The Birthday Party	Classroom setup Class is set in semi-circle, with the teacher sitting in a non-central position.	Given it is a relatively small class, there is only one group of about 10 female students. The teacher leads the way by summarizing the previous lesson, eliciting responses from the students as she goes along. As they reach the current scene in The Birthday Party, they read and stop to discuss the events, motivations of characters and themes in the extract. The discussion diverges from the play somewhat but this is allowed by the teacher, who is interested in finding out what the students think about the characters. Students are involved and interested; confidently voicing out what they are thinking and discussing amongst themselves.	Discursive Rel. to real life What they feel Personal involvement *Side:* *Enjoys* *Goes extra [subjective]* *Ref: Significance of lack of pedagogical training pointed out.*	Using text as support Discussion Not entirely controlled by teacher (loose control, but there is still some direction to the lesson) Attempt at making the students reflect upon what they have learnt and to make connections with previous sections studied. Relation to prior knowledge. Students are perceived as mature and can contribute to the learning taking place	3rd person narrator Flashback with narrator/interviewer (parallel narrative)

The process of generating the narratives was an act of co-creation with the participants but it is also important, as researcher, to acknowledge that it was also a process that was coloured by who I was as I entered the field and started making sense of the data that was being created. During that process, which spanned data generation, the elaboration of a narrative structure, the construction of the narratives, and their initial categorisation along the spectrum of possible choices, and finally the cross-case analysis of sub-units, considerable introspection, reflection and realisation have taken place. Without deviating from the research phenomenon, it was important that I also make mention of this process, as I moved from relative naivete as a researcher, fully convinced that there were ready-made categories, to a more tentative and thoughtful researcher now aware of the complexities of human behaviour. I chose to represent this in the initial categorisations that informed my first engagement with the data, which subsequently I found to be surface labels that only described broad observable actions from the teachers. Thus, the narratives that are included in this thesis are not just the storied lives of teachers but also the narrative of who and how I was as a researcher prior, while, and after meeting the participants. This is made apparent through the inclusion of my own narrative voice, and the implication of my narrative self within those narratives, which shed light on my positionality, as well as the beliefs and knowledge which informed my interactions with the participants. The set of narratives that were devised, alongside the structuring device of the two chapters, delineate my earlier comprehension of the situation, and how I sought to codify the field. I have retained those initial categories to highlight this preliminary level of analysis in **Part Two** of this thesis, which were eventually challenged and troubled with deeper engagement with the data and led to a more fluid understanding of teachers' pedagogical choices.

3.5.2 Level 2: Thematic analysis and cross case comparisons

3.5.2.1 Choice of thematic analysis

Narrative inquiry was the method used to guide the research design but thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) was used to analyse the results, with emphasis on what the participants shared. Thematic analysis, which is qualitative in nature, can be used to analyse classifications, patterns and themes pertaining to the data. It usually engages in great detail with the data and can be applied with diverse topics under an interpretivist paradigm. The reason I opted for this analysis was because it systematically allowed the researcher to analyse the frequency of a theme in the entire narrative set, leading to greater detail and depth in the understanding of the phenomenon. Themes could be described as general propositions that were generated from detail-rich experiences of participants and provided recurrent and unifying ideas regarding the subject of inquiry. Namey et al. (2008) posit,

> "Thematic Moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas. Codes developed for ideas or themes are then applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis, which may

include comparing the relative frequencies of themes or topics within a data set, looking for code cooccurrence, or graphically displaying code relationships." (p.138)

Thematic analysis allowed me to identify and establish the relationships between concepts and compare them with relationships and other factors noted in the data, even when the data has been produced at different points in time or was presented in different formats (for instance, interview transcripts, observation notes and lesson plans). Through thematic analysis, analytical statements about the phenomenon could be made that could effectively cut across those different data production instruments (Creswell, 2009). Thematic analysis was also of interest to me since it could lend itself well to the study of individuals' practices from their point of view, and how their situations and pedagogical choices were being influenced. Yet another aspect of thematic analysis that was of interest was that it did not require pre-existing themes, and could be based on any study that would require information from participants. In my case, a preliminary scoping and literature review had already uncovered a number of salient ways of approaching the phenomenon of pedagogical choice and some pointers as to the kind of influences that had been discussed in previous studies; however, I decided not to let these a-priori categories overshadow what the field had to offer. Working with this analytical frame also provided the opportunity to code and categorise data into themes, for instance, in terms of similarities or differences and note other kinds of patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed a model which I have used in my study for the process of thematic analysis. The following Figure 3.5 illustrates the three stages of that process:

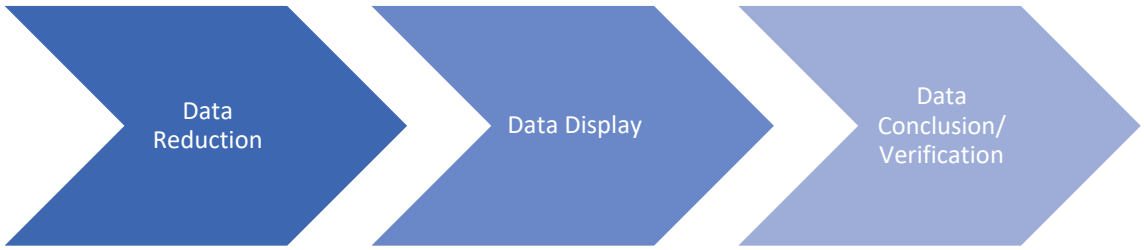


Figure 3. 5: Miles & Huberman (1994) model for the thematic analysis process

Data reduction can be defined as the process of "choosing, focusing, simplifying, building and transforming data" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). At that stage, connections were made from identified patterns across the different transcripts, which allowed me to start

mapping out the data into categories after having selected, simplified and transformed the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) posit that reducing data can be achieved "through selection, through summary or paraphrase, through being subsumed in larger pattern" (p.11).

The next stage, namely data display, could be described as, "an organised, compressed, assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). At that stage, I made use of a number of display and text highlighting techniques to point out relevant quotes, significant events or turning points in the narrative, noticeable similarities or differences and so on. Working on different data display techniques assisted me in clearing out irrelevant items of information and to highlight those elements which were significant to my research questions. It also helped to clarify my own analytical processes in my selection of patterns and themes, thus making my work more transparent for other researchers. The identification of significant quotes from the narratives also aimed at providing evidence, and supported the arguments and interpretations I was making in the analysis chapters in **Part Three** of the thesis (Gibbs, 2002). I used data display to achieve conceptual coherence by collating items that related to each research question (Miles & Huberman 1994). The analysis included interpretations of the phenomenon and the influences upon pedagogical choice to support what the participants had shared with relevant evidence (Blacker, 2009). Thus, I made use of tables, and figures in Microsoft Word to establish certain links and note some relationships amongst different concepts. This allowed me to organise and present information in an accessible form to facilitate further analysis, and also provide more refined and detailed explanations and comparisons as I generated more data in the field.

The third stage of the data analysis process refers to the organisation of the research concepts and thoughts that were generated in the process in order to build coherent findings and generate connections out of the results. Crawford et al. (2008) even suggest that a narrative be allocated to the diverse data to allow for a clearer understanding of the participants' thoughts and experiences. This is what the narratives I wrote in fact did, by bringing together the various elements generated by the different instruments into one coherent story. Moreover, thematic analysis allows the researcher to make connections between ideas without facing ambiguity as such kind of analysis adapts to new input as more is revealed by the participant or as more participants are included in the research. Therefore, some of the initial clues then develop into themes and can be stretched to encompass new data. However, thematic analysis is most effective when the theme is derived from "bulk of the data" (Joffe and Yardley, 2004, p.67). One single item of information can be insignificant unless supported by other recurring instances which then could be said to reflect the whole story. Therefore, the data set must be detailed and comprehensive for such analysis to take place. Data drawing was the third step in the aforementioned Miles and Huberman Model (1994).

Having displayed the data in specific ways, I inspired myself from the following points to draw conclusions:

- I noted patterns or themes that were similar or contrasting
- I grouped information under categories that seemed to belong together

- I identified connections and interrelations amongst the different factors noted in my study
- I aimed at consistency and conceptual coherence to explore to what extent the findings fit the theoretical framework of the study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that themes must be evaluated to ensure that they represent the whole of the data. They stress upon the importance of validating themes at the beginning and concluding stages of data analysis. One way of addressing issues of reliability would be to involve an external reviewer at the start to evaluate identified themes (Hosmer, 2008, p.52). If external reviewers have already validated or removed themes which do not reflect the phenomenon's concerns, then the researcher can be proceed without any further conflict (Hosmer, 2008).

3.5.2.2 Cross-case analysis

The different storied narratives were then read a few times for the researcher to distinguish salient themes running across them. My participants not only did not teach literature the same way; they also gave a variety of reasons for their choice of pedagogy. I referred to my critical questions to identify a list of themes (see **Chapter Six**) which I subsequently categorised into four larger themes. In line with the thematic analysis model referred to earlier, I graphically represented those themes after identifying repeating patterns within and across the narratives, which led to refining the generated themes and deriving patterns in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The cross-case analysis allowed me to carry out a more in-depth analysis of themes with respect to the different narratives of pedagogical choice. Identifying teachers' different choices across the different contexts under study not only enabled a study of pedagogical practices within the microcosm of the classroom but also enabled specific currents to become discernible, and tentatively leading towards further abstraction.

3.5.3 Level 3: Analysing findings in relation to existing literature

In **Chapter Two**, a temporary theoretical lens was proposed to assist in explaining how pedagogical choices are made. The third level of analysis here refers to bringing back this lens and identifying to what extent the actual findings corroborate or diverge from the lens. At that stage, confirmations of, or divergences from, existing literature or frameworks were noted. These divergences subsequently would be scrutinised against the methodology used in the study to gauge if these were genuine gaps. Subsequently, any new knowledge generated was presented as a research contribution to understanding the phenomenon.

3.6 Section Five: Who am I? My position within the study

While engaged in qualitative research, I was mindful of the essential element of reflexivity, acknowledging the process whereby "all findings are constructions, personal views

of reality, open to change and reconstruction" (Tindall, 1994, p.151). In this process, I developed a self-awareness which enabled a more transparent understanding of the construction of knowledge and assisted me in carrying out analysis more accurately (Pillow, 2003, p.178). I thus closely monitored my own interactions with participants, and noted my own biases and responses which might influence the research.

It was therefore essential for me to present and re-present myself and my positionality within the entire research process as I have done in the Prologue to the thesis as well as in **Chapter One**. It was my positionality as teacher educator in the field of English language and literature that brought to the fore the importance of understanding the influences upon pedagogical choices. It was certainly my personal and professional interest in the way the subject is taught that assisted me in identifying where I would identify the phenomenon of pedagogical choices. Van Maanen (1988) posits that research can never be fully closed to further interpretations and that there can be no "immaculate perception" of things. A different researcher with a different background or professional experience might perhaps have approached the research problem differently than I did. With the implicit understanding of the multiplicity of realities and variety of interpretations that exist (Cohen et al., 2000), I therefore could not remain insensitive to the many subtle or visible ways I impacted on my own study. Acknowledging my positionality, and an "a priori attachment to and involvement with, the institutions or social groups in, or on, which [my] investigations are based" (Sikes & Potts, 2008, p. 2) and acting in consequence of those, seemed to me a better proposition than pretending I was completely neutral or objective. Many of the discussions we subsequently shared during the research process stemmed from the confidence the participants developed that I could relate to them and would be able to understand what they meant.

I adopted a holistic approach to approaching the research problem; for instance, broadly inviting teachers to share their views, beliefs and experiences on the teaching of literature in order to engage with more specific elements pertaining to pedagogical choices. Given teachers work within specific contexts, I also paid attention to the different relationships they have within the system in which they operate, and how these, in turn, impact upon their pedagogical decisions. With a principal focus to understand participants' perspectives and experiences, narrative elements were elicited in a series of interviews. In this study, I have privileged a personal approach to generating data, by principally using interviewing and observation as main data production instruments, although other instruments were also used in the process to elicit information from participants. Interviews ranged from semi-structured, in the first encounters with the participants, to unstructured interviews and conversations as the interaction unfolded organically over time. These interviews enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon from the viewpoints of the participants in the study.

Mercer (2007) compares carrying out insider research to be akin to "wielding a double-edged sword" (p.5). While on one hand, I had direct access and intimate knowledge of the "culture and taken-for-granted understandings" of the participants and their contexts (Hawkins, 1990, p. 417), that very same proximity could lead to an inability to generate new knowledge in a field that was already too familiar. In some cases, there were expectations of reciprocity

on the part of participants, that is, I was expected to share back my own experience of teaching literature. While I was careful not to take over the conversation, these personal snippets of information became further prompts that elicited more spontaneous contributions from many of the teachers involved. I was thus not a complete "outsider" and while my other "hat" as teacher educator was initially viewed with some degree of reserve, that was quickly set aside over the long run. Any potential power dynamics between researcher and researched became flatter as I engaged with participants more frequently. I however had to be careful not to directly or indirectly lead the participants to agree with my points of view. In fact, there had been a few uncomfortable moments when participants would directly ask me for my opinion or my standpoint, given their increased familiarity with my presence. In a few of these cases, I had to admit that I would not be able to answer directly at that point while in other rare cases, a non-committal answer seemed to satisfy their curiosity. Prolonged and frequent contact with me also meant that I had to be aware of the risk that I might end up being given answers I wanted to hear, at least from the perspective of some participants.

I believe, however, that the relationship of mutual trust and respect that was developed ensured that, for the most part, I would be getting genuine answers to my queries. While there is great emphasis on trustworthiness as a means of validating findings, I also took the firm standpoint that my participants were honest and genuinely wanted to contribute to the discussion around literature teaching. The very same sense of ethics also permeated the creation of the narratives, where even in situations of crisis, or where teachers found themselves deploying a variety of pedagogical choices, the narratives were still told from their points of view and not that of an all-seeing and all-judging researcher perspective.

3.7 Synthesis

In this chapter, I explained my choice of research paradigm and research design and justified the use of narrative inquiry as an effective means to explore teachers' choices from their own perspectives. I also elaborated on my choice of participants, followed by a description of the process and instruments I developed to generate data in the field. I also described the challenges and serendipities encountered in the process and how I engaged with those. Next, I expanded on the different analytical stages I set up to engage with the data generated in the field to lead the way to further abstraction and subsequent theorisation. The next chapter is one of two chapters that explore the phenomenon via narrative representations of the synthesised data. The next two chapters underscore the transition into **Part Two** of this thesis, which is the first stage of analysis of findings.

PART TWO:
Narrative representations of pedagogical choices in the literature classroom

Orientation to Part Two

Part Two marks the shift into the analytical phase of my study. Following an inductive approach, I allowed the information produced together with my participants to coalesce into nodes of more significance as I closely scrutinized the information produced during my time in the research field for emerging themes, without the restrictions of imposing a-priori categories at this stage. As described in the previous chapter, I opted for a narrative representation of the data as a synthesis of the information obtained from my eight participants through the different research instruments I had used during data production in the field. This re-storying process, I felt, would be a means to retain the authenticity and individual flavour of each participant as each narrative would set out to describe how a particular English literature teacher made pedagogical choices in his or her classroom. This resulted in eight narratives, told in a limited third-person narrative voice, representing the narrative voice of the participants, interspersed with some first-person narration, representing my own voice within the narrative, which subsequently have been presented in **Chapters Four** and **Five**.

What emerged from an initial study of those eight narratives was that the various teachers displayed a range of responses when it came to the pedagogical choices they made in the literature classroom and the degree of autonomy with which they made decisions in the teaching of English literature. In parallel, from my interactions with the participants, I understood that some teachers' choices aimed at mostly preparing students for readiness for examinations, while some participants chose to counter this trend through a more holistic and developmental approach towards the teaching of literature. What was noteworthy was that the same teachers who considered themselves more autonomous tried to diverge from an examination-oriented pedagogy, irrespective of their age, or years of experience. This attracted my interest as a possible way of approaching the eight narratives, taking into consideration the dynamics surrounding the choices of pedagogy and the way teachers enacted those choices in their own contexts.

My initial conception of my participants ran along a spectrum, with my understanding of the different teachers ranging from less autonomous to more autonomous, which I then sought to apply to the narratives I was developing from the being generated. As I however mapped out the different narratives along this line, I realised that the data itself was suggesting that something more complex was at play. While there were indeed teachers who saw themselves as being constrained and imposed upon, they were not necessarily without any agency in their pedagogical outlook and practices. Their choices were also not fixed but rather contingent upon different situations, and influences they were under. I could however discern certain dominant initial features across the narratives which could allow me to explore the deployment of pedagogical choices across the continuum of possible choices. I thus decided to use certain dominant initial trends from the data to map out the narratives along a continuum detailing different degrees of agency and different choices ranging from examination-centred teaching of literature to developing a deeper, more personal engagement with the subject. I also took the decision to present the narratives alongside this continuum in two separate chapters to clarify the different possibilities of pedagogical choices my participants engaged in. While all the narratives represent individual lives and circumstances in their own right, for the sake of representativeness, only four narratives, that is, two narratives in each chapter, are presented in the following two chapters. The other narratives have been included in the Appendix (see **Appendices 19** and **20**) and will be referred to subsequently in the analytical chapters in **Part Three** of this thesis.

It became increasingly obvious to me that the notions of agency and the agentic teacher implied it opposite amongst other teachers. The following two chapters does not assume that some teachers possess or do not possess agency but rather represent how teachers use their pedagogical freedom to make specific choices and how they explain these choices. **Chapter Four** thus consists of two narratives of teachers who suggest that they enjoy limited pedagogical freedom in their pedagogical choices while **Chapter Five** presents two narratives of teachers who consider that they were able to have a greater sense of freedom in the pedagogical choices they made. A note of caution, however, should be inserted here with my representation of the teachers along this continuum. My attempt stems only out of the need to represent, as neutrally as possible, some different experiences of English literature teachers in different contexts within Mauritius, and no hierarchy is intended in broadly mapping out the narratives of the teachers in the next two chapters. Moreover, the choice of presenting those narratives in two chapters is not an attempt at presenting binary opposites since, as the various narratives themselves will reveal, decision-making is highly complex, and what motivates one teacher to make specific pedagogical choices can differ from one subunit to another subunit within the case study. The following two chapters thus highlight my preliminary level of analysis, where I was mostly guided by the data being generated in the field. I thus have deliberately included the way I initially categorised those teachers, which will be questioned and troubled in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four: An Initial Narrative Analysis: Instrumentalist Choices

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I have opted to present narrative representations of the data produced in the field as a means of answering my first critical question, namely, "How is English literature taught in upper secondary English literature classes?" I present two narratives of my participants as they engage with their own teaching contexts and describe their pedagogical choices in the English literature classroom. In this particular chapter, as outlined in the prologue to Part 2 of this study, I highlight the the pedagogical choices they make, or in some cases, the choices made when faced with limitations, especially in the light of the various forces at play within their individual cases. What is pertinent is that while a variety of teaching 'moves' are noted, there is a broad tendency across those two narratives to emphasize on "safe" and comfortable pedagogical practices. How teachers therefore exercise their pedagogical freedom in such situations is represented here. Two additional narratives (see Appendix 19) illustrate a tendency towards similar choices some teachers make but have not been included in this chapter.

4.1 Orientation to Chapter Four

This chapter comprises the narratives of Kishan and Rita. In each narrative, I have included some biographical information, details about the schools and contexts in which these teachers operate, the texts and levels they teach and the different pedagogical moves they make in their literature classes. While no hierarchy is implied in the presentation of the narratives, I have chosen to present the narratives from the point of view of the new career participant first, and moving on to the more experienced in this set. Kishan works in a private-aided secondary school, while Rita works in a state secondary school.

4.2 **Kishan's Narrative: Learner-centred approaches work best […] but…**

Prologue to the Narrative

We are sitting under a tree in the school yard, and with the usual school noises somewhat muted, amidst chirping birds, we start our conversation. Kishan has kindly accepted to meet me in one of his free periods and this man, who is in his late 20s, starts telling me about his experience of teaching literature for the past seven years in this private-aided secondary boys' school, situated in a rural area.

Interestingly, he is the only one who teaches English literature at upper secondary level in the school. The secondary school itself has a sister-institution nearby which houses a girls' secondary school, governed by the same higher administration but each having their respective staff and departments, although, I am told, some overlapping in duties does tend to take place.

Kishan is very keen to share his experience as an English literature teacher at upper secondary level. Our interactions have however often been rushed as his free time is limited, and I need to make the most of the time we have at our disposal.

I am interested in his Grade 12 class, which consists of only three students who are studying English at a subsidiary level. Two years back, due to subject choices, literature in English was not offered at SC level (Grade 11) in his school. However, since a handful of students had enough credits, they were able to opt for the subject at subsidiary level. For the school to offer English at advanced level, or as main subject, would have required a minimum of five students. The neighbouring girls' school, on the other hand, had enough students and was able to offer English at both principal and subsidiary levels. This time, Kishan is glad that he has been able to get those three who are willing to study English literature.

This reminds me of my own experience as a student of literature in a class of two students, and prompts me to request him to narrate how a typical day in such a class would go.

The bell rings. Kishan is already on his way to class, across narrow, meandering corridors of his school, trying to avoid the traffic of students as they move in and out of their various classrooms.

Using technology in the literature classroom

He reaches the multimedia lab, which is not his usual classroom but which he resorts to, whenever he feels the need to show his students something on the laptop. Kishan tries to avoid disruption. Whenever he plans a lesson around discussion or film-viewing, he makes sure he carries it out in the library or the multimedia room so as not to disturb his colleagues. Whenever he has an extract to work on, he prefers to form groups in the class, assign them part of the extract, let them jot down all their ideas and then get their team leader to present the gathered points. He has found that his students naturally find drama interesting and lively, whereas they find prose tiring due to the continuous reading they have to do. Indeed, one of his students, who is privately[23] sitting for the literature paper finds the amount of reading he has to do, especially in terms of prose, to be discouraging.

Today, as per his prior instructions, he finds that his three students from the Grade 12 class are already in, and that one of them has already connected the laptop to the projector.

"Great!" says Kishan, as he looks upon the set-up. Using the projector has become a regular feature in his classes, and he often finds that having this visual element as part of his lesson grabs their attention more effectively than just speaking to them. Technology is something that Kishan is familiar with, but he is mindful not to be too dependent upon it. A recent incident involving a power shortage, which prevented him from carrying out a class as initially planned, serves as sharp reminder to him to always be prepared. That does not diminish Kishan's faith in technology. Not only does he make use of it to facilitate his teaching during classes, he also finds that connecting to his students beyond the walls of the classroom can bring in some benefits. Whether he uses Skype or Facebook, he finds that he is able to get his students to interact more naturally and extend the discussion they were having in class. He finds his students much more willing to carry out research work when he is connected to them and this reinforces his trust in their cooperation. This, he firmly believes, is one way of making his teaching livelier. He feels that students can love the subject and relate to it better. Indeed, as Kishan muses upon his own experience as teacher, a teacher can make you love the subject, or dislike it. Often, Kishan thinks of the way that a teacher can convey a message and encourage his students to have some sort of impact. One challenge he faces, however, is the limited access to materials and resources that he could use for literature teaching. When he does find them, the resources are sometimes not contextually appropriate or of good quality on the internet.

Teaching drama

Today's class is on Shakespeare's ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. Kishan prefers teaching drama rather than other genres featured on the syllabus since his students respond more readily to this genre. He has discovered that the study of a dramatic text opens up the possibility of using different strategies such as readers' theatre, and active use of role play in the classroom,

[23] Students who have exhausted the two consecutive years they can officially sit as candidates for an examination at school may still have the further option of paying for a third opportunity to sit for these examinations, this time as private candidates instead of regular students.

which are skills that can be transferred to other classes. Kishan personally enjoys going beyond the text and being involved in the performative aspects of the play. The possibility of making learning more interactive and learner-friendly contrasts with the way he was himself taught.

Kishan does not have many fond memories of his literature classes when he was a student, but one classroom memory stands out when he was asked to participate in a role play.

"Generally we were given notes in a teacher-centred class, to complete the text and the syllabus. But in Grade 10, I really liked the literature class, especially when we were doing ***Romeo and Juliet*** *and I got to play the role of Juliet in class, while another classmate was playing the role of Romeo. I remember we had to enact the Balcony scene and I was trying to exaggerate a bit in front of my teacher. This stands out as an interesting class for me," Kishan says, with a smile.*

I am fascinated by this modern take on male actors performing female roles, as was the case in Shakespeare's time, and I wonder if he, too, would implement this in his class of boys.

"Was it because you participated in it?" I inquire.

Kishan replies, "Yes, yes, that made it memorable! That's why I prefer this type of teaching, where students make sense of what they are learning and not just remembering their teacher's notes. Sometimes, what you need, is to get the students to get into the minds of the characters they are studying to make sense of the whole text."

Today, he intends them to compare and contrast the characters of Oberon and Titania in a selected extract from the play. Before that, he questions them about the previous lesson on the same text. Once the students have answered to his satisfaction, he proceeds to tell them more about characterisation and plot, which are two aspects that they will cover in more depth in the coming classes.

For this class, Kishan did not have to prepare extensively. In previous lessons, he has provided paraphrased extracts and summaries of key moments in the text, as well as brief introductions to the characters but he intends to prepare them to do a more in-depth analysis of sections of the text in today's session. Generally, he prefers to have them work on the text on the spot. By listing and discussing the characteristics and motivations of the characters, the students will also have a better understanding of the plot progression and character evolution in the play. They should also be able to situate the extract in the main text, showing their understanding of its significance in relation to the play. Kishan would like his students to make the connections

between Titania's actions and her punishment by Oberon later on. Following this classwork, Kishan intends to give them a written piece of work as homework where the students will be expected to integrate the various points raised in a coherent answer.

Using film to teach literature

Kishan then distributes copies of the extract from Act 2, scene 1 in the play. His instructions are clear and concise and the students do not ask for clarification since they have worked out similar activities before. They need to look for information in the extract about those two main characters in the text. To facilitate this task, Kishan intends to show them a video clip of that same extract from a film adaptation of the play. Even though some of his students might not be used to watching a black and white film, this is the one that he feels is more authentic and closest in terms of adaptation to the text. He also feels the clip will jog their memory regarding what happened prior to the scene they are studying and hopes that it will assist them as they situate this extract in the play.

As the clip is played, Kishan uses small questions to encourage his students to make connections with the extract they have in hand. He also asks them to pay close attention to the interactions amongst the characters and invites them to take notes as they watch. When the clip is over, he goes to the whiteboard and draws a vertical line in the centre of the board. On one side, he writes the name of Titania, and that of Oberon, on the other. He invites his students to write down Titania's positive character traits as well as any negative traits they may have noticed. Then he gives instructions for them to do the same for the character of Oberon. The emphasis, here, is on developing a better understanding of characters and their motivations.

The students start working. With this class, Kishan has come up with an efficient and smooth way of running things. The small class allows him to be more focused on managing the students' learning and to be more precise in his instructions. There is little scope for confusion and generally, the students work, participate and cooperate, as required.

Kishan smiles as he thinks of his upper secondary classes.

"I find working with upper secondary more enjoyable because they are more mature," he says. "And since some of them have a background in studying literature, the class becomes interesting and easy as well. With those students, there is more understanding, critical thinking, and "thinking outside the box", as we say."

"Does your teaching of literature differ according to the level you teach?" I inquire.

"Very much so. At lower secondary level, it's more like storytelling and questions and answers. In cases like Grade 7 and Grade 8, the classes are more teacher-centred, given the low to average proficiency level of students in English. With my Grade 13 students, however, there must be a certain autonomy on their part as well. I can use audio-visual materials such as clips from the laptop, but I also need to get their views and opinions on the matter, to know if they are thinking in the right way or not, or if they can come up with new ideas, and can prove them as well."

"And do they cooperate with you?" I ask.

"Oh yes, generally those students react positively. It is a small group, so it's manageable, because they have individual accountability," Kishan replies.

The term makes me smile, and Kishan answers, "They can't escape by not doing any work. And generally they do it! The good thing about working with smaller groups is that you can manage them well, and can check their progress regularly. Given that I have five periods per week and see them often, I can manage to complete the text and get their feedback. I always ask them to prepare. Since I only have three students at upper secondary level, I don't have that problem that they are not preparing. They do prepare and they come, and given that they have a literature background since they have studied literature at lower secondary, and at Grade 11 level, they already have an appreciation for it."

Larger groups are a different matter, though, as Kishan explains:

"Whenever I have larger groups, for example, Grade 7 and Grade 8, where I do literature classes only once a week, it becomes more difficult to check progress. Then I have to rush with a text, especially when there are public holidays and extra-curricular activities. With the upper secondary class, if there had been more people, maybe the class could have been more participative, and instead of giving individual work, I would have resorted to group work then."

Kishan, however, is confident about the way he handles this class.

"They participate", he proudly states, "I think I can cater for their abilities and also for their knowledge and feedback. With this class, I can see where I am going and if they have not understood, I can cope."

Using empathic questions to develop understanding of characters

As the students work, Kishan decides to bring in an additional layer of complexity by getting them to think more deeply about characters' motivations in order to ensure that his students do not leave the class with just a collection of facts about the text. With this particular group of students, he knows that he can get them to make connections between events in the text and to be able to explain the behaviour and actions of the protagonists in the play.

“Do you agree with what Titania does, or says, in this extract? Why, or why not?” he asks.

The three students reflect on this question for some time and one after the other, the three boys provide their interpretation of this character’s motivations in the extract and start discussing among themselves. Caught up in this exercise, one of them asks Kishan if he can do the same for the character of Oberon. In this case, Kishan approves but frames the question differently to focus on the character’s motivations: “Why does Oberon act and talk the way he does in this extract?” The historical and cultural contexts behind the development of these two characters are not touched upon in this lesson. Oberon and Titania have been plucked out of time and space, and to be assessed by the students as two individuals within a story.

The empathic questions enable the students to probe into the characters, their thoughts and feelings at particular moments within the text. Knowledge of the character and the situations in the plot allows them to come up with original ideas. With the examination paper focusing more on content and stylistic questions, Kishan thinks that some of his students who can demonstrate critical skills will be favoured, especially those with a background in literature, while others might not fare so well. He thus has to prepare them to be able to answer a variety of questions for the examinations. Through this activity, Kishan targets the development of empathy in his students, which he hopes will prepare them to better understand the text and its themes.

I invite Kishan to elaborate on his teaching style.

“I use various methods but I try to combine both teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches at the same time. Most of the time, I feel that only learner-centred approaches do not work because we have so many texts to be completed that giving notes at times is also mandatory. Given their level, these students also need this additional “spoon-feeding”, especially if they are not reading, preparing or researching on their own,” he states.

I am curious about his reference to “spoon-feeding” as a strategy and ask, “Do you think it works?

“I believe that learner-centred approaches work best, because it’s hands-on experience, but given the short time span that we have, especially the limited number of periods that we are allocated at school... it becomes difficult to be innovative, or use creative approaches.”

While reminiscing, Kishan realizes that he was taught in a teacher-centred way, where completing the syllabus and the assigned texts were the priority, while notes and rote learning were a staple feature. Although he has tried to distance himself from merely getting his students to accumulate facts and knowledge indiscriminately, Kishan does acknowledge that his

teaching is perhaps not as creative as he would wish. However, he is unapologetic about his own teaching strategies. He would like to see more innovation and creativity in the teaching of English literature, but deep down, he feels that he cannot avoid examination-oriented teaching. For him, being creative is time-consuming, especially when he feels the pressure of completing the text and the syllabus. So, while he does try to bring in some elements of creativity, he feels that he has had to compromise on what his teaching could have been, if he had free rein over every aspect of his class.

One of the most challenging aspects of teaching a play is to prepare his students to be able to answer context questions. Very often, because the students are not so accustomed to Shakespearean language, they find it difficult to analyse extracts. It is a different picture with essay questions, which the students are more easily able to answer. As he proceeds with his lesson, Kishan invites them to work individually for a while. As they work, they sometimes have a question that crops up and which Kishan tries to answer. From time to time, the students show their exercise books to their teacher for approval. After fifteen minutes, Kishan invites one of the students to write his ideas on the board in note form and to explain them to the rest of the class. Kishan then asks the others to comment and invites them to add the ideas in their exercise book if they are new to them.

Generally such working sessions are also followed by notes that Kishan provides. Having already discussed some major aspects orally, he then addresses those aspects that were not covered, through the notes. Kishan feels he has to provide those notes, at least to ensure that the students have understood how to critically comment upon a text. Kishan is not always sure of himself when it comes to preparing notes as interpretation of a text may vary from person to person, but he knows that if he is unsure of a particular text, he can always rely upon the advice of some of his friends who work in other secondary schools in his area, especially those friends who are currently doing the PGCE alongside him. At school, during departmental meetings, the general advice that is given is to use group work, or to incorporate audio-visual materials. In any case, Kishan has always had the liberty to use any strategy he wants in class. He sometimes exchanges notes and information about texts with his colleagues so that they are on the same wavelength. Kishan does that because it gives him reassurance that he is on the right track, and not getting confused, whether it is in terms of content or preparation for examinations. Teachers are often very likely to be blamed for the poor performance of their students and he would not want to face problems because of a possible confusion.

At the moment, with the Grade 12 class, Kishan is teaching the play, ***All My Sons****, and the prose fiction component through the collection,* ***Stories of Ourselves****. With the Grade 13 students, he is currently teaching the poetry collection,* ***Songs of Ourselves*** *and Shakespeare's play,* ***A Midsummer Night's Dream****.*

I am curious to know how texts get chosen for the literature class. He states, in a matter-of-fact way, "The members from the English departments from the boys' and the girls' secondary schools meet and consult the CIE prescribed texts list, from which we decide upon the texts."

"Is there any particular consideration or concern that you all have to take into account?" I ask.

"We especially try to see which texts are examinable not only the next year, but the year following that too," he replies. He then adds, "In case our students are going to repeat the year, at least these texts will be available…"

I am curious to know about these texts which seemingly have a longer shelf life.

Kishan then adds, "Both schools decide upon the same texts as it is easier when it comes to preparing exam papers. Sometimes I'll do one paper, and another colleague from the girls' department next door will do another, and that way we can exchange papers. We do this especially during the exams period. While we are two separate departments, it is helpful to have the two schools working together. This avoids confusion, and ensures that both schools are teaching the same thing."

"Is there some comparison, as far as performances and results are concerned, between how the boys and the girls perform?" I ask.

"I prefer not to do so," he answers, "I don't know if it's really good to say that girls do better in literature, in terms of scores, marks, answers, or even in terms of lengths of answers, but the boys with whom I work are no less better, I think. They might be having a class of 15 to 20 students but if I have but 3 to 6 students here, I am satisfied."

Selecting literature texts

Choosing which text to teach is an important decision that Kishan has to take. Kishan always has to think of texts which are accessible to his students in terms of length. He sometimes chooses texts of shorter length but which still will engage his students with the essence of literary analysis. Length, however, is not everything. In the case of novels such as Arundhati Roy's ***The God of Small Things***, for instance, the themes are complex, and Kishan found himself having to prepare more extensively on a number of aspects, ranging from the names of characters to the setting and the caste system. He strongly believes in providing the background and context of particular texts to his students, and wants them to be able to identify the purpose

behind such texts. With Shakespeare's ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, helping students discover the context in which the play was written has enabled them to enjoy the text and its fairytale aspect even more.

Accountability

Accountability in terms of results is a major challenge Kishan has to contend with. Although he has fewer students in his English literature class, results at school level are accounted by percentages in each subject. What worries Kishan is that a single student's poor performance could largely impact upon that percentage, and thus negatively reflect his own performance as a teacher. The fact that he does not consistently get students every year who score well adds to his preoccupation about the general academic level of students enrolled at his school. State schools take up the more academically successful students, which leaves him with students who sometimes are not even able to write English properly. Kishan thus feels he has to work for his survival, given the number of private schools closing down every year. He feels some degree of pressure, as member of the teaching staff, to assist in maintaining the pass rates at an adequate level.

Ever since 2008, when Kishan started teaching in that school, he has quickly become aware of school realities. With the schooling system being predominantly examination-centred, fewer and fewer students are taking up literature as subject as they head towards more scoring or, as he calls it, "fruitful" subjects, such as Travel and Tourism, Sociology, and even Music and PE. Perhaps, as he sometimes ponders, English literature has become obsolete to these young people, with only a handful of people opting for this subject at Principal level at upper secondary level. From Grades 7 to 9, English literature is an examinable subject, with its own paper, and with two periods per week during the year. Moreover, he realises that the fact that this subject is also examined has led some of his peers to adopt a very examination-centred approach to the teaching of texts, where a lot of focus is placed upon exam-based questions, rather than deeper understanding and appreciation of the text. In the end, the texts set for the literature component are often the only reading that the students do, albeit superficially. The way that literature is currently taught in his school at lower secondary could explain why so many students either do not opt for literature when they reach Grade 9, or feel disheartened when they actually do opt for the subject. Kishan sometimes finds that, with his Grade 10 class, some students do not like to speak out, especially since they had no choice besides taking literature as an option. He tries to counter this by using groupings so that, at the end of the day, they have to participate, even if it means voicing out among their own friends. Eventually, his hope is that these students, who initially do not have an affinity with literature, end up understanding and appreciating it more.

Knowing that Kishan is currently going through professional training, I ask him how relevant or useful it has been for him. I am curious, obviously, and at this

point, I realise that I cannot quite get rid of the teacher trainer hat invisibly perched on my head.

Kishan responds, "Through the PGCE, I've encountered strategies, methods and a bit of pedagogy and psychology, so this has helped me get into the shoes of the students, to understand how they would like to be taught."

I wonder if he has been able to transfer the theoretical into the practical as a result of his PGCE course.

"Oh yes," answers Kishan, "Before it used to be so confusing! Now I am more confident, and to support this, we have had a 100% pass rate for literature at Grade 11 level.

According to him, notes are not an absolute necessity even though with the level of his students, he prefers to provide at least some paraphrasing or summary of key aspects:

"Actually, I give notes," he says, "but after we have gone through the text, after the discussion is over, and after I've listened to the students' interpretations. Then it can be that whatever notes I've prepared in advance can tally, or not, with what the students say. So I generally keep the notes-giving till a later stage, because I feel that if I give the notes at the very beginning, the students will treat it as gospel-truth, as if these are the right notes to score marks. I prefer letting them come up with their own points and interpretations, based on their own research and they can even refute my perception of things as well."

"Has that ever happened?" I am curious to know.

"Well," he replies, "as I view it, literature is dependent upon people's perceptions and it is not necessary that others believe what I believe. There was a text last year at Grade 13, where one of the students did not appreciate that I was condemning a character. I felt free to voice out my views as I had been working with these students for the last four, five years and had a good rapport. They were able to see my point and I was able to accept their viewpoint as well. If I say, for example, that the character of Macbeth, or Iago in ***Othello****, is a villain, for some people today, he might be a hero! So I have to accept that my interpretation might not be the only approach."*

Using the Cultural Model

Generally, Kishan does not provide extensive background information to the texts he teaches but he encourages the students to do background research on the authors and time periods being studied. The focus usually tends to be on the plot, characters and themes, to start with. From

his experience, he feels that certain texts require more input in terms of background knowledge. Usually, for short stories and novels, he provides some background information on the text, and the author as well as some notes because some of his students find prose texts such as novels bulky. The additional challenge is to complete those texts and complete the syllabus because of examination purposes, and he sometimes feels that he is rushing through the text when he should be developing his students' critical responses. One way he tries to address this challenge is to provide extra support outside classroom hours, whether it be during library periods, or during holiday time.

Kishan then throws in this question: "Do you think that, for a woman of that century, Titania was bold?"

Kishan prefers to highlight the cultural context to show its role in the construction of meaning in the text. For instance, Shakespeare presented his female protagonist in sharp contrast with the expected norms of the time that guided behaviour in Elizabethan times. For the students, Titania might be bold but they might not see her behaviour as being out of place, given contemporary gender representations in popular culture. However, Kishan wants his students, who are firmly anchored in the 21st century, to understand how strongly Titania would have stood out to an Elizabethan audience, as she defied conventions that generally would require her to bow down before her husband. In fact, he wants them to understand how it is this disobedience and the punishment which is visited upon her eventually which drive the narrative of the play forward, so that the so-called "wayward" and wilful wife is brought back to a more "obedient" state. It is this idea of how culture shapes behaviour and relationships in a society which Kishan also wants to highlight in this lesson.

Developing personal response

As the class proceeds, Kishan asks his students about their personal response to the quarrel between Titania and Oberon. He prefers listening to their views rather than imposing a definitive and authoritarian version of the story, although he does step in from time to time when he senses that the students are not providing a convincing interpretation of the text. It is his belief that holding those classroom discussions will enable him to ascertain whether learning is taking place. For a number of years, Kishan has tried out this strategy in class, and the fact that there were empathic questions set for the examination paper, which tapped into students' understanding of character and plot and their ability to relate to them, made it easier for him to teach literature this way. However, Kishan now feels a bit insecure as this type of question is now no longer set in the examination paper. So, while building students' empathy in relation to characters in the text is still a valuable exercise, they cannot directly transfer this understanding to the examination paper.

As this class ends, Kishan invites the students to keep the pages they had worked on in their revision files for this subject, and he wraps up the lesson by giving a homework question based on the actions and behaviour of Titania and Oberon in Act 2, scene 2 of ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. To encourage them, he concludes that marks will be allocated for this written task.

Unlike drama, poetry is perhaps more challenging for Kishan to teach.

"I sometimes feel that the language in poetry can present difficulties. The students are not so responsive to poetry; they have to be given more time. For drama, it goes on very smoothly as they've had drama texts at Grades 11 and 12. When I did ***A Midsummer Night's Dream****, they knew stage directions and so on, but with poetry, it's so concise that sometimes to find information is difficult," he states.*

"What sort of preparation do you give them, then?" I inquire.

"It is expected that the students will have to take the poem apart and analyse the poem. Whatever be their interpretations, I mediate them; I accept them. They might be right, or they might be wrong. But I let them voice out before I give out my interpretation," Kishan replies.

I ask him why he prefers this approach.

With a smile, Kishan replies, "Teachers can have different approaches to teaching poetry. You can have a mere reading of the text, which is more bookish, and more traditional, but which could lead to people not liking poetry. If a teacher knows his learners very well, he will try to teach them according to their level, abilities, tastes and likings. Perhaps they already have some background knowledge of poetry. In this case, I will have to change the strategy and approach of teaching poetry."

He gives me an example of a student who has recently joined his literature class with no prior literature background:

"I have this one student who has never done any literature but who has gone into this subject combination at Grade 12 level because he had no other alternative and because of his grades in English, and not because he likes English literature. This student has a bit of a problem, especially since the other students have been doing literature for a while."

"What do you intend to do, then?" I ask.

Kishan replies, "In his case, I make him read more, approach his friends in class, know what normally should be written, or how it should be approached, how it should be read, and so on. In any case, if you come up with a new poem, then it's important to ensure that the background, the milieu, the way of thinking and the school of thought of that poet are understood by the students.

Teaching Poetry

Today is Poetry class with the Grade 11 students. The poem being discussed in class is "Underwoods" by Ben Jonson, which is featured in the poetry collection, ***Songs of Ourselves***. For a long time, Kishan has felt uncertain about the teaching of poetry and has even gone to the extent of avoiding to teach it, because he is aware that there are so many ways of understanding it. It had been particularly challenging since he also had to teach it at lower secondary, with low-performing students. When he had joined the school as an English teacher, Kishan had not been too surprised to note that not many boys tended to opt for English literature at upper secondary level. Eventually, even he started to think that perhaps literature was not meant for students in his school, and that he should not concentrate on teaching it. Now, however, even with the few students on board at Grade 12 and Grade 13 levels, he realizes that he has to do his best to tackle it, even though he knows some of his students have little background in literature study.

Challenges in teaching poetry

Kishan has about thirty poems to complete over two years for the poetry component of the examination paper with the students. He has come up with a method of teaching those poems, preferring to take up those poems which have been written by the same author, or in the same period so that there might be some continuity and familiarity, at least from a contextual aspect. He also bases his selection of poems on the popularity of some of the poets, such as Shakespeare, for instance, who is already a familiar figure for some of his students. In such a case, it is an advantage since the students have already been exposed to the cultural and historical background of the author. However, he realizes that it might also be challenging to present a writer they initially encountered as a playwright as a poet, as there is a different dimension to the author's writing which they now have to study.

Sometimes, Kishan feels that the language itself can be challenge when it comes to teaching literature, especially poetry. Getting students who have not been accustomed to poetry to read verses and make sense of what lies between the lines and between the words can be quite difficult. In his poetry classes, Kishan tends to focus on the themes, imagery and style of the poet. As preparation, he often provides a paraphrase or summary of the poem to facilitate understanding of the content. In a subsequent session, he would then focus on stylistic devices, atmosphere and tone. Very often, Kishan would attempt to draw their attention to common themes or elements of style that are present in the different poems in the selection. He prefers to let them discover those similarities by themselves, although sometimes he has to intervene to provide a clearer interpretation.

Finding practical ways to discuss the poem

All the students are expected to prepare the poem for today's lesson but he has assigned two students to discuss the imagery in the text and to bring pictures that represent the themes in the poem. Kishan sticks the two pictures brought by the students on the whiteboard, with captions labelling them as the "oak tree" and the "lily". He then invites one student to write his ideas on the board underneath the picture of the lily, basing himself on information from the poem, as well as some of the background research he has carried out. As the student finishes writing, Kishan tells the rest of the class to think about the ideas written down by their friend, and then invites another student to write his points under the picture of the oak tree. When this is done, Kishan asks the whole class whether they agree with the points presented by their friends and whether they agree with the poet. One challenge which he anticipates is the fact that most of his students are not familiar with either plant but he expects them to have at least looked up pictures or done a minimum of research on those aspects before coming to class.

Kishan prefers to provide a practical way into the text, as he finds that poetic texts and their language tend to confuse some of his students. He invites his students therefore to list characteristics of the flower and the tree so that they themselves can see the author's intention behind his poem. Ideas come from different directions and Kishan seizes this opportunity to encourage them to voice out their feelings as well in relation to those two plants and their perceived usefulness. One student thus starts speaking about the decorative aspect of the lily while another one describes the practical applications of wood from the oak tree. At this point, Kishan does not attempt to restrict or direct the ideas coming from the students but he intervenes whenever there is an exaggerated or erroneous fact being stated.

When this discussion is done, Kishan praises the class for their participation, especially the two who had the task of preparing the notes, and goes through some of the notes listed on the board, adding and clarifying where he feels there is a need for this. He then directs them to the poem again, drawing their attention to specific lines in the text:

"In the 6th line, the poet refers to "May". Why do you think there is this reference? Is it a month or a season that the writer is trying to convey?"

He also draws their attention to the implied contrast between the lily and the oak. At this point, Kishan brings the context to the fore by asking the students why an author like Ben Jonson would attribute importance to plants and trees. Through this discussion, Kishan wants to draw their attention to the symbolism of those images and to show how the poet is noting the importance of balance in nature, which perhaps he feels ought also be represented in human society. The students seem to appreciate this approach to the poem, which they then try to relate to the notes they have been given.

Preparing for the examinations

As he wraps up the lesson, Kishan tells them to prepare the next poem, and asks them to focus on some of the stylistic devices used in the poem. Kishan believes that it is very important to prepare his students for the examinations, especially in terms of writing. He wants his students to pay close attention to time management especially given the length of essay they are expected to write, which may determine whether they get a good grade. For him, practice is very important to be able to put down one's ideas on paper. Kishan prefers, when it comes to providing guidance, not to give his students a sort of model answer. Usually, after having carried out a test or corrected some class work, he revisits the lesson during a remedial session. During such a session, he can provide guidance on common mistakes and addresses specific aspects which have resulted in lower grades than expected.

Kishan often however feels rueful that he cannot prepare everything for the student to understand. Sometimes a lesson which he had planned for two periods eventually takes four periods to complete. Whether it be for drama, poetry or prose, he always needs to verify if the students have understood. Once, when he was teaching a short story, he had to explain the word "dowry", which many of the students did not know, and that led to further discussions on the cultural background of the text. With upper secondary students, however, he knows that he can expect them to do some research work and come to class well prepared. Kishan remains proud of his achievements, knowing that because of his encouragement, some students have taken up literature as a subject. When he had just joined the school, English was not being offered at either Main or Subsidiary level. He is particularly proud of one of his students, who, a year before, took English at subsidiary level, even though the subject was not being offered by the boys' department, and who, following his guidance, sometimes had to go to the girls' department, follow the classes there, and sit for the exams here. However, with his current group of 3 students, he feels satisfied that he has been able to follow them since the last year.

When he tries to evaluate what his students have learnt from his classes, Kishan gives his students their due. He feels that those who have ventured into studying literature till their A' levels tend to do well academically and he feels proud that his students get selected to participate in co-curricular activities such as the Model United Nations mainly because they do well in English literature and the General Paper. He feels that, though literature, his students have enriched their language. They are much more confident with their own handling of the English language and can confidently intervene during school activities such as the Prize Giving Day. Kishan also feels, as he discusses with his students, that the latter are able to understand others better.

As he says goodbye to his students, Kishan is satisfied with class he has just had. He hopes this particular class will follow the footsteps of their elders who are currently on their final year. He realizes, however, that for his class to be a success, it cannot always be a one-way traffic, and that he has to keep thinking of ways to involve his students in building up understanding of the texts they are studying.

4.3 Rita's Narrative: You have to work within certain parameters

Prologue to the narrative

We are both of us sitting in a science laboratory, perhaps an odd space for two people to chat about the teaching of English literature, but this cannot be helped. It is the only space that is currently free and we are both seated on high stools in front of a spotless table. A lab attendant comes in, has a brief chat with Rita, and then exits quietly. We now have the space to ourselves and can discuss freely.

Rita is in her mid-fifties and has been teaching literature for nearly 18 years. She has worked with both lower and upper secondary students during her career. She now holds the post of head of department within the English department in this urban state secondary school. We have had the occasion to discuss in the past, so I do not feel there is much ice-breaking to be done on my part, but there is a tentativeness, which over time, I realise, is natural to Rita's personality. We start off with some comments about the school in general and then I start asking her about her own experience as an English literature teacher.

Rita's Narrative

As the bell rings, Rita picks up her bag and books and heads towards her Grade 10 class. The school cross-country race had taken place the day before. Sometimes she wonders how she can get anything done in a year, what with all the school activities in this state secondary school, not to forget public holidays! She scans through the class, looking at the students who have turned up. She does not have high hopes for today's attendance: some of them have already informed her that they would be absent.

At present, Rita is teaching ***Richard III*** and ***An Ideal Husband*** to the Grade 12 students. Sometimes she and her colleagues opt for a historical play because even if the context is different from their students' experience of life, it is easier for them as it is based, to some extent, on historical events which the students can look up while researching. If there is a protagonist like Richard III, from the beginning of the play till the end, it is easier to follow his development in the play and compare to the actual historical figure. With the Grade 10, she is teaching Priestley's play, ***An Inspector Calls*** as well as Stevenson's ***Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde***. ***An Inspector Calls*** is set in the 20th century, which Rita thinks might be easier for the students to understand. However, this is not enough. She knows she has to make the characters sound interesting so that her students start getting involved in the text. She is aware, however, that it might not be easy for most of her students to imagine the life of a rich industrialist as such an experience might not be part of their reality.

In today's lesson, Rita's objective is to get the Grade 10 students to identify details that will contribute to characterisation in ***An Inspector Calls***. This exercise also will enable her students to study this section of the text in depth and allow her to check their understanding of events leading to this part of the play. Since she has only limited time to proceed, Rita has already selected which parts she wants to teach and which aspects of character to let the students discover. She wishes she had more time to go in depth to

develop upon some of the ideas raised and focus on language aspects in the play but she finds herself compelled to rush on to complete the syllabus. This means that she chooses to focus on mostly themes and characterisation, which to her are essential components of literary study at that level.

As they read the extract, Rita points out elements which explain why one event is the consequence of a decision taken previously by the character. She also asks simple questions to the class to enable them to move beyond the events in the play and to identify people's motivations for acting in a particular way.

With the lower secondary students, her focus remains mostly on comprehension and general appreciation of literature as narrative, where students reproduce facts, memorise events and are able to answer questions such as who, what, when, where and how. Things become more complex when the students reach Grade 9. At that point, they are required to start comparing and contrasting, and giving brief explanations for character motivation and plot progression. This is where analysis begins in earnest. Then, as the students proceed to Grade 10, Rita gets them to pay more attention to the language. For instance, she draws their attention to the use of irony in the text, helping them identify elements in the text that suggest this irony. At Grade 12, she guides her students towards a deeper study of literary texts, but this is where she often faces difficulties with some of her students who do not pay much attention and do not seem to grasp the gist of the text. What she has noticed is that her students seem to appreciate Mauritian texts in English which are studied at lower secondary, such as ***Tales from Mauritius***, where they can relate to the familiar context, for instance, living on an island. However, since there are no set Mauritian texts in the syllabus at upper secondary level, extra effort has to be made to familiarise the students with the historical, socioeconomic and cultural background of the texts.

Text selection: affinities and aversions

Rita is very careful with the texts that she teaches. She knows that while there are benefits in getting students to relate to the content of a particular text, to better understand it, there are also challenges in doing so. Her choice of texts thus reflects this concern with the content and themes as there are some students who, according to her, could feel upset about what they read. Personally, Rita avoids texts which have sexual connotations or violence as she finds such aspects challenging to explain to the adolescents in her class and too emotionally charged for herself to discuss impartially. She recalls that when she was teaching ***A Winter's Tale***, she was also undergoing some stressful moments at a personal level. She could not help homing in on specific aspects that 'spoke' to her more during that stressful time and she found it difficult to go deeper into those themes.

She also recalls a Grade 11 class where she had to teach Ngugi's ***The River Between*** to boys and girls. Faced with issues such as sexuality and genital mutilation that cropped up in the text, Rita found that she just could not teach that novel to that particular audience. She had eventually asked her friend to take over this particular class, while she took her place for another text. Sometimes, issues crop up in texts which do not make her feel comfortable. While she feels she probably can discuss those issues with girls, she does not relish the prospect of teaching the same to boys or a mixed group. It is all down to her level of comfort, she realises. With an affinity for the abstract, she finds it difficult to teach texts that bring forth nitty-gritty details, such as biology or sexuality. She realises that she cannot always resort to negotiating with a colleague to teach each other's texts. In some cases, she just has to teach the text which has been selected for the students which is not always a sweet experience when there is no affinity for the text in question. Rita is thus mindful of the issues raised during the discussions. Since literature is also about conflict and serious issues pertaining to identity, she feels that some of her

students might feel hurt and shut themselves off from discussion. She notices those themes to be recurrent in some postcolonial texts and avoids teaching these types of texts as far as possible.

"So how do you choose a particular text?" I ask.

"Well, we choose them together, as a department. We look at what Cambridge proposes, for this particular year, and then we go and try to find out whether those books are available. We also do some research to find out what sort of books they are: what story, what kind of language, whether it will appeal to our students or not. Text choices often depend on decisions taken at departmental level to assist those students who are considered as "average" and who also do not have a literature background", Rita replies.

"So, it's entirely a collective decision?", I ask.

"Yes, but it also depends on our preferences as well," she replies. "And if we have a certain affinity towards one text, we can sometimes swap with a colleague and we can then take the text we prefer. For instance, if a colleague prefers to teach ***As You like It*** *instead of* ***Corolianus****, then she can swap with me as I don't mind teaching* ***Corolianus****. Another colleague likes teaching poetry, while I myself prefer drama. So when it comes to allocating classes devoted to specific genres, we share amongst ourselves. You know, I would not want, as Head of Department, to impose upon someone who is clearly uncomfortable with a particular text. We work as a team and we need to take their wishes into consideration."*

A preference for drama

Rita starts her literature class with the Grade 10 by asking her students how they fared in their previous class test. Once everyone is settled down, she announces the topic of today's lesson, which is the exploration of character development in J.B. Priestley's play, ***An Inspector Calls***. Rita is particularly fond of drama as genre. Not only does she like it, but she also finds it easier for her students to understand. She has realised that many of her students do not even bother to go and read when longer texts are assigned to them. With drama texts, Rita does not face the same worry as they tend to be shorter texts. She usually starts the school year with the drama text since she believes that doing so will allow her students to do a bit of roleplay. As she is also an English teacher, she sees the value of developing oral skills as well, which are going to be useful for the oral examinations in English scheduled at Grade 11 level. This is, however, something that she gets students to do as early as Grade 7, by giving them lines to read aloud as well as some roleplay. Even though they might read from the text, coming in front of the class and speaking aloud is, from Rita's point of view, an important aspect of personality development.

What strategy to adopt for prose texts?

When it comes to novels, though, getting students to read one after the other can become monotonous. Rita is the first to admit it; she does not like teaching novels. In fact, despite having taught novels for a number of years, she still perceives that novels as a problem as she is not always sure which teaching strategy works best for this genre. Later on, in the school year, she is planning to teach ***Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*** to her Grade 10 students. For her, this is manageable as it is not a very long text. She finds that she does not have the time to complete all the chapters in class if she has a longer novel to teach.

Experience, however, dictates to her that it is essential to get them to read some essential sections from the novel in class. Rita thinks that she is like any other Mauritian teacher in going over the texts in that manner. She however sometimes makes use of other strategies such as getting the students to prepare and present summaries, or inviting them to discuss sections in the text in groups. She believes that such activities are bound to get the students to read their chapter.

The ambiguity within literary interpretations

Rita loves reading poetry but she is ambivalent about teaching it since she feels there is scope for a lot of ambiguity in the interpretation. She finds it difficult to address this issue of ambiguity when students are still very tentative in their own interpretations and often rely on the teacher to do the explaining. When it comes to teaching poetry, Rita refuses to teach it in a mechanical way. She does not want her students to just look to items within the text, and tell them to "look for alliteration here" or "look for personification there". Literary analysis of poetry, which also involves looking closely at the elements of style and language, is something she equates to 'dissection' and this does not appeal to her at all. The same could be said for modernist and postmodern fiction and drama. Rita, who sometimes styles herself as "old-school" is wary about teaching non-conventional drama like Beckett's ***Waiting for Godot*** as well as the works of Pinter and Stoppard, which sometimes get included in the syllabus but she appreciates teaching the works of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller.

Devising her own style of teaching literature

With her students in mind, Rita often prepares a series of small questions before she starts her class to identify weaknesses. Short questions, she finds, are helpful. When she gives them essay questions straight away, her students are often lost. Structured questions allow her to make them explore the text in segments and even then, she has to scaffold to help them have a clearer view of the text. She remembers teaching ***Richard III*** to students who, halfway through the text, still could not figure out what was happening. However, she understands their predicament: there are many characters and many of them have names that the students are not really familiar with. In such cases, she often uses diagrams, or timelines to make sense of events and relationships. This, in a way, is what she likes to do; it's her style. As she explains the scene from ***An Inspector Calls***, Rita also highlights the different conventions in the play, including the stage directions and props in the scene. She then draws their attention to the way speech is conveyed in the scene, pointing at the effects of the pauses. She also asks them to read out some of the quotes using the appropriate tone of voice.

"Does feeling rotten, "pourri"[24], does it feel good? How can you convey that when you say it?", she asks the class.

A few timid answers ring out at first, and then more confidently, some start discussing the scene.

Going beneath the surface: "literature is not about storytelling"

Rita uses the scene to discuss the plot of the play. She draws their attention to the development of the characters over time and how this particular scene sheds light upon the protagonist. As she discusses the characters, she tries to involve them by referring to their lived experiences, referring to local shopping malls so that they may understand Sheila Birling's experience in the shop. She then invites them to look for a quote in the text to illustrate the point they want to discuss. This is soon followed with another question where she asks her students to identify moments now in the text where Sheila

[24] Translated from Kreol Morisyen: "rotten"

shows some degree of sensitivity. Rita is aware that her students might not always recall the objectives of literature study or put in place the different skills that are required. She has to remind them that literature is not about storytelling. The challenge, therefore, is to go beneath the surface. However, when it comes to analysing literature, she finds that some of the theory can be very technical, especially when analysing stylistic features.

As we talk, Rita tries to explain the situation she works in.

"You see", she says, "It's not just that the students do not read enough. They also have a number of distractions."

"What sort of distractions?" I inquire.

"Well, the school runs a lot of activities. Then we have many organisations that solicit the participation of our students and the Ministry itself sends a calendar of activities and insists that you participate. So, it's not surprising to find oneself missing one or two periods at times."

I ask her how she works with this limitation.

She replies, "I sometimes use the activity periods to continue my literature classes! Since I do not have much time, I do not spend a lot of time on the background of the texts. What I then do is to tell the students to prepare first and then we can extrapolate a bit." She wryly smiles as she continues, "Of course, not everyone will do it. Some are discouraged when they find their friends not participating so much."

"What do you do to involve these students?" I ask.

"What I try to do is to call upon their personal experiences, or I myself volunteer some information about a personal experience. That is not always easy; some students are really like oysters! What I try to do is to rope in the more outspoken students. I often find that the more timid then start opening up gradually."

Different attitudes to literature

While some students readily participate in those classroom discussions, Rita is disappointed with the indifference of some others during that lesson. Sometimes she has to remind them that all it takes is a little more patience and effort to get into the text. With her experience, she knows she can speak frankly to the girls, so she says, "You know, this attitude of 'I don't know, and I don't care', this is not how one studies literature." She hopes this will get them to realise how much they are expected to be involved when studying a literary text. Rita finds a difference between the students she has now and students she had, only some years back. She attributes this difference to changes in the way students learn, irrespective of the subject or the field, nowadays. Back then, she notes that most of her students did their best to read and know their texts. When the students were in Grade 12, she would spend the first year giving out notes and laying down the foundations of literature study. She would gradually let them explore the text on their own and do their own research in the second year. Even those in Grade 11 put in more effort and enjoyment in discovering and exploring characters and themes in the texts they were studying. They were thus more ready to formulate and share views.

Developing interest and enjoyment of literature

Rita believes that a good performance in English literature is connected with the love and enjoyment of reading. She sees the English literature teacher's personality as being very important in assisting this process. While there are those students who naturally enjoy reading, or whose parents have taught them or encouraged them to read, there are those who do not. Rita believes that it is those students that the teacher needs to target. Rita is very much aware of the predicament in which some students find themselves when they opt for a subject which they think is going to be rewarding in terms of grades but whose objectives are still unclear to them. Rita has noticed that many of the students who have opted for English literature at Grade 12 level come without a literature background. This means that they have not studied literature at Grade 10 and Grade 11 level, which is when literature is offered as a distinct subject. This, coupled with the fact that they are not very proficient in the English language itself makes Rita's task in the classroom quite challenging. Even before she starts tackling the stylistic aspects of the text or to venture into the components of the narrative, she has to ascertain whether the students have actually understood what they are reading.

Using Kreol to bridge the gap

Language is a complex issue for Rita. As her class is focused mostly on literature study and analysis, there is very little time to work on students' language skills. While she tries to do her best to equip her students with knowledge and skills to address literature texts, she finds some students in class who do not understand the language itself, or who are not able to read a text closely or identify basic stylistic features of a text. Moreover, some of her students do not communicate well in English either in speaking or in writing. They lack the essential vocabulary to be able to argue and thus feel insecure when it comes to expressing themselves in class. One way she gets around this is to allow them to speak in Kreol. When they do so, they are able to come up with interesting ideas and are able to argue their way around a particular issue, theme or character. She realises then that they are able to think critically.

Rita also finds herself using Kreol, as well as gestures and movement at times, which makes explanation often enjoyable and interesting. She also tries to get them to come forward and involve them in a number of activities. By so doing, Rita is confident that her students will also start appreciating their texts better. She often uses Kreol, alongside French and English during explanations and discussions. Using Kreol, which is both Rita and the students' mother tongue, enables her to bridge certain gaps in comprehension and allows them to voice out more openly. Then she can safely shift into English once she knows they have understood what she is communicating to them. While she knows many of her students have good ideas, they however cannot communicate them well in English, which is a second language to them. Sometimes, during discussions, her students are able to offer pertinent commentaries and suggestions but this is not often demonstrated in writing. Whenever she uses Kreol, Rita finds that her students like it, especially when they have had little exposure to canonical literary authors such as Chaucer or Shakespeare.

To Rita's chagrin, the literature class contributes in a sense to getting them more involved but it does not make them better English language learners. This in turn leads to lower performances in the examinations since, even if the majority can give their opinion, they cannot, in her view, express it in writing. She has had some pleasant surprises, though, with some of her students who had not really studied literature before, but who actually developed an affinity with the subject and did well for their examinations. She credits those students who have been able to make some progress in developing insights into the subject, especially since Cambridge promotes the development of insights into texts, whether it be personal or comments about the language or style of the text. However she is also

sometimes helpless when she finds some students having barely progressed over the two years. She is forced to admit that with her current batch of students, it is an uphill battle as they require a great amount of scaffolding on her part. They may be more technology-savvy but they do not use it to become better informed. While they seem to have access to an almost infinite store of knowledge via the internet, many of her students do not bother researching the authors and books they are studying. When asked to carry out research, quite a few just download the notes and present them as they are in class, without any personal opinion. Moreover, many of them do not go through their literature texts. They seem to have other priorities. She knows that reading requires spare time where the students need to sit down, a pencil in hand, and start reading on their own.

"The students do not read…"

What worries her is that she has been noting a kind of apathy and reluctance in some students, which reflects in the results as well. Rita's colleagues often tell her that their students do not read at home. They might do so up to Grade 9 but many of them will claim as from Grade 12 that they do not have the time to read. Rita has noted a decline in the reading culture amongst her students at school and she is aware this might be happening in other schools as well. She understands that this is where she needs to intervene and assist her students. She thus has to prepare questions and get the students to sit in groups and study the text closely together. Rita is not entirely convinced that those who are regular readers tend to do better in literature. However, she feels that the habit of reflecting upon what is being read is not established from the onset but needs to be cultivated. She sometimes suspects that technology itself might be diverting her students' attention, with online messaging and social media, leaving less or no time to actually read. They then expect Rita to come and tell them what is happening. Rita is not entirely sure that just providing notes will address this issue. This limited involvement has an impact upon the time it takes to complete a text, especially when there are other texts on the syllabus. When not much progress is made, Rita starts doubting herself and feeling frustrated. She tries to look at her own practice to see what is not working with her students.

Her experience as a student of literature

For some students, the way that they are taught has a profound impact upon how they perceive a particular subject. Rita recalls her own experiences as a student at secondary school, with books such as Jane Austen's ***Pride and Prejudice*** or Shakespeare's ***The Tempest***. She remembers how she felt when the teacher used to skip sections of the text, leaving her disoriented and unwilling to open the book on her own. Not going in depth in those texts meant that she did not feel connected to the plot or to the themes. She and her friends would sit, huddled up in class, and listen to the teacher's explanations. They were rarely solicited to participate in class, nor did they venture to voice out much. She however recalls appreciating her poetry lessons, during which she encountered poets such as Wordsworth and Milton. Listening to the poems being read and discussing them afterwards awoke a sense of wonder for the mystical which steadily unfolded over the years. This was a sharp contrast with studying novels like ***Pride and Prejudice***, which, with its talk of marriage, had seemed so foreign to her! This type of exposure, coupled with the input of some literary criticism in the last years of secondary school meant that she felt some of those texts too heavy to understand. She learnt a lot, and in fact, feels that she did well, academically. However, she often felt, at the time that she did not know what exactly she was learning and how she would use that knowledge. She sometimes wonders what was special about her poetry class, which made her absorb and react so much. The same teacher who taught poetry to her also taught General Paper and used the same methods, that is, to explain, discuss and give notes. However, she found herself seeping in the poetry session like a sponge whereas the General Paper sessions left her indifferent. This leads her to think that teaching literature also has to take into account the

experiences of the learner. She believes that literature is not only the teacher's concern and that students' input is essential to know what is happening in their minds as they encounter and think about literature.

Rita finds that some of her students who enjoy reading actually do quite well, even if they have missed out on literature classes at lower secondary level. The fact that they are regular readers, whatever be the type of texts they read, gives some of these students an entry into the literary world. She would like to see more young people read and is saddened that Parents-Teachers Association meetings tend to be dominated by money or disciplinary measures when they could talk about means of getting the students to read more.

For Rita, this is where she has to intervene, by motivating her students, getting them to interact, and instilling in them a genuine interest in literature. She cannot rely on the assurance that her notes only will suffice, as some students forget what a "thee" or a "thou" stands for by the end of the second year. Given that many of her students actually stop coming to school right from Term 2 itself, she tries to ensure that they are able to learn the techniques and get them to work in groups and study by themselves. She believes that once they have grasped this, they can study independently, even if they are not regular or stop coming to class altogether. As long as her students have acquired some basic text study skills, she remains confident they will do well.

"So, what works, with the students that you have?" I enquire.

Rita replies, "Well, I have found that students need to be involved with the text. Whether they are reading something aloud, role playing or even discussing, if they feel it is their lesson, and their class, they will definitely become involved."

"How do you get them involved, then?" I query.

"Well", she replies, "you have to activate their schemata and find out what they already know! I try to get those who know to initiate the discussion.

She pause a while and then resumes:

"They can enact roles or specific scenes. I think this is important. There is more enjoyment and a sense of fulfilment, you know, when you've participated, and stood in front of the class. You have an audience, and you can voice out your thoughts on what we have been discussing. This, especially for girls, is very important when it comes to countering the hidden curriculum."

"So the literature class helps them to find their own voice?" I ask.

"I hope so!" she replies, "by getting them involved in discussion and role play, perhaps this will motivate them more. My aim is to help them think about the characters, go in depth, look for evidence in a text, develop their critical skills and enjoy themselves in the process. That's my style!"

"Not everyone can or will participate all the time, though," I point out.

She nods in acknowledgement and states, "We have to be realistic; it doesn't always work. Left on their own, it is sure that some will never venture out of their comfort zone. Once we do those activities in Term 1, they are going to apply the techniques throughout the coming two

years. Even those who are quiet and watching now will get the opportunity to voice out eventually. Seeing their friends voice out will perhaps motivate them."

"Certainly, that seems to be a positive thing to look forward", I suggest.

"But you can't force them," she replies. "They all have their own learning styles. If a student likes to learn in her own way, without too much of exposure, I think it's fine! Many students are inhibited. Younger children are more spontaneous but older students are more reticent and withdrawn, and this becomes challenging when you want them to react and participate. I know that some girls are socialised in such a way that they do not voice out at home and they reproduce the same behaviour at school. However, I have told them, 'Home is home, school is school. This is the world outside and you now have different roles to play. The role of a daughter is not the same as the role of a student.' Slowly they also come to realise that there is something odd about the social expectations they are expected to meet. As you can realise, the teacher has to be more actively involved. We cannot overlook that."

Helping students overcome shyness

Some students are very quiet at home, and yet when they come to school, they are required to voice out. Rita acknowledges that this is challenging. Some of the quiet students, as Rita has often noted, tend to find their own way and do well. When Rita reflects upon her own life journey, she realises that she became an English literature teacher even though she barely opened her mouth at school. Her own style is now a mix of a number of strategies acquired over time. Her PGCE has equipped her with a different set of strategies as well as a different conception of teaching. Prior to her PGCE, Rita used to give her students summaries and explanation only. Now, however, she has learnt to involve students. She used to perceive a sort of wall between herself and her students but now she makes an effort to reach out to them. She uses scaffolding through smaller questions to lead her students towards a major theme.

Being creative does not necessarily yield expected results

When Rita tries to be creative, she notices that there are students who enjoy literature and who participate enthusiastically in class discussions. Rita often feels good after leaving such a class. However what worries her is that some of these very active participants obtain a C or a D for their examinations. Having done some thinking on this, Rita believes that when it comes to answering questions for the exams, these students simply have not mastered the technique. This upsets her as the students seem to be quite analytical and show good understanding of the text when they participate. She realises that they cannot organise their work satisfactorily, did not support their claims with evidence from the text, and if ever they make a critique, it is not solid enough. Some of them also leave a number of grammatical mistakes. Having recently had the opportunity to look at the work by girls from a neighbouring state college, Rita cannot help comparing their work with that of her students. She notices that those girls have put in some extra effort in terms of personal research and are more careful with their language. There are however, others in her class, who may not be so active in terms of classroom participation, but who have nevertheless scored better grades. She thus finds herself thinking about the importance of preparing her students for the examinations.

Rita often feels that there is pressure upon educators to upgrade the quality of student performances since these results apparently reflect their own performance as educators. While she is fairly satisfied with her students' results, she still feels there is something lacking. She worries about the causes of

absenteeism, where many students prefer to stay away from school and take tuitions instead. She sometimes thinks of the absurdity of people going for tuitions on a Saturday to receive coaching on up to eight books in a single day. The fact that some of her students think the tuitions are enough to prepare themselves for the examinations baffles her. So, this leaves her wondering whether school is boring and not innovative enough. She also wonders whether the students will stay back, especially during the third term, even if she innovates in class.

From time to time, Rita provides small insights to her students so that they are better prepared to work with literary texts. She provides indications on finding evidence from the text, telling them to keep facts on the left hand side of the exercise book, and the evidence from the text on the right side, reminding them that just stating facts about a character, theme or text is not enough. She advises them to learn a few quotations by heart so that they may have some textual material to refer to when they write their essays. Her aim in suggesting these small strategies is to ensure that the literature text is not alien to them by the end of the year.

I ask Rita about her own definition of teaching.

She shrugs as she answers, "I don't know. It's really a mix of everything. The one thing that stands out is that I try to involve the students. Even that depends on certain expectations you have of the students and the way they are learning in class."

"So how do you generally proceed?" I enquire.

She smiles as she says, "You have prepared something, so you come and observe the students; then you ask a few questions and find out that they are ***not*** *going to speak, and then you end up resorting to the old methodology of explanations, because time is running out! Sometimes you keep prodding the students and nothing comes out. This is not the case with everyone, though. However, many students, my Grade 10 included, have been with other teachers before. They are conditioned by a certain type of teaching and might not be used to alternative teaching methods."*

Notes as assistive tool for students

Rita finds that she often does not have the time to cover a full text, even though she herself experienced similar situations as a student. So she then provides the summary or identifies some extracts to discuss. When it comes to drama, she makes an effort to go through the entire text, even though it sometimes happens that she has to gloss over certain parts. Rita also tries to provide some background knowledge to the texts being studied. In the past, she used to give a lot of background information to her students until she realised that it was not necessary to have so much information. What she wants her students to focus on is the text, and as they proceed with reading it, she makes a point to highlight social, historical or cultural items that need to be noted. While she does provide notes, there are moments during the reading of the text or while discussing, where she points out that there are events and elements in the text which are open to interpretation. Rita understands that leaving texts to open interpretation can lead students who are fairly new at analysing texts to feel uncertain and lost. So the notes also act as an assistive tool to the students, showing them how to frame and construct arguments around points in the literary text. Guidance, therefore, is essential, in the eyes of Rita. She tries to point out to her students that there are other interesting ways of discovering a text, and that reading a text on one's own

can be enriched by discussion afterwards, so that students can get a better feel of the text. She moreover appreciates some literary texts that also come with guidelines on key aspects on the text, and she often invites her students to consult these notes and guidelines in the text, with her assistance.

Rita is very much aware of the limitations of giving notes, especially when it comes to understanding the complexity of emotions in a text. Rather than going for longer texts which require a lot of notes, she thus prefers to go for shorter texts that she can work with, along with her students. This is one of the reasons why she prefers drama instead of novels. She realises that one cannot explore a text fully if one doesn't know the text. What she tries to do is to spot those students who are more outspoken and who can see the connections, and get them to discuss the points in class. She finds that this is useful to bring everyone in the picture. What she has realised is that she cannot teach on her own. She has to find allies in the classroom.

The influence of professional training

After having done her PGCE, Rita has become more aware of the importance of interaction. She has realised that students are human beings, persons with their own knowledge. She feels it is essential to trust in the students' own understanding but what is needed however is to access this and encourage it to develop. She recalls that she used to perceive her students as empty vessels to pour knowledge in, in the past. This is no longer the case. She has come to terms with the fact that not all students assimilate information in the same way. This is what she keeps at the back of her mind when she repeats and retells things in class. She sometimes smiles at the reactions of some of her students who will say "Madam, you've said this before." She would then redirect their attention to an aspect they may not have noticed before.

Difference between the language and literature papers

While English literature is often a component of the English language subject in the first years of secondary schooling, and mostly serves the purpose of building up exposure to and appreciation of the English language in various forms, it however diverges in content and aim when students opt for the Literature in English subject at Grade 10 level. Rita sees a great difference in the way she teaches language and literature. As soon as Rita steps into an English language lesson, she knows that there is homework to be corrected; this is not the case in the English literature class most of the time. Work tends to be given and corrected individually, with the feedback either given on individual drafts or on the whiteboard. For Rita, literature is mostly about emotions and feelings. She believes that if she would be remiss if she could not get her students to feel something from the texts they are reading. She thus sometimes uses anecdotes or comparisons to provide a local or topical reference to which the students can relate. In her mind, there is absolutely no doubt that the literature class should not be a language class.

With the different issues that she has to face in class, Rita is often thinking of strategies for teaching literature and for making the class livelier. According to Rita, the literature student needs to feel that the literature class is different from other subjects. The student does not just come, read and work out homework. They have to understand that they are going to use their mind, express their emotions, do in-depth reflection while they relate what they are reading to their own experiences and to the world around them. Rita thinks that literature should be taught in a more dramatized way, where students come forth to deliver at least some lines from the text. She usually gets some of her students to do that, while also showing the way herself. According to Rita, the teacher's background is important: if she

has followed professional courses, and has been able to shed her inhibitions, then will she be able to model this type of strategy in class. She does not want her students to feel that the literature class is reserved only for the extrovert students. She is aware that there are many students who are quieter but who still can do very well academically in this subject.

"So, in what way is the study of literature different from that of language?" I ask.

"For me, literature is the study of human beings. What is interesting with human beings is that they have thoughts and feelings and their reactions are sometimes influenced by their social background. Actually, I think it's the study of human life, and one aspect I particularly like is the psychology of human beings, and how people evolve and change over time, especially due to their interactions with each other. Circumstances also affect the way the plot develops. But literature is not only that; it is the use of language in the text. I would like my students to appreciate how language conveys thoughts and emotions. It is the subtleties of language, that aesthetic part of it which makes literature different from a subject like Psychology."

I am curious to know more about her conception of literature, and so I ask, "Is there a difference when we talk of ***studying*** *literature? What do you focus on, in class?"*

She ponders for a while before responding, "Is there a difference between the literature that one reads and the literature that one learns at school? I guess I did not really think about this before. It is true that literature as a subject has its constraints. When you are teaching for an examination, you have to abide by the syllabus, you stick to one text and do not necessarily refer to others. You have to work within certain parameters."

When I ask her about those parameters, she replies, "You have exams, so that means you have to work closely in relation to your timetable. You have to divide your text into chapters or segments you want to concentrate more upon. What happens very often is that you have to cover that text for the examinations, and take into consideration the various needs of the students. I will not use the term 'superficial' but let's just say that the coverage of that text is not done in as much depth as I would have wished."

Creating a mood for better understanding of the text

There are certain aspects that Rita hopes her students will catch from the discussion or her explanations in class. Rita often thinks that psychology, empathy and understanding the other are key aspects to understanding literature. Indeed, when she goes through the relevant sections of the play she is teaching, she tries to bring out the complexity of characters that develop over time through references to everyday life situations. Rita believes that in the literature class, it is essential to create a mood, which will assist in the interpretation of the text. Rather than starting a class by diving straight into a theme, she will spend some time going into what happened before this particular segment. A lot of preparation is required before she proceeds because Rita realises that there are certain areas that require clarification. What also strikes Rita is the attitude of some of her quieter students who sit together, as if expecting a storytelling session to begin. There is an expectation which is built up in the literature class which she feels strongly in some classes, especially whenever life issues are going to be discussed. She finds this with the Grade 10 class in the way that they engage with the text. Perhaps, Rita ponders, this is where empathy begins, since they know they are discussing human beings, and not words on paper.

Helping her students to see the bigger picture

Even then, she has to limit herself due to time and also due to students' academic level and degree of maturity, which she finds to be a limiting factor when it comes to developing themes further. She finds this lack of maturity to be more obvious in their written productions, where many just summarise, rephrase or narrate the plot, without going deeper into the analysis of the text. Rita feels fulfilled when her students actually demonstrate an overall development, showing a fuller vision of their own. Her idea of a student not being 'mature enough' is someone who sees literature as bits and pieces, who does not see the connections between events, who cannot see the development from the beginning to the end of the text, and who does not see the bigger picture. She tries to direct her students in this direction by asking open-ended, challenging questions and allowing them the space and time to debate events in the text and comparing them with real life. She notes, however, that over the two years of study, some of her students develop in terms of psychology and experience. This leads to a more interested and engaged relationship with the subject itself; an attitude that Rita finds interesting to work with.

Rita tries to provide her students with space for reading and exploring on their own. Usually, she prepares questions on specific chapters and gives them those questions on the spot. So she gets them to interact with the text right here in class. The students thus explore the text at the first level of understanding, by identifying what is happening, who is who, as well as the plot. In between, she slips in some higher-order questions to get them to think and to build empathy. She considers the bulk of the work to be focused on understanding the text. To further develop these skills in her students, Rita gives challenging, open-ended questions to students to get them to imagine themselves as one of the characters, and then to express what they are thinking and doing. By moving away from more factual and direct questions like "what happened in this scene?" and "who did this action?", she is able to tap into students' personal responses which still require the students to go and find information from the text.

Empathic questions, where students are required to imagine themselves as one of the characters in the text, allows them to experience the story from specific perspectives and develop a better understanding of the text. Rita believes that such engagement with the text is the beginning of literary appreciation. She gets her students to relate the text to their own world. For instance, she refers to a film that they have watched. When she is teaching ***Richard III***, she makes a number of references to local and international situations. She asks the students to recall and mention the names of people's whose actions and decisions might seem tyrannical or dictatorial. She feels that if she does not bring them to that more concrete level, it becomes very difficult to get the students to understand.

Teaching by instinct

Rita thinks of herself as being the spontaneous type; this means that while there is some preparation that she does for the lesson she is about to do, and she knows what she intends to cover, she does allow for some flexibility in the way the class will turn out. As a teacher, Rita sometimes teaches by instinct. For instance, while teaching a particular lesson, something can come up which will make her think, "let me use a song here". It may not have been planned, but if it fits the occasion and the aim of the lesson, she spontaneously goes for it. This is why she prefers to teach drama, which fits her approach and which provides her with opportunities to create situations where students can come and do something. The fact that this particular class is a Grade 10 one means that she still can introduce some effective literature learning strategies which will be useful to the students in their appreciation and analysis of literature.

When Rita herself was a student, she used to get a lot of notes which she often did not know how to use. As a teacher now, Rita rarely gives notes as she has seen students haphazardly reproducing notes in their written work without due thought given to the question. Just delivering notes and then leaving the class is not Rita's idea of a literature class; her students need to discover something by themselves and be able to articulate something about that experience. Even if it is arduous, and takes time, she prefers exploring one section of the text at a time, and looking at the language, the atmosphere, the feeling and the way characters are portrayed. Together with the students, she does an intensive analysis of one section to provide them with hands-on experience with working things out on their own. Since she knows the Grade 10 are not going to respond a lot orally, she gets them to express themselves in writing. She feels it is essential that they get the appropriate references from the text and not just make generalisations. She thus invites a few of the students to come to the board with ideas which they can write on the board. Drawing a line in the centre of the board, Rita divides the board so that her students can compare and contrast two characters.

Arousing their interest

The type of text chosen for study also impacts upon the level of interest of the students. Rita has observed that certain texts can be bulky and abstract for the Mauritian students, who eventually switch off. She avoids lecturing as this will condition her students into remaining there in class and expecting the tutor to give all the information. Rita believes that her students must be able to appreciate a text but she understands that their personal reactions to it depend upon their experiences and likings. In some cases, as for ***Winter's Tale***, she uses roleplay which gets students involved in the plot and makes them want to know what happens next. Once the students have done some acting, she notices that they seem more cheerful and that they have enjoyed this type of participation. The teacher plays an important role in this process. Rita recalls one of her English literature teachers who used to teach her poetry. He had been in politics and the fact that he often related the poems he was teaching to elements of this life aroused his students' curiosity. She was however lost when the teacher spoke distantly about texts and themes that did not touch him personally. She recalls him saying, while teaching ***Pride and Prejudice***, "All these women are after men." It was clear that he despised the text and made little effort to hide his opinion of the story. That same teacher would also skip from one section to the other and concentrate on the turning points, but Rita found herself feeling lost in the process.

The teacher's mood

Rita believes that students are very receptive to their teacher's moods. If a teacher just orders the students to turn to a certain page, and then afterwards, to turn ten extra pages without any significant change in their understanding and interest in the text, this already puts them off. She recalls a time when, as a teacher, she had just moved from a school she loved to another which she did not like so much. In one of the classes, she was shocked to hear a little group of students ask her if she was feeling better as she did not look happy with them. Although these students were considered to be quite weak, they had nevertheless sensed that she was not too happy. She soon changed her attitude and assumptions about the school she found herself in and that change reflected in her own teaching in class. She feels that it was a well-timed change since she considers the Higher School Certificate to be one of the memorable moments in one's life, and students recall a bit more vividly the way they were taught at that particular period.

Being 'old-school'

Rita often thinks of herself as 'old-school' in the sense that her methods have been tried and tested over the years. She feels that technology can improve a literature lesson in many ways and can grab the so elusive attention span of her students. For instance, she thinks sometimes of presenting the main ideas of the text for them to view, using pictures get her students talking and to help them situate time periods of specific texts. Perhaps, the students can use technology also in their presentations. However, with the school being equipped with only one projector and the administrative and logistical hassles involved in securing a laptop and projector for a lesson, Rita rarely finds herself opting to use those tools to teach. For her, technology in the literature classroom can only be feasible if the required equipment is ready and accessible. If she has to run to someone to get a laptop, then go to someone else for the projector and then find yet another person for an extension cord, then forget it!

Rita's ambivalence about technology

Rita is uncertain about the effectiveness of using tablets or other technology in the classroom. As a teacher, she has been told by her superiors to make use of the tablets that were widely distributed amongst the students and teachers by the Ministry of Education. However, since she has not received training besides the one briefing session at school, she feels somewhat at a loss about using these tablets for learning. She deplores the fact that things are done at the level of the Ministry without much planning or foresight. She however thinks that the tablet could be more useful for the teaching of language, especially when it comes to using software such as Hot Potatoes or web links for learning activities. However, she is also sceptical about the effectiveness of technology in the long run. The process of teaching and learning might become smoother, but ultimately, she feels that the benefits of integrating IT in education are exaggerated at times.

Rita recalls having once brought to class a music player to highlight the relationship between music and emotions in one lesson. When she played the music, she was soon interrupted by a colleague who came rushing in, saying, "Madam, please lower the volume! The rector won't be happy about this!" Indeed, Rita found out that this rector disapproved of any sort of 'disruption' to more conventional methods of teaching and classroom management. With such kind of attitude, Rita soon found herself discouraged about using these more creative methods. The reactions of other teachers can sometimes prove to be a constraining factor upon the way Rita plans her classes. Even then, she still has the firm belief in keeping her mind alive and free from routine.

Developing an interest in one's subject

Rita believes that the teacher needs to appreciate the importance of the subject. She recalls an Economics teacher who once told her, "Zot sameme zot konner zot, zot kone zis zot liv, zot Shakespeare![25]" while they were discussing salary increments. The fact that this other educator was able to come up with this generic judgment that literature teachers had no clue about practical life issues had disturbed her, and she feels that sometimes, besides other subject area teachers, even some English teachers do not fully appreciate the importance of the subject they are teaching. Part of that appreciation, she believes, needs to be infused in the class through the atmosphere that she can create and get the students to appreciate. She recalls one of the classes she had once, where the girls came to class and told her "Madam, when we come here, we are happy" because the literature class is a break from a more

[25] Translated from Kreol Morisyen: "You guys, all you know is your books, your Shakespeare! That's all you know!"

mundane and logical world. That was refreshing for her to hear, and it really makes her day when she sees students with their books open, who look 'ready'.

Sharing of good practices within the department: a dream?

As a head of department, Rita strongly feels that it is important to learn about new pedagogy and to share this with her department. She especially fears routine, which can, in the long run, lead people to do the minimum. Rita believes that in order to develop interest and enthusiasm for literature in others, teachers must try to develop that enthusiasm in themselves, first. Rita personally would like to learn more and would like to apply her knowledge in making her classes more interesting. She tries to model that sharing spirit out during departmental meetings but she is forced to realise that not all her peers share the same inclination to talk about pedagogy. Discussions often veer towards administrative and other mundane matters. Even those who have done their PGCE or a Masters find themselves reluctant to share their good practices. Rita would have appreciated peer observation sessions. However, this is seen as a taboo in a college, and colleagues can often view this request as an intrusion and show resistance to this type of sharing on the pretext that they are all professionals and should not be under scrutiny.

Rita understands them, to some extent. Prior to her PGCE, she also did not really volunteer information about her own practices. Perhaps, she muses, this is to do with the fear of being judged by others, and perhaps it has something to do with the fear that one does not really have good teaching practices to refer to. Part of her wish to create this platform stems from her own uncertainties about teaching certain types of texts and she wishes there could be such opportunities to discuss how texts, especially the novel, can be taught or how technology could be integrated in the literature classroom. When she discusses with her peers, the latter tell her that they do not have time to teach the whole text. What they do is that they prepare or download notes, which they later on circulate amongst the students and which they discuss later on in class. When she hears that they do not often do the reading of texts, this makes Rita feel uneasy.

Beyond her own department, she also believes that teachers should network and attend workshops regularly in order to share good practices and keep themselves updated about the latest developments in the field of literature teaching. She used to attend such workshops in the past, which used to fill her with a lot of enthusiasm whenever she would go back to class and try to put something in practice. She regrets that there have not been any recent workshops of that nature, which would have allowed her to know whether she is on the right track.

As she wraps up her lesson, Rita asks one of the students to summarize the scene, and in between, she asks small questions to make sure they have understood what has happened, "Why was Eva smiling in this scene?" Then when a few of them have answered, she again prompts, "How would you react if you were in Shirley's place?" There is not one definite answer she wants from them at this point, but rather she wants to encourage them to come up with interpretations of this scene, from their vantage point. She finishes the class by acknowledging the efforts made by the students to participate in class. She is not sure if all of them will be there for the next lesson, and possibly she will have to do a recapitulation for those who were absent, but this is how her classes go, and she looks forward to the next class, hoping to ignite the spark of interest for literature in the minds of her students.

4.4 Synthesis

Chapter Four presented two narratives which addressed two teachers with varying degrees of experience. Through the stories of Kishan, and Rita, what is featured prominently are the various concerns that impact upon the teachers' choice of pedagogy and assessment. The narratives highlight the prominence of examinations, which push the teachers, some of whom have idealistic notions of what literature is supposed to accomplish, to compromise by making pedagogical choices that emphasise safety, comfort and accountability. Kishan's main worry remains his students' pass rate. Rita is mostly preoccupied with the poor English language proficiency and performance of their students in English literature, which will negatively impact upon their results. They thus sometimes opt for 'safer' choices, when faced with the imperatives of having low-performing students pass their examinations since they are held accountable for these results. On another hand, it would be hasty to relegate them to one fixed category. The teachers in this chapter also show intimate awareness of learner-centred approaches to teaching literature, of the importance of fostering appreciation for the subject, and they recognise the need to involve their students fully and relate to their lives. The narratives in this set thus also indicate how some teachers are able to work their way around the limitations that beset them, and are able to provide enjoyable learning experiences to their students despite the overt drive to be examination-ready. The themes that arise from this set will be further analysed through a cross-case comparison of the different narratives in order to study the emerging trends that could explain why teachers make specific pedagogic moves in their classroom.

Chapter Five: An Initial Narrative Analysis: Going Beyond the Academic

5.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I had presented the narratives of two teachers who found themselves constrained in their teaching by administrative requirements and the need to prepare students for examinations, amongst other factors. In this chapter, I present the narratives of two teachers who have chosen to focus on a more holistic and learner-centred approach to literature teaching, despite specific forces that were introduced in the previous set of narratives. While this chapter was initially constructed with dominant initial features of expansive pedagogies, just like the teachers in the previous chapter, the teachers presented here also contend with a number of enabling or restricting forces which impact upon their decision making in the literature classroom.

5.1 Orientation to Chapter Five

This chapter consists of the narratives of Vedika and Sharda, respectively. Once again, while no hierarchy is presumed, I have chosen to present the narratives from the point of view of the youngest teacher first, while the older and more experienced teacher concludes the set. Vedika works in a parastatal secondary school while Sharda works in state secondary school. For the sake of representativeness, only their two narratives have been retained for this chapter; two additional narratives representing teachers "going beyond the academic" are included in **Appendix 20** and will be discussed in **Part Three** of the thesis.

5.2 Vedika's Narrative: Literature is that bridge… to human experiences

Prologue to the Narrative

A food court is perhaps not where I had expected to carry out this first conversation with Vedika, but this is where she wanted to meet to discuss. We are in a shopping mall, not too far from the school she works at and I am pleasantly surprised that the food court is fairly quiet, with only a few people around in this early afternoon.

Vedika, in her early thirties, has been teaching for around seven years. One of my colleagues had recommended me to contact this teacher, whom she had known as a fellow educator a while back. Vedika works in a parastatal co-education schooling system that consists of a number of schools spread around the island. When I had initially contacted her, she was in a different school but has, since then, been transferred to one of the colleges situated in a rural area.

We begin with some small talk before we engage more seriously about her work as an educator. Vedika seems quite open and willing to share her views on her own teaching and her students. This is what she tells me about her English literature class.

The bell rings and Vedika heads towards her classroom. It is early afternoon, which is not always the best time to be carrying out a literature class, especially when the students have just had their lunch. Today's class is about William Shakespeare's ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, which she is teaching to the Grade 12 class. For those studying English at Principal level, there are ten periods of about 35 to 40 minutes each per week, with two periods allocated per teacher. Vedika is in charge of teaching one of the papers for this subject, while her colleagues are looking after the other papers. Two of the ten periods are considered as 'floating periods' and if ever Vedika has need for an additional class, she can use one of those floating periods on that day. Today, what cheers her is the fact that most of the ten students have turned up. Vedika drops her bag and file on her desk, which is rather unusually located on the side rather than centrally in front of the classroom, since Vedika likes to sit close to the group.

After some brief casual comments to the students, Vedika starts the class by asking them what they did the previous week in class. After having elicited prior knowledge about the previous session, Vedika then moves on with the aim of the lesson, which is to discuss two of the scenes from ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** that she had asked them to prepare since last week. She expects them to have prepared by reading the original scene and trying to make sense of what that scene is revealing in terms of plot, character and theme, to begin with. If they have already read the extracts in advance, then she expects to carry on with the discussion of the scenes in class.

Her experience as a student of literature

Vedika recalls one of her first encounters with English literature as a student at secondary level. In that class, she was studying ***Macbeth*** and she remembers the teacher telling the class, "Ok, Act 1, scene 1; go home and prepare the lines." Vedika had been at a loss as to what to prepare, especially since the teacher had not briefed them about how to "prepare" the lines. Fortunately, her father, an English teacher himself, had helped her out but she recalls that her friends had been very confused, and had to look for someone who could explain to them what Shakespeare's language was like, and how to make sense of it. Vedika recalls having felt really lucky to have that sort of help at home, but many of her friends started disliking the subject because they were being asked to prepare without knowing exactly what was expected of them. The dictionary was not of great help for understanding Shakespearean language, and the internet not really that common, nor accessible.

Her classes, then, did not really seem like a proper class. She remembers that she had to recite lines from the first scene, where the Witches speak, and she did not even understand that they were reciting an incantation. However, she also has fond memories of studying ***July's People***, which she enjoyed. What made it easier was that it was written in a more contemporary style and addressed serious issues like racial discrimination, which made her and her friends reflect and discuss. Very often, it was the group work that they did which led to new knowledge and their teacher would just validate whatever they came up with, with "yes, that's good". When Vedika had started teaching, she had thus made it a point to explain clearly to her students what she expected of them and how to achieve those expectations.

Would professional training have helped her?

At some point, Vedika embarked upon a PGCE course but eventually dropped that professional training. She sometimes thinks that such training would probably have helped her improve the way she teaches the subject and broaden her awareness of different literature teaching methodologies. She believes that perhaps professional training was, in some way, helpful in understanding her students' psychology better. The little she has acquired from her first modules have helped her in planning her lessons more effectively, carrying out brainstorming sessions and working on developing the interest of the learners.

Generally, Vedika allows a good deal of freedom in her class, but at the beginning of the year, she usually lays down the ground rules for how the class should operate. Thus she will make sure that every student is aware of the pace of work and her expectations regarding the efforts that each is supposed to furnish, such as, in this case, what they are expected to do when they are told to prepare something. The fact that she had newly joined the school this year also meant that she had to be more authoritative instead of being her usual easy-going self. This approach has been quite effective, and most of the time, Vedika does not have to remind her students of what needs to be done.

From time to time, though, whenever there is a turning point, or an important scene in the text they are covering, Vedika still prefers to go through the scene together in class first, by getting some of the students to read aloud the various roles in the scene. This is what she does today

with Act 3, scene 2 of ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. This scene is fairly longer than some of the others and there is an important change in the dynamics amongst the protagonists that Vedika would like her students to note. Vedika does not interrupt the students as they read the whole scene out. She does not really like stopping students at every moment to comment on the extract. As far as possible, she has encouraged them to try to feel the mood of the characters so that they can convincingly read out their lines, using appropriate tone. This is not always easy as some of the language remains difficult for the students to read out.

Eliciting personal responses

After they have read the scene, Vedika asks the students what new information they have gathered in this scene. Sometimes she finds that her students are so much emotionally engrossed with the fate of the characters that they do not pay a lot of attention to details pertaining to the plot, and through questioning, she tries to bring back those elements of information about the plot. Some students voice out what they have understood so far from the text, although a few admit that they are a bit confused. Vedika realises that a few have not understood what has happened between the protagonists, Hermia, Helena, Lysander and Demetrius, and rather than explaining straight away herself, she encourages some of the other students to explain what they have understood. Then, using and rephrasing their responses, she helps to build up the overall picture within Act 3, scene 2 and gives out a short commentary on what has just happened: At the orders of Oberon, the fairy king, Puck mistakenly places a magical potion on the eyes on Lysander, who wakes up and becomes infatuated with Helena. The same thing happens with Demetrius, who also begins chasing Helena. Vedika here highlights the shift in the story because both Demetrius and Lysander had been following Hermia before, while Helena was hopelessly trying to win Demetrius' affections. She wants to make clear how shocking this reversal is for Helena.

"How would you react," she asks the students, "if someone had, for a long time, admitted that they hated you, or been deliberately ignoring you, only to now suddenly turn around and say they loved you? Would you believe such a person?"

"Ah, so that's what's happening!" one of the students exclaims, "I did not understand why Helena was speaking so harshly with the others."

"Exactly," replies Vedika, "She cannot believe what she is hearing, so she is ready to think that the two men as well as Hermia are playing a trick on her."

Then, Vedika shifts the discussion onto Oberon and Puck. The latter seems to be very popular amongst the students and she wants to hear their thoughts about him. The students respond by saying they like his mischievous character but the fact that Oberon has pushed him to do a number of things is not something they approve. Vedika prompts them by asking them how Puck's misunderstanding is going to change things for the four protagonists. One student replies that confusion is likely to ensure, which is where Vedika points out that this confusion is going to make the story more interesting and allow some tension to enter the story. She then asks them, "Don't you want to know what is going to happen to these four?" Most of them nod or give their assent. One girl replies, "I really pity Hermia now. See how much she had to

suffer, and now the person for whom she left everything has now left her!" Someone else adds, "It's funny, at first, when they wake up and fall madly in love, but it does not seem to be a happy moment for the heroines!"

Vedika considers this statement as an interesting start to a discussion on the nature of comedy in Shakespearean drama. Since the students are not very familiar with literary texts, she tries to tap into their own knowledge by asking them examples of comedies that they know. Some students name American films; others mention Bollywood comedies that they are familiar with. She then reminds them that the notion of comedy in Shakespearean drama is not what they have been used to seeing in those films, and that a comedy in Elizabethan England might not necessarily induce laughter at every turn, but generally involves characters in a series of events that may seem serious or even tragic, at first, before being resolved. She reminds the students that they will later on need to write down what aspects they found to be humorous in this scene.

We have just finished watching a video clip from the film ***The Dead Poets' Society***[26]*. I had been telling Vedika that there was a film about an English literature teacher that might interest her, and that I had a clip from that film, if she was interested to watch it. She had never watched this film before and was curious to know what the film was about. I could observe Vedika's initial reactions as she initially started watching calmly, then seemed surprised and then excited as the clip went on.*

When the clip is over, she looks at me, sighs and then laughs. When I ask her what she feels about this type of teacher, she replies, "Well, he is a very unconventional teacher indeed. I perhaps would never have told my students to tear off pages from their book. Imagine the reactions of parents and administration, here!"

She then adds, in a more reflective tone, "But the thing, though, you do see what he is trying to do; he is getting them to really feel how poetry works, how emotion governs the process. It is easy afterwards to come and write big books about the technical aspects of poetry, but what sense will my students make of a poem if I tell them all this dry stuff?"

"You do have to focus on some of those technical aspects, right?" I ask.

She replies, "Yes, we do. I do not like to give heavy notes that will remain there in the notebook, and that are waiting to be copied and pasted during the exams. You can't tell the students everything about a text; you have to let them also discover some of its effects by themselves!"

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[26] Haft, S., Weir, P., Witt, P. J., Thomas, T., Schulman, T., Williams, R., Leonard, R. S., ... Buena Vista Home Entertainment (Firm). (2006). *Dead Poets Society*. Burbank, Calif: Touchstone Home Entertainment.

Giving notes and developing personal opinions

Vedika does not usually give a lot of notes in class, but when she does, she tries to cover the broad aspects which she feels the students will need in order to revise the text. She thinks that something should be left for brainstorming, especially after the students have read the text and she finds that too often, notes are given in such a way that students do not feel any real need to engage with the text. Providing a space within the lesson for voicing out allows her students to give their own interpretation of things as well as different perspectives coming from a younger generation. Moreover, she feels that some notes can be of too high level for students and can make students feel even more at a loss. She thus takes care that the students understand whatever she gives them. Vedika recalls one incident when students from another class approached her; they wanted her to explain the notes they had received from their literature teacher, Vedika's colleague. What had surprised Vedika upon looking at the notes was the realisation that they seemed to be of university-level. While they were indeed based upon the book that the students were reading for the A' levels, the concepts and language in those notes were not really understandable as they dealt with advanced, abstract concepts. While she felt she could not intervene in the way her colleague was working, she did advise those students to read more generally around the subject and to approach their own teacher to get her to explain, in her own terms, what those notes signified.

Vedika believes that notes provide security, especially to those students who like "spoon-feeding", and who hence become very dependent upon the teacher and the notes. She is not worried about those students who have been used to being asked "what do you think?" or "how do you feel about this poem?" since lower secondary. By the time she has them at Grade 13 level, these students can present and defend their own opinions since they are able to do a minimum of critical appraisal and analysis, upon which she as a teacher can build up.

Besides giving notes, she also advises her students to keep a notebook. Whenever they finish a scene in class, after she has explained the text, she tells them to write down their own summary of the scene. They also need to write about the different characters and what actions they have done in the extract. If there is a character who stands out in this scene, Vedika's students are expected to find a relevant quote pertaining to that person. Then she also highlights the importance of noting what they felt about the atmosphere prevailing in the scene. Vedika wants them to consider this notebook as something that covers everything of note in the text so that they can refer to it for any classwork, assignment or even revision for the examinations.

Literature teaching strategies

Vedika prefers to deploy a combination of strategies when it comes to teaching her literature classes. She considers her way of teaching to be more holistic, with some degree of expository teaching at the start, and then gradually opening the session to the students. Since she already knows the text, the background of the writer as well as how to approach it, she prefers to start off with some frontal teaching, with the aim of exposing the subject to her students, creating interest and motivating them. Then, she will move on to group work; she has found that her students enjoy such types of activities as they are quite new to them. Her students are more

motivated to work together when the end result is a class presentation, which provides them with the opportunity to present new ideas in front of the class. Such activities boost their self-esteem and confidence, and over time, as Vedika provides them with such a platform, she finds that they are already on their way towards a certain sense of maturity. She finds that they no longer just read the text and answer questions but there is a great deal of critical thinking involved, as the students explore motivations and contextual factors behind characters' actions and events.

Later on, she will include brainstorming sessions to make the students reflect upon, and react to, what they have just learnt. One activity she often gives involves the students to imagine themselves in the shoes of the characters, for instance, by asking them how they would have reacted if they had been living there at the time depicted in the text. Such empathic tasks have enabled Vedika's students to transpose themselves into that time and context, to better understand what they are reading. Vedika has often realised that students assume that the experiences they are reading about are quite foreign to them, yet she encourages them to tap into their own personal experiences. That character they are reading about is undergoing hardship in the plot, but perhaps some of the students might have experienced something, which, while not so harsh, might be close enough to help them connect with the character. Moreover, to understand what is happening, Vedika believes it is important to address the relevance of the author's background, in order to understand how texts function and the purpose behind the writing, and she usually starts with these kinds of discussions.

Developing students' observation skills and empathy

Today, Vedika starts off by discussing what she had given them to prepare. Indeed, Vedika had instructed her students to observe passengers on the bus on their way to and from school, focusing on their facial expressions, their body language, especially if they were on a long journey and to try and imagine what they might be thinking, what their history and their high and low moments in life might be. Now comes the time for them to describe, one by one, the people they had observed. While one boy describes the bus conductor, whom he sees every day but never took the time to really observe, another describes an elderly lady with numerous plastic bags. With small prompts and questions, Vedika encourages them to remember details from what they have seen. One of the students exclaims, "I was looking only at the way that person was dressed; I did not really look at his facial expressions." Another comments that she was trying to look at someone's face until that person actually noticed her, which made her feel so embarassed that she stopped looking. This arouses laughter in the class and some of her friends start poking her, but she laughs along with them. Vedika laughs along and asks her students if they liked the activity. She tells them that there are many things going on in someone's life, and that very often people judge others and react upon what they first see. However, she points out, if someone pays attention, one can understand that every person is complex.

The aim behind this activity was to encourage her students to be more observant and empathetic towards others. Eventually this might lead to her students developing a better understanding of the fictional characters they encounter in class. Most of her students, Vedika finds, tend to live

in a bubble, with immediate teenage concerns, which sometimes prevent them from paying close attention to others in society. Can her students understand and empathise with their fellow countrymen? When they see those working people getting up early and taking the bus alongside them, what sort of struggles can they imagine these people are facing on a daily basis? By getting her students to pay attention to people on the bus or on the streets, she wants them to relate to these people who might be seemingly different but whose life experiences might, in the end, be similar. In a way, this is what she expects them to do when the students read their literature books set in another time or another country.

She hopes that such observations can also be helpful in getting them to understand fictional characters better. For instance, the Mechanicals in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** also have their aspirations and dreams, even if these are cast in a comedic light. Vedika hopes that in some way, such types of activities, over time, will also lead to some humility as well, especially for those students who are well-off and do not realise what it means to be living on a monthly salary of Rs 5000. They are, in a way, forced to reassess their own notion of the world, since many of them perhaps think most people live like them. Empathy then becomes an extension of themselves rather than just a literature-related skill that they should study. Vedika thus tries, especially in the first term, to carry out such small experiments. At times, she asks the students to describe their best friend or the feature or quality that they appreciate more. Sometimes, she finds, all depends on the class dynamics, with some students feeling more timid than others. However, in time, they warm up to such types of activities and even start looking forward to them.

Some weeks later, we meet at school itself in the staff room. I ask Vedika whether she prepares lesson plans for her literature classes.

Vedika replies, "Actually, we are expected to write lesson plans for language lessons but for literature, it's not formal. We do it at the level of the department."

I ask Vedika how this process works.

She replies, "It's a freer process. Usually, at the start of the year, we decide which texts to use and the key aspects we need to cover. For instance, for ***A Midsummer Night's Dream****, we agreed that students need to know the background of the writer, since many of them might be encountering Shakespeare for the first time and will need a few weeks so that their teacher can introduce them to Shakespeare, his work, some key concepts within drama, such as comedy or tragedy. Some of these terms will be new to them, so we need to find time to introduce them to all that before we really start."*

"It is also not always easy to understand the Elizabethan period, right?" I inquire. I wonder how she will address gender representations and relations in the play during her class, especially considering that the students are, unsurprisingly, reading the text in relation to themselves and their time.

Vedika responds, "Indeed. This is where we decided to use films or documentaries that address Shakespeare's life and times, or even to encourage them to look for articles and interviews of people who are speaking about him.

Text selection

Generally, teachers are informed what texts they will be teaching some months before the school year begins in January, so that they have plenty of time to research the text or swap with a colleague if they do not feel comfortable with the text. Vedika believes that if someone has a problem with a text, it does not necessarily entail failure or that the teacher is a bad one. She would be the first to admit that she cannot like all texts or genres, which is why she appreciates being asked about her opinion concerning text selections. She prefers having a say in the matter as she believes the choice of text impacts upon the way she teaches. Texts are selected from the prescribed texts list from the Cambridge International Examinations website[27] by the English department of the school because each branch of this parastatal institution chooses their texts individually. The list is carefully considered and members of the English department discuss which texts will be appropriate, depending on the students' level and ability. The choice of texts varies from year to year but the department selects texts which are lighter and will possibly be enjoyable for the students. However, once that selection is done, each teacher is free to carry out the teaching of that text the way he or she wants.

The advantage with getting the texts much in advance means that Vedika does not lose time in the preparation of the texts she has to teach. Moreover, she is familiar with many of the texts that are usually prescribed at either O' or A' level, since she studied or read them when she was doing her BA in English. She is aware that the ways she approached those texts at university differs from the way the texts should be taught at secondary level; however, she admits that some of those approaches do colour her own stances towards certain texts. For instance, her affinity for feminist writers and theorists brings her to sometimes raise the issue of representation and power within the texts she is studying with her students. Choosing and using texts that address these issues is also one way for her to interrogate the centre-margin dichotomy characterised by generally white male authors dominating a great part of the literary canon. Addressing this dichotomy, while not necessarily forming part of the actual syllabus, becomes for her an interesting way to approach the text, so that the literature class becomes a space to explore new grounds along with her upper secondary students.

Limited sharing of practices at the level of department

Vedika has come up with her own plan of work with regards to ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, and she regrets that there is no prior discussion in the department or amongst colleagues as to the way to go forward with the text. This had been part of the work culture in the department in the previous school she had been in, but does not seem to be extant in her current school. Teachers, it would seem, rarely share effective techniques and practices in their classes. Vedika

[27] http://www.cie.org.uk/

believes this is very much an ego issue; not everyone would like to share that they are unsure about teaching a particular text, especially when they are established educators in the school. Vedika thinks that this sense of insecurity, as well as other prejudices, need to go so that educators may forge ahead with a greater sense of agency.

The challenge of teaching poetry

So far, Vedika has not faced such situations but she admits that getting her students to understand and like Chaucer's language can be challenging especially when the students have just finished studying a novel. Poetry, she has found, is not really her forte, and there is a lot she needs to learn before she can be confident about teaching it. However, with authors like William Blake, and more recent collections such as ***Songs of Ourselves***, Vedika feels more at ease because she is familiar with those works. She acknowledges that her bias against certain writers originates from the way she was herself taught, so much so that thinking about them brings up some bad memories; however, she also realises that she cannot avoid teaching certain texts indefinitely. She believes that, even if she does not like a specific text, she has to make sure her students like it and are learning from it. First impressions, she realises, are very important, which is why she tries to provide good learning opportunities around the text for her students, right from the start.

The literature syllabus

At lower secondary, the literature syllabus at her school consists of a set of poems and short stories. The novelty of studying poetry attracts the students more at that level, and they enjoy the playfulness of the language as well. Vedika finds short stories, on the other hand, to be not so interesting, especially since quite a few of those stories are neither short nor new. While many of the stories from ***Tales from Mauritius*** connect the reader to Mauritius, they have been there for a long while and not all students feel that connection with the text. Vedika smiles when she thinks of her own rector, who once told her he had studied that text. In Vedika's view, though, ideally, the lower secondary students should be exposed to poems, short stories and extracts from plays. She finds the latter to be of great interest for her students since many of them get involved in school plays or do mini-sketches during prize giving day. Vedika finds lower secondary more enjoyable to teach since the curiosity and awareness is very much present at that age; the case is different at upper secondary level where she finds that many students come with their own prejudices about the subject, which they then underestimate. For instance, they come thinking that English literature is a boring subject, or that it is quite light and a scoring subject. This is one reason which pushes quite a few of them to opt for literature when they cannot find better subject options. Vedika finds the lower secondary literature syllabus thus to be not very demanding, since she has to cover only a few poems and short stories. However, by Grade 9, she has to make sure that her students are aware of the specifics of each genre, especially the way language is used to create specific effects.

As far as the upper secondary students are concerned, she finds that having to select three texts for the Grade 11 can be quite difficult when there is sometimes not many viable choices out of

the Cambridge list. She recalls that ***Silas Marner*** has been selected at some point for A level by many schools and no student across the country had attempted questions based on that text, that year! It turned out that many students and teachers had found the text challenging to address in class, and those students just ignored that question and did something else. Vedika bears this incident in mind now when she helps in choosing texts, and she also realises that this means that teachers need to innovate in the way they approach texts.

Vedika herself personally prefers teaching the works of Shakespeare; given that she had read most of his plays, she feels that teaching Shakespeare is a kind of comfort zone for her. She can also easily compare the text which she is teaching to other texts of his. However, she finds that her students do not always share her passion for this writer. Her students tend to like more contemporary texts and she has found Indian texts in English to resonate particularly with them. Perhaps this is to do with the fact that much Indian popular culture is accessible via the media. She also appreciates such works and feels that her students feel connected to such writing because of the portrayal of customs, traditions, family rituals and so on, to which quite a few can identify with or are familiar with. She has also noticed that her students like texts by African authors as well. One difficulty she has noted is with writers such as Chaucer, whose language the students find hard to understand. Vedika tries to deal with this problem by simplifying the text for them, and getting them to understand the themes in the text, as she did the previous year with ***The Wife of Bath***, which was a great success with her students. She remembers how the girls had enjoyed the text and the fact that the Wife seemingly had so much power and influence, and could relate it to contemporary society, while the few boys in class had been uneasy about the Wife's character and manipulative side.

In her previous school, Vedika had worked on ***As You Like It*** with the Grade 13 students while in her new school, she is now teaching ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. What had been interesting personally for Vedika was the fact that there had been five boys and three girls there, and it has been a great opportunity to get their perspective and point of view, especially when Rosalind in **As You Like It** disguises herself as a man, or when she complains that she cannot cry, because tears are supposedly not suitable for a gentleman. Vedika found that the boys had been able to empathise with Rosalind's situation by acknowledging that there were situations where it was difficult to control their emotions and by stating that they envied the girls for the freedom the latter seemingly had to be able to display their emotions freely. One of the boys had talked about the death of his grandmother and how he had to control himself because he had to console his little sisters, which was quite challenging for him. This was a rare opportunity, even for Vedika, to understand how boys feel in such situations. This time, in her new school, she also has a mixed group and she hopes that both boys and girls will share their somewhat different perspectives in class, which will bring newness to the learning process.

While a number of students choose literature as a *safe* subject choice, there are those who, as Vedika has noticed, have shown interest and motivation from the start and who opt for the subject till upper secondary level. What Vedika finds challenging in the teaching of literature is generally getting students, for whom literature was just an 'unknown' option, and whose parents have most likely chosen it, to like the subject. This often results in some form of

resistance due to the fact that, feeling that it has been imposed upon them, they dislike the subject even before coming to class. This resistance, as Vedika recently experienced with two of her own students, was expressed with a general reluctance to participate, and a feeling of unhappiness and confusion when the outcomes and assessment details for this subject were exposed to them. In fact, the two students came to her to tell her they did not like the subject and whether it would be possible to drop it. It took Vedika a lot of time and patience to have them reconsider their stance through tutorials and one-to-one talks with them. Three weeks had gone by before the two students started thinking that perhaps literature was not all that bad, and they started paying attention when they saw their friends enjoying.

Vedika has pondered over this situation for quite a while, and her belief is that the way the subject is introduced to the students makes a difference in the way they approach the subject. One should, according to her, thus start from Day 1, at lower secondary, preferably, by introducing the subject, making them like it, and use whatever means and resources available to consolidate that interest.

Until they know better, the students come with a lot of prejudices about literature. When Vedika starts her year with her students, she usually has to face a number of assumptions on the part of students: they think of it as a boring subject, where they have to study many books. Many of them come to class, expecting a lot of notes, which they have to write down, summarize and learn by heart for the examinations. Vedika has found that this reputation can be quite damaging in the first few months of class. From interactions with students and fellow colleagues, Vedika thinks that, for many students, literature, especially at Grade 9 level, is like torture, since the texts have become more complex than at lower secondary, but the only thing most of them are expected to do is to sit down and take down notes. Since literature is taught to everyone throughout till Grade 9 at that school, a considerable number of students await till subject choice forms are given to them at the end of Grade 9 so that they may get rid of the subject. For Vedika, this is almost a tragedy in the making, since she thinks a simple change in approach in the earlier years could have made a world of difference. She feels it has become so much harder to carry out a class at upper secondary because of the damage caused during the lower secondary years.

Literature, in her view, should be introduced as a creative means of expressing oneself through language, so that students enjoy and appreciate it. Then, that appreciation becomes the keystone to deeper understanding and critical appraisal of texts. Vedika had a student in her previous school who had not done literature before but who still was allowed to take English at Principal level at Grade 12 level. Initially, this student had shown great promise and had wanted to do all kinds of remedial work to catch up. However, in the second year of studies, at Grade 13 level, she started lagging behind and told Vedika that she did not like some of the texts on the syllabus. As Vedika found out, to ask someone who had not done literature to appreciate Keats or Byron had been very challenging, and it turned out that there was actually quite a considerable amount to catch up, which the young student could not cope with in her last year of studies. Such an incident reminds Vedika of the sensitivity and foresight required in implementing this subject from the start.

Since Vedika has smaller groups, this, according to her, allows her to put in place a number of strategies that would not have been possible in a larger group. Although Vedika appreciates working with the lower secondary more, she does feel closer to the upper secondary since they have had the opportunity to discuss and share on a number of aspects pertaining to the texts they are studying. That interpersonal dimension becomes even deeper, considering the nature of the discussions that usually take place during the literature lessons. Talking about those texts has inevitably led the class to explore the cultural context and background pertaining to those texts to be able to make sense of them. Such discussions are eye-openers for a number of them, who are perhaps encountering postcolonial writers or as is currently the case, canonical writers like Shakespeare, for the first time. A number of issues discussed, such as power and politics and the representation of women and other minorities have made of her students almost instantaneous advocates of the "downtrodden"; the latter being a larger group from what they had initially believed or seen through mainstream media. Vedika understands that getting her students to understand the context in which literature texts are set can be difficult, yet essential for the content to make sense. One way she tries to get around this is to get her students to carry out research on the background of the author. Moreover, through discussion and brainstorming, she hopes that her students will develop an interest and engagement with the text that goes beyond academic requirements. The challenge lies in getting her students to understand traditional Nigerian culture of the early 1900s in ***Things Fall Apart***, for instance, a text that she taught at Grade 11 level in her previous school. This is where she had to intervene by telling them what to research and read upon before they even started the text. She felt they needed extra guidance because African literature, ironically, was new to them, whereas the students were familiar with some form of Shakespearean text or other European texts. She recalls that the biggest cultural shock, especially for the girls had been the fact that Okonkwo, the main protagonist, had three wives. They had not realised that such practices existed; they had thought that such accounts were made-up or fictional.

Besides understanding the historical, cultural and social background of texts studied in class, Vedika is also a firm advocate of developing her students' personal understanding and reading of the text and often finds occasions to enable her students to voice out what fascinates or troubles them with the text they are studying. The students thus did not hesitate to convey how they felt challenged in their own notion of what it meant to be a "hero"; they did not really know what to think of Okonkwo. Even the boys were not sure what to say about him, since he was not such a clear-cut hero or villain type, as they had been used to hearing about in stories, or in films. Vedika recalls the indignation when her students were reading about the wives. They wanted the wives to rebel against Okonkwo and challenge his imposing rule because they themselves would not have accepted living a life under Okonkwo's rule. Vedika is always astonished at how, by identifying themselves to specific characters in the text, her students have been able to uncover some of the dynamics governing relationships in the text in an easier manner than if they had had been given notes. The important thing was to get them to think in the shoes of the other, fictional person they were encountering in the text. The next thing was to take a step back from their own and make them see things from the point of view of that

society, and this is where they realise that their own values and their conception of the world are not necessarily universal.

Grade 9 students sometimes approach Vedika, when it comes to choosing subject combinations, and ask her how O' level literature will be. Vedika then tells them about the texts. If some of them have had bad experiences already with literature, they will not opt for the subject. Vedika in such cases tries to convince those students that things do get better, but then she often has to contend with yet another pertinent question from the students, "Who is going to teach this subject next year?" In that small question, Vedika can sense that mixture of anxiety and hope with which students approach this subject, and highlights an essential point: the subject may or may not be interesting in its own right but the student's experience of that subject is also dependent on the teacher. It makes sense, in a way, to Vedika, since those students have to be with that one teacher for two years and the outcome of those two years will be that readiness to sit for an international examination. Vedika is aware that, at lower secondary level, students do not usually dare to ask such questions but in her new school, she has been fielding such types of questions from the Grade 9 students. Some of them will then say, "Oh, that teacher? We'll think about it" or "I hope it's not Teacher so-and-so; I heard her classes are…" and so on. If a teacher is notorious for humiliating her students for not understanding or not having studied literature before, or for using sarcasm, she is not likely to be attracting people to opt for that subject.

One of the positive side effects is that fewer people get to choose the subject, eventually, which makes the group more manageable for Vedika, who can then implement some more interactive strategies. Whenever she thinks of Blake's poetry, the only thought that jumps to her mind is, "This has to be read outside!" When she introduced Blake's poetry to her students with the poem "Piper's Song", she took her students to the nearby playfield, and despite the fact that it had been very sunny on that day, the sight and smell of the green grass and the trees and the feel of the breeze conveyed a different meaning to the words being read out aloud by the students and, in Vedika's mind, allowed them to connect with the essence of Blake's poetry. She had even wanted to take them to sit by a nearby river, which flowed near the school grounds but then had to reconsider because of safety concerns. On another occasion, she surprised them by taking them out to the school garden and telling them that the class would take place there. Some of them had had this reaction, "Ah, a literature class in the garden?" since they could not reconcile going through their literary texts outdoors. As Vedika found a little while after that, her students were quick to adapt to the new setting and even saw the point that she was trying to make by taken them out of the class.

What Vedika has also used to arouse their interest is to use literature-based films, which according to her, are very effective. For instance, she often makes use of such films, which she invites them to watch and discuss together afterwards. Film, according to her, has the capacity to convey a variety of feelings and emotions more directly to the audience than literary texts, and this, as Vedika has often found, is a suitable entry into the domain of literature. What she often does is to use a film version of a text that is not being currently studied in class and stimulate their interest in the plot and characters. When she finds that they are interested and

are willing to discuss motivations and themes, she leads them to their literature text, which she sometimes describes as being something similar to what they have just watched. One good example is ***Pride and Prejudice***, which she finds her students, whether they be girls or boys, can easily relate to, and she uses the discussion around the film to bring up the nature of literature and its ability to mirror life. Sometimes, Vedika shows film or dramatic versions of the plays she is teaching to her students, although she makes sure that she uses those after the text has been completed. The reason for this is that many students believe that once they have watched the film, they do not need to read the text. Showing them the staged version of the play or the film adaptation thus allows her to show them the performative aspect of the play, which so far most of her students have only experienced as script. Since only a few students from her current batch have done literature before, they have limited experience of drama, especially staged plays, so seeing a character they have encountered while reading, now performing on stage adds a different dimension to their understanding of that character.

She has, since then, carried out some more activities such as role playing in their own customised outfits for the school Open Day, or even carrying out treasure hunts, with the names of characters from some of the texts she has been teaching. While Vedika is quite satisfied with the way her students participate and interact in class, she thinks that the learning experiences could be enhanced with literary outings and simply stepping outside the class. By these she thinks of visits to museums such as The Blue Penny Museum[28] to introduce them to different concepts of modernism, and to make them realise the importance of history. Since museums are also stereotyped as boring places, Vedika hopes that they will see that museums can also, like literature, awaken an interest in a number of disciplines. At the same time, such visits will also constitute some time spent out of the classroom, which Vedika thinks could boost their engagement with texts. In the near future, Vedika intends to highlight the magical side of the play by initiating small sketches from ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, the preparation of which would take the whole term. While this will get the students even more engaged with the text in class, she also thinks this would be useful in building their confidence in voicing out and role playing, and the experience of mounting those sketches together will really boost their sense of cooperation. All these activities, however, require planning and more importantly, authorisation. On quite a few occasions, Vedika has had her requests for outdoor activities for either lower or upper secondary turned down because of misconceptions. For instance, taking the students out of class is felt to be like time off work, or an outing rather than a full-fledged class.

For Vedika, one of the biggest challenges she faces as an English literature teacher is to make her students feel comfortable with the content they are being presented in class. Even if she asks them to carry out research independently, Vedika is aware that there still an amount of work to be done to be able to get her students to understand Chaucer or Shakespeare's contexts and to identify aspects from their own context that they could relate to what they are reading. She finds that if they have not really grasped the cultural background to the text, it would be

[28] The Blue Penny Museum is principally dedicated to the history of the postal service in Mauritius, and is situated in the capital, Port Louis, more specifically, at the Caudan Waterfront.

difficult for them to connect on other levels. Once this is achieved, Vedika is herself sometimes surprised by a few of her students who come up to her and say that they have finished reading the book on their own.

Vedika regrets that, when she was a student, her teachers did not really take the trouble to make her like the subject. They were always rushing to complete the syllabus and laying emphasis on the examinations. One of the decisions she took on early in her career was to work the opposite way, by thinking of how her students would like a teacher to be. Taking this as a guideline, she realised that her students were not really here just because they have an exam to sit for, and that they have a lot of expectations from her. They also are not in class to just sit and listen to someone speak all the time. Through literature, Vedika thinks she has been able to teach a lot more than just storylines and details about characters; she has also taught about humility, generosity as well as the darker side of human nature through the characters and themes in the texts they have covered. The text thus becomes a neutral zone where moral issues or any other issue may be discussed through the actions of fictional characters. What works, especially with the upper secondary students is when she treats them as adults. She views this strategy as being an effective means to counter the mainstream top-down culture which prevails in many schools.

As her students become more familiar with the literature texts, they also realise that their initial fears were baseless and that in fact, through literature, they are better able to look more closely at people and understand them. Vedika appreciates the fact that her class has helped her students in some way to understand human nature. The ability to relate fiction to real life events is something that fascinates her students, who try to interpret and predict the reactions of people they interact with, based on what they have been able to learn from literature. Vedika has also noticed that some of her students display more maturity and they think before they take any decision or display more sensitivity when they speak. She notes that their attitude is slightly different from the other students as they display more empathy towards elderly people who have been invited from nearby homes during Gandhi Day[29]. They will start talking to these people, ask about their family members and even seem moved after listening to their distressing stories. Vedika finds that her literature students also become more confident and proficient in the English language, and many of them volunteer to participate in interschool activities such as the Model United Nations. Some also participate in small dramas at school and even at national level, they sometimes participate in drama festivals. While she does not take full credit for this change, she does acknowledge that some of her classes might have had some influence on the way her students perceive things.

Vedika carries out discussion sessions after having read a scene together with the students, where she will ask them about their opinions on what they have just read. If someone does not agree with the actions or motivations of a character or the portrayal of a theme, they are free to voice out and explain their own position. Sometimes also makes use of hot seating, where one

[29] This school celebrates the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi; upon which day students perform songs, sketches and so on to honour his life and work. Here, Vedika is referring to the elderly from nearby homes who have been invited for the cultural programme.

student will be asked to pretend to be one of the characters from a text being studied. Then this 'character' will be interviewed or questioned by the rest of the class. She finds that this particular technique not only allows her to check her students' understanding of the text, but also contributes to making them connect to what they are reading.

Vedika has mentioned films and the internet a few times during our conversations. This time I ask her to elaborate on the input of multimedia and technology in her classroom.

She replies, "Using films brings newness in the class, and students become highly interested whenever I mention that we will be watching a film and holding a discussion afterwards. They really do not want to miss these classes."

I then ask her how she makes use of the internet.

She smiles as she answers, "These students are always connected in one way or the other to the internet! Since they do spend time online, I often get them to carry out research on specific aspects that I have identified. But sometimes, some go out of their way and carry out research on aspects or themes that interest them, which they later on share online or in class."

She then adds, "With my Grade 10 class, we have created a group page on Facebook, where we share the links to resources we have found. I usually lead the way by sharing links to resources where I think the level is correct for them. So, if I find an interesting article on one of the authors we are studying, I will post the link there and tell them to have a look and give their comments. And they do! I can then build upon whatever they have commented."

"And what is the student response so far?" I am curious to know.

"Well, they have taken to it from the start, and they also share links now. The one issue I had at some point with some students was that if someone wrote something about the text in an article, then they would see it as being entirely correct. It took me a while to try and convince them that this was probably a well-stated argument but that she could question it and even go against that author, as long as they can sustain their energy.

"Would you then say that your Facebook group is helping them reach out to one of the aims set by Cambridge, which is to develop an informed, critical response?" I inquire.

She thinks for a while and responds, "I think so. Facebook is something which is very accessible to them, and something they will go to in their free time. So, I am not worried if we miss classes because of school events and activities. If I tell them there is something to read, or prepare, I know I can count on most of them to do that."

"Is what they find of relevance to what you are covering in class?"I ask.

She laughs and replies, "Not always! Most of the time, they encounter university-level materials so they are never sure of the relevance of what they are reading. Sometimes they will print it out, bring it to class and request me to explain what it means. This is where I intervene, after they have presented what they have found, with my own comments and suggestions."

"So they're also refining their own research skills." I suggest.

"Yes!" she replies, "I tell them how to better scan when they do research online so that they can find reliable information. This is good for their General Paper as well, in fact!

In today's class, Vedika has decided to take the back seat. For this lesson, she aims to consolidate her students' presentation skills through a relatively simple exercise. She had already told her students to prepare small presentations on characters that they like in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. Subsequently they are expected to invite questions from the class. Vedika also intends to intervene and ask them some questions to bring them to reflect analytically and answer in a relevant manner. Although they have done simple presentations before, based on the plot, the students have not really done more in-depth presentations. Vedika hopes to be able to use this session to show them how to identify their strengths and weaknesses when it comes to making effective arguments. At this stage, the students have already completed most of the play.

Generally, when she carries out those sessions, she looks at what they have assimilated as impressions and knowledge since they have first started reading the text. Thus, whether the students have done some additional research on the background, author and text also counts as part of the presentation. At this level, she is aware that some of what they present might come from materials they have found online, but she hopes that gradually, under her guidance, they will begin to use those materials more effectively to support their own arguments, rather than let the materials stand by themselves during the presentation. While she does not expect them to carry out bland, formal presentations, she does make it clear to them that she expects them to use appropriate body language and communication skills while they present information that is relevant to the topic. To that purpose, she has had sessions where she has assisted her students on their pronunciation.

For Vedika, the advantage of using this method from time to time is that it breaks from the traditional, expository method where the teacher explains and gives notes on the characters. With the focus on character analysis, this particular lesson allows them to voice out their opinion on a character of their choice, and share what they think with the rest of the class. Since she also plans to open up the session with a discussion with the rest of the class, no presentation is really isolated, but connects with the other presentations. She also finds those sessions to be more interactive and hence more memorable for the students; they are more eager to listen to their friends since they have been used to hearing their teachers lecture lengthily in most of

their classes. Remembering who said what in what circumstance makes the learning process different, so much so that Vedika now thinks that notes are not enough anymore. Moreover, such type of lesson also helps to reduce her workload, in the sense that she does not end up taking the class time doing all the talking. Given that this particular class takes place in the afternoons, she feels that it is important for the teacher to get her students involved. Vedika has also tried out other means to make the class more interesting. In the beginning, when her students were starting to become familiar with some of the protagonists of the play, she would bring kitchen paper and markers and together they would work out character diagrams, where each student would contribute an adjective to describe that particular character, based on their knowledge and understanding of the latter. This would be accompanied by discussions to justify their choice of words. These would be ways in which she would vary her lessons.

As each group comes forward to present, Vedika quietly notes down some of the key ideas that are brought forward on the board in the form of a mind map around the character. One group has just finished presenting on the character of Titania, upon which Vedika opens the floor to the class' comments. A few students thus start commenting on the character being presented, and suggest their own reasons why they like or do not like Titania. When Vedika is satisfied that there has been some response to the different presentations, she then asks a few questions of her own to the whole class. At one point, she asks, "Try to imagine that you are Titania. What would you do if you had her power?" This allows her students to use their imagination to think of a number of situations where Titania's magic could be of use to them in real life.

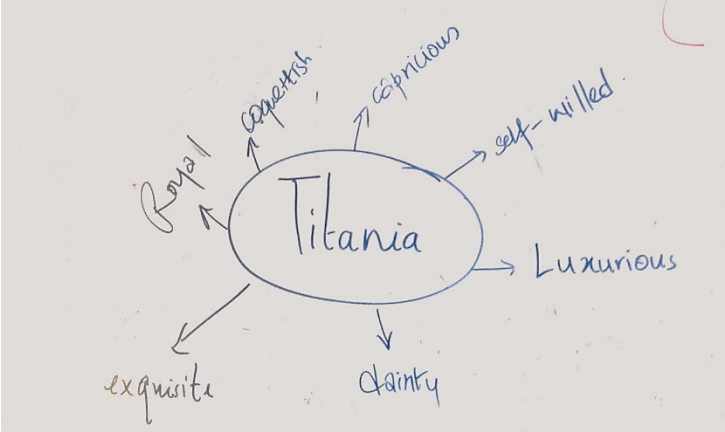


Figure 5.1: Vedika uses a mind map to help describe a character

The next presentation considers the character of Oberon, the king of the fairies. The students present some of the positive aspects of Oberon, including his cunning and leadership skills as king. Vedika uses the discussion time to question them about Oberon's supposed maturity. She asks them, "Was his wish to take the little boy from Titania justified? Was he also right in using magic to obtain what he wanted, while tricking his own wife?" Together with the students, Vedika explores these other aspects of Oberon's character.

As the presentations proceed, Vedika uses small questions to get the students themselves to deepen their understanding of their favourite characters' motivation and, where possible, to

provide the counterpoint to their own appreciation of these characters. When it comes to Hermia, for instance, although the students might see her mostly as a victim, Vedika would also like them to realise how courageous she was in choosing love over filial duty, whilst being threatened by the prospect of death. She gets them to assess Hermia in the light of traditional images of womanhood; her refusal to be submissive, to some extent, shows her true strength. When the students present on Lysander, she uses that moment to ask them how the latter, despite being a flat character, still manages to become a catalyst by pushing events forward. When her students give some examples of such instances where Lysander becomes a critical character in the plot, she invites them to link the events to the rest of the play, thus showing them how to make sense of the relationship between character and plot.

As she wraps up this segment, she points out to the class that no one chose to present on the character of Demetrius, so she takes a few minutes to talk about the way he is presented in the text as this unfaithful person who is unsure of himself and guided by his own self-interest. As she talks of more general themes, she alludes to other Shakespearean comedies. She refers to ***The Tempest***, where, just as in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, magic and supernatural elements play a prominent role in pushing the plot forward and providing a space where conflict may be resolved. When she talks of Hermia's situation in the play, she compares that to Hero's situation in ***Much Ado About Nothing***, where the woman is put to trial or subject to public condemnation despite her innocence.

She then invites the students to share their notes amongst each other. She also asks them to write down in their notebooks the various types of characters they have encountered and to try and categorise them as round or flat characters to begin with, and after that, as main and secondary characters. For each character, she tells them they have to write a few lines to show how the character changes or does not change over the course of the play. She gives the example of Hippolyta to note down, where she indicates that the latter does not evolve much throughout the story. At that point, one of the students asks, "Miss, what about you? Tell us who your favourite character in the play is!" She smiles as she replies that her favourite character is Puck, who despite being at the service of his King, Oberon, still remains mischievous and true to his self.

In the next segment, two students who had been absent previously have been given the opportunity to present on a theme that Vedika had given them to prepare some time back. The rest of the class has already presented, and since Vedika wants the whole class to benefit from the content being presented by these two students, she has taken that on board in her planning of the class. The students come forward with their sheet of Bristol paper. They are about to present on themes of love and the supernatural. They start off by asking the audience about their views on love as being presented in the text so far. Taking the two major couples in the text, as well as the fairy king and queen, they start questioning whether love is shown as being genuine or contrived in the text. In relation to the theme of love, they also discuss whether the relationships shown in the text assist the emancipation of the female characters or in fact reinforce some of the patriarchal roles of that time, such as that of the father, the male lover or

the husband. Vedika is surprised to hear some of those terms, which she has casually mentioned before but not really discussed in depth. Clearly, these two students have also done some reading on their own on these aspects.

After this presentation, Vedika now opens up the discussion to the whole class, prompting them with some questions. She asks them to think what they would say if they had to compare Lysander to Demetrius, and the same for Hermia and Helena. There are a number of issues which are related to the discussion of these four characters and which she would like to touch upon. At one point, as she listens to one student speak about the feeling of hurt that Helena experiences, she responds by questioning them whether outward appearance is more important that character or personality. She also asks them to reflect about Helena's state of mind when the two men start courting her in the woods. One girl responds that she feels betrayed.
Vedika responds, "Ok, why would she feel like this? Shouldn't she be happy to get what she wanted: the attentions of Demetrius?"
Another student responds, "No, because she suspects that they are playing a trick upon her."

Given that many of her students are familiar with the concept of matchmaking and arranged marriages, she asks them to imagine if this were happening to them instead of Hermia: how would they feel if they were being forced to marry someone they did not like? Would they comply or resist? Most of the students are so vehement in their response that it makes Vedika smile. She then asks the students, "What do you think about the way Oberon tricks his own wife?" One student replies that he is very cunning and that the trick is funny. Another retorts that he should not have gone to such great lengths to achieve what he wanted. Vedika makes use of this interjection to invite the students to comment on the relationship between Oberon and Puck. She then asks them, "Would you have liked being ordered about like that?" Most of the students reply in the negative. Then, she moves on to use other scenes they have just read about where Oberon is shown to be more generous and liberal than Theseus.

Since her students did not really comment on the dream aspect of the play during the presentation and the ensuing discussion, she tries to bring that element through questioning and explanation. She explains that these four protagonists do not know what happened to them while they were under the influence of the spirits, which might make them then think that it was all a dream. If they are rational people, how would they explain what they have lived together? She asks her students, "Can four people have the same dream?" The students laugh at this question and try to think of situations and conversations that might ensue upon the protagonists' return to Athens. Vedika concludes that the journey into the woods has been a sort of trial where a number of issues have been dealt with, so that the characters can now start with a clean slate.

Vedika smiles wryly as she says, "I do not know why people think it is so easy to explain certain concepts to students. Somehow, some of us tend to forget that these are still teenagers!"

"I guess some of them might seem more mature than their friends, but there are still so many things they have not experienced themselves, right?" I suggest.

She nods and says, "Literature is that bridge, in the sense that it brings to my students a number of human experiences that they still have to understand at their level. Take 'nostalgia', for instance. If you just say there is nostalgia in this text, or that extract, it will remain abstract. They'll note it, and it will be just words on paper. But if you tell them to think of a moment when they were perhaps dropping someone at the airport, someone whom they know they will miss; well, there you have it, they'll be able to understand at least one aspect of nostalgia!"

"Do those examples work?" I am curious to know.

She nods and says, "What I try to do is to get them to go to their own personal lives, by asking them "How did you feel in that situation?" and "What were your reactions at that moment?" They will be able to come up with relevant examples to better understand what is going on in the text. They are not always willing to give such examples, at the start of the year: I was new, of course! But over time, they realise that they can voice out and that the examples do not have to be deep, private moments, either, but simply experiences they or someone they know has had."

Teaching in a new school

Since Vedika joined this school in February, it has taken her a while to get her bearings and for the students to start relating to her. In a way, she misses the dynamism and familiarity that some of the other teachers seem to have, after years of having worked, even on and off, with certain students. As a newcomer, she realises that, even months afterwards, some of her students might still be unsure of who she is as a teacher. There was also some initial resistance from some of her students who, according to her, had had bad experiences of literature and therefore came to class expecting the worse. Indeed, some students came to class conditioned by the way they had been taught literature by Vedika's predecessors, some of whom had preferred a much more traditional stance, in terms of giving copious notes and not expecting any sort of personal response from their students. Over time, though, she knows she has been able, through her approach in her class, to indicate aspects of her professional and personal identity and to make her students feel comfortable, which is one of her main concerns. The novelty of having moved from another school also played in her favour, with students more willing to start afresh and accept a slightly different approach to literature teaching than what they were used to. Students who came to her class in February did not know what to expect, and that, in Vedika's mind, was a good opportunity to build up rapport from scratch. Initially,

she found that the girls felt more comfortable from the start and were more ready to share their personal experiences.

While generally discussions tend to have overall good responses from both boys and girls, Vedika finds that centres of interest tend to diverge so she has to vary her questions or suggestions to involve both groups in the discussions. The boys, even now, do not interact as much and Vedika finds that she has to go after them and remind them to submit assignments. She also addresses them differently; she has found that her male students respond more readily if she directly asks them the question, almost as if she were carrying out an interview. However, she finds that while some girls tend to be more invested on one side of the debate, the boys try to give a balanced and distant view. For the girls, Vedika is aware that the issues they are reading might be touching them at a personal level. It is like a battle they have to fight, even if they are not the ones whose freedom is at stake. Therefore when such issues crop up, Vedika is careful to provide the space for such discussions to take place. This move is not always understood by the boys; Vedika remembers when one boy actually said to her in class, while she was raising a point about feminism, "Ah yes, Ma'am, you're a girl, so ultimately you are going to take their side." She also received statements from others who thought that feminism was all about the hatred for men, and this is where she again had to intervene to discuss how feminism was a way of trying to address issues of power and representation in society. This makes her realise how important it is to make those terms and approaches clear for her students to understand.

Raising such issues is never easy when it comes to challenging stereotypes and assumptions and Vedika is aware that just telling them about such issues, without discussing them at length, and especially through the texts in the syllabus, would not yield great results. There is an initial tendency to associate those alternative views to fiction, since in much of their everyday life, many of the students have seen the opposite happening, with the father still leading the household and the mother following, especially in that rural area. When it comes to Egeus' condemnation of Hermia in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, there is some empathy and sympathy built up towards Hermia but Vedika is sometimes surprised when her students, including some of the girls, take up Egeus' side, because they have themselves witnessed their parents, and more especially their fathers apply the rule of law in their own homes. They might not approve of the death sentence pronounced by Egeus and Theseus, although they do not necessarily condemn Egeus' right to ask for filial obedience since many of them are familiar with a similar family culture.

Vedika is often mindful when it comes to addressing serious themes in class. More often than not, most literary texts address deep themes pertaining to the human existence and address issues such as life, death, human emotions and so on. Vedika has thus had a student who had lost a family member recently, and who nearly broke down in class, when the issue of death was raised in one of the texts. The reader, as Vedika has often found, also constructs meaning out of the fictional text, and the events or characters they read about become meaningful when viewed from their own perspective. One way that she tries to address this is by making it a collective space for sharing. She sometimes wonders why there is the assumption that the

teacher will always be asking the questions and the students will be the ones replying. Sometimes she narrates chosen aspects of her life, such as the death of her own grandmother when she has to address the theme of death in a text. Using this personal experience allows her to put her students more at ease and also provides an interesting link with the text they are studying. It is at this point that some will voice out and say, "Ah yes, we also had a similar experience!" This opening up is a gradual process and it does not always happen at the same pace for everyone. The reactions of her Grade 10 students are quite different from those of her Grade 12 students. Grades 9 and 10 students still view some of the serious issues they encounter in literature as trivial stories that can only happen to others. The other side of the picture arises when the students get really passionate about what they are currently discussing. It used to be a challenge in class for Vedika to indicate that everyone has their point of view, and that if someone disagrees or differs from one's point of view, it is not something personal. Vedika, in initial phases, has had situations where students would simply close themselves and keep their distance from whoever they were disagreeing with. For them, it was important that they be shown to be right during arguments and this meant that, from the students' perspective, one had to be the loudest and the most vehement. This tended to build tension until Vedika intervened to defuse the situation.

Yet another challenging aspect is the issue of assessment. Vedika thinks it is very important to prepare her students for the examinations; she has found that while some students might be proficient at understanding, interpreting and analysing the text in class, they do not really know the proper way of answering questions. While discussing with her students, Vedika was therefore quite surprised at hearing some say that they had to write everything they had read about for the examinations, without checking whether their answers would be relevant or not. They then became disappointed when Vedika pointed out to what extent their enthusiasm or emotional involvement with the text had led them to digress and showed them how to extract useful information from all the notes they have accumulated. Vedika tries to teach in such a way that her students can derive guidance and information as to how to prepare themselves for the examinations. During a class presentation, for instance, she sometimes tells them to prepare on a particular character by looking at the evolution of that character throughout the play. During the classroom presentation, if she feels that they are not coming to the point, or that they have not provided enough information pertaining to the argument they are making about that character, she provides feedback, which allows them to prepare themselves. She also teaches them to pay attention not only to themes, atmosphere and characters, but also to look for motivation and symbolism in the text. For this to happen, she spends some time on the development of empathy in her students through a number of activities.

When literature teaching is being called upon these days to be creative and innovative, Vedika finds the recent decision by Cambridge International Examinations to remove the empathic question from the examination paper to be regrettable. Preparing for such a question enabled some of her more creative students to express themselves by stepping in the shoes of certain characters. While being enjoyable, these activities also enable the teacher to know to what extent her students have really understood what is happening in the text. Even though such questions no longer feature in the examination paper, Vedika still thinks such empathic tasks

can be useful in the literature classroom and she to include such activities as far as possible to include some more originality in her students' work, which is an interesting contrast to just learning notes by heart. Such questions also open up the text to a variety of interpretations, which make it easier to discuss together.

Thinking about empathic tasks often brings Vedika to reflect upon the level of examination papers over the last few years where the trend for Cambridge seems to be to set simpler, relatively easier papers. In contrast to some of her colleagues, Vedika finds this trend to be unsettling. She appreciated the challenging nature of the literature examination paper, and she feels that teachers should not rejoice at having such easy papers, as they do not allow students to develop as much as she would have liked. She has also noticed, during panel corrections[30], that when students do well, some of her colleagues feel hesitant to give them the best mark they could get out of the mark band. While she acknowledges that there is room for improvement for most students, she cannot understand why teachers are so reticent when their students do well. Perhaps, as she sometimes thinks, this has to do with the fact that few do actually score really high marks for the examinations. According to Vedika, this would explain why so many teachers are happy about the removal of the empathic question. If students do not score as much for the literature examination, the assumption is that the paper is challenging and therefore the removal of difficult questions is to be welcomed. Vedika acknowledges that the overall reputation of literature is that it is a difficult subject; she has noticed the same being said by students about the oral English examination at Grade 11, which generates a great deal of stress for such a short examination.

Vedika pays close attention to the way that her students formulate their answers. She has found that it is all too easy for discussions to be lively and interesting but then yielding little of value in terms of arguments. While she has taught that multiple interpretations are acceptable, her students initially thought that whatever they could write down would be correct. She then intervenes by telling them to pay close attention to the evidence that they provide for supporting their claim and to make sure that whatever reference they have used is duly acknowledged. She also warns them about making extravagant claims which go far beyond logic and reason. These unrealistic interpretations, which are unsubstantiated by the contents of the text, could adversely affect her students' performance. Finding plausible interpretations is something that Vedika's students find challenging, and many would much prefer being told by the teacher instead of freely interpreting the text. Vedika finds that this is one of the particularities of this subject, which compared to some other academic subjects, does not require the student to come up with only one kind of answer to a specific question, since the focus in her subject is to build up her students' interpretation of the texts.

There are times when Vedika wishes that there were not so much pressure upon teachers to 'produce' students with good results, and she often feels that her subject is misunderstood not

[30] Panel corrections are carried out in some schools and departments when a common paper is set for a particular year group. The teachers servicing this particular year group would correct papers and moderate to ensure that there is a degree of agreement upon marking criteria and common understanding of marking bands and standards.

only by other teachers but also by her seniors, especially at the level of administration. Vedika, whose rector at her previous college was also an English educator, feels that it is of considerable help when one's head of school knows the subject. She feels she was getting a great deal of support and understanding in the way she was running her classes, and there was more emphasis being laid upon the quality of teaching rather than producing favourable statistics at the end of the year. Of course, not everyone can get the rector of their choice but already Vedika notices that there is a considerable difference in approach between the two rectors. There is a stronger focus on productivity and accountability in terms of results in her current college, while her former rector used to emphasize on the importance of gaining something of quality out of the teaching and learning process while maintaining rigour and quality.

Vedika would have appreciated seeing more teachers who spoke more directly of talking about the contents of poetry or drama, not necessarily about books and technical aspects. A lot has to do with the personal involvement of the teachers, and Vedika often thinks that if someone just goes to class for the salary, in the end, it will show. Most of her colleagues, she has found, firmly believe in quality, first, although they too can get frustrated when their efforts do not necessarily pay off. While there is generally no high expectation in this field for top results, the parastatal institution in which she operates has produced laureates on the Arts-side[31] before, and there is an expectation that those who have chosen to do literature and other compatible subjects for their HSC stand a good chance of becoming an Arts side laureate. So teachers such as Vedika are often told to encourage students to opt for the subject, even though Vedika believes that this should also be reflected in the pedagogical practices in class.

As she looks back at her own efforts in the schools she has been in, Vedika realises that it is actually hard work to get students to understand literature. However, she has noted that her students, if curious and interested enough, will read more about the subject. Whenever she tells them to read about a particular time period, or particular author, she finds that they do carry out the research and come to class ready to discuss. Vedika notes that even the boys, who are a minority in her actual class, are quite motivated and participate in all activities, albeit not always with the same enthusiasm as the girls. She now finds that she looks forward to having those classes with her Grade 12, which she feels have benefitted in quality because she has opened up that space to have her students' voices heard as well.

[31] State scholarships are provided to the topping candidates for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) examinations in specific domains or 'Sides' which are determined by the candidate's choice of subjects for the last two years of secondary schooling. Choosing appropriate subject combinations leads to students being eligible to apply for a State scholarship. Examples of such domains are the Arts Side, Technical Side, Economics Side and Science Side. The Arts Side includes different combinations such as the languages, sociology, visual arts and so on.

5.3 Sharda's Narrative: The Big Picture

Prologue to the Narrative

Sharda has been working for the past 25 years as an English teacher, starting first in a private school before moving on to State schools.

When we meet, she is very keen to tell me about her experience in a number of schools, many of which, she is proud to say, are "star schools". She then talks about her experiences in this particular school, telling me about the students' academic level.

I ask her about some of the classes that she teaches. She tells me about her Grade 8, Grade 11 and Grade 12 classes which she is currently teaching. With her Grade 11, whom she has invited me to observe, she has been teaching three texts over the two years, namely the CIE[32] poetry anthology, ***Songs of Ourselves****, Anita Desai's* ***Fasting, Feasting*** *and William Shakespeare's* ***The Tempest****. She then tells me that she has five periods per week with those students to cover those three texts.*

"The problem is, you can't read the story, line by line! This steals my time! When you make those references outside the text, when you tell them those short stories, this is what they remember."

"I noticed that you made quite a few references to Indian films and serials," I point out, referring to her previous class.

She laughs as she says, "Obliger faire! Obliger faire[33]! They connect easily because this is what they see in the films that they watch. "Oh, c'est pareil, ca![34]" they will exclaim, because they suddenly realise that those themes had been around them all the time," she replies, "this makes the class much more interesting, but don't expect mature discussion as they are more passive in this school."

Teaching the novel to Grade 11 students

Sharda has recently completed Anita Desai's novel, ***Fasting, Feasting*** with her Grade 11 class and, as is her habit, she is revising some key sections of the novel before she continues with the other texts on the syllabus. There are about twelve students present today, and they are all

[32] Cambridge International Examinations
[33] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "One must do that! One must do that!"
[34] Translated from French, "Oh, it's the same!"

seated in a cluster around Sharda's desk, listening to her attentively. The class, however, does not start with the text straight away. Sharda chats with her students as they settle down around her, and in the meantime, she asks them about their other school activities and deadlines. Then, she briefly recapitulates the main points raised in the novel, in case her students have missed out something.

Piecing the fragments together

Sharda usually starts her very first class by providing background information on the authors under study. She also encourages her students to do some background research on the author, her times and the society she lived in. This, she finds, is essential since many students find it difficult to relate to literary texts. Since her students know little of history, when Sharda speaks of Henry VIII or some other historical figure, the students are not in the least connected with the past. There is no willingness to go back to the past to a reference that does not elicit any reaction in them. Therefore, as Sharda often notes, they find it hard to feel the way people felt at that time, or to engage with these people's customs and beliefs. Sharda feels sad that knowledge within the subject has become fragmented. For many students, literature is just going through the lines to find their meaning and trying to study the text with an examination question in mind. The text hence becomes a collection of themes, setting, plot, characters and so on, which are studied individually, rather than a whole.

Sharda feels that the challenge lies in combining all these aspects to have an overall picture and identify what the author means. Sharda has always believed that there are a number of benefits from studying literature. Not only do they learn about other societies, they also relate to real life situations and get to reflect on how these issues affect all of them. They also get to understand different viewpoints and perspectives. A simple poem on a flower, she sometimes reflects, can make one become more conscious of one's surroundings, and this growing awareness is something she has noted in her students over time. There can be many interpretations to a text and Sharda believes the classroom is an essential space where those interpretations can be discussed. What she tries to inculcate also is the notion that interpretations are valid as long as they can support their answers. Whenever she corrects their work, Sharda reminds her students that arguments based on firm evidence are what examiners look for. Helping her students build those skills becomes even more difficult when time is a scarce commodity in the school calendar, when there is a selection of texts to complete, and days when classes cannot be run because of school events. Sharda still tries to bring about this awareness of the bigger picture, when she asks her students to cluster themes from different texts in order to compare them. Thus, the students are able to understand how specific authors or poets have represented love, for example, in their own distinctive style, in their texts. That also, however, is sometimes a challenge since some students find it difficult to move beyond one particular text.

Developing informed personal responses

Sharda knows that her students do not relate that much to ***Feasting, Feasting***, and that this may hinder their understanding of key events in the text. She however personally finds that this text

probably contains more relatable contextual references for the girls than the other texts on the syllabus. Since one of the competencies required for this subject is to develop informed personal responses, Sharda often tries to get her students to voice out in class. To achieve this, she starts asking some general questions about what the girls may have seen in Hindu or Muslim weddings in Mauritius. "Is it always a happy moment for everyone?" she asks. Some students reply that it is obviously a joyous moment, but then another student chips in with "When you have to organise a wedding at your place, it's always very tiring! You never get to sit down and appreciate anything!" This elicits laughter and agreement from her friends. Another student points out that sometimes people get married to please their relatives or family and that this is what is happening to Uma in the novel. Referring to both Anamika and Uma's wedding ceremonies in ***Fasting, Feasting***, Sharda asks them what they think of their respective old bridegrooms. Then she invites them to put themselves in these two characters' situation, "What would you have done in their place?" She is not at all surprised when one girl quips, "Madame, sa lontan mo ti pou sove sa![35]" Sharda is pleased that such discussions lead to deeper observations about gender roles, and her students very often expressing their personal reactions to events which, they realise, could well have happened to them, had they been in such a context.

Using class discussion

She often has recourse to discussion as a strategy, to bring forth aspects of the text as they occur, and to discuss their use and effect upon the reader. This entails a degree of noise in the class, but Sharda does not mind that since, in her mind, one cannot just sit and read all the time. Sharda believes that a teacher cannot limit herself to the material in the book; one must go beyond the text. In fact, when she started teaching ***The Tempest***, she found it difficult to explain the opening scene of the play. Her students just could not connect with the story. What she did was that she drew a boat, added the boatswain as a stick figure and used arrows to show the wind affecting the boat. Although the girls initially laughed at the drawing, Sharda told them, "Sorry, girls, you have to use your imagination here." Indeed, Sharda notes that they did understand what she was trying to convey, and she has, since then, used more of these drawings to clarify a point, event or theme in the text. She finds that it is rewarding when at long last, whatever she uses to represent her ideas makes sense to them.

Sharda comments on her students' responses, directing them to look at the novel for specific quotes on the event. She also points at the language and punctuation used in the extract that she is looking at. Sharda points out how important the theme of marriage is in the text, and how life in middle class families is often affected or driven by such events. She then directs the students to note the similarities between the three women who get married in the text, namely Uma, her sister, Aruna and her cousin, Anamika. Since she is carrying out a revision session, she tells the class to pay attention to the information provided in the text about these three women and their relationship with the theme of marriage. As she reads out one particular paragraph in the book, she tells them to underline and remember the quote, which they

[35] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "Ma'am, I would have run away a long time back!"

obediently set out to do. She then explains the link between the metaphor of the flower and the young women.

Using real-life examples and allusions to popular culture

As the class proceeds, Sharda goes through some key extracts in the book, occasionally commenting on the presentation of the characters as well as the themes in the text. She makes several references to wedding ceremonies and families as presented in Bollywood films. From discussions with her students, Sharda has found that they do not really like ***Fasting, Feasting*** because they get lost in the details. One way she tries to get around this resistance is to get her students to think of Indian films and serials, which she knows most of them watch, and which have many themes such as love, family, marriage, religion and society; the same themes which are present in the Indian novel they are studying. When some of her students tell her that such films are exaggerated, she replies, "I know films are exaggerated but they are not always false. At some point, movies used to show bandits attacking trains; well, when I was studying in India, this actually used to happen and we would hear about it in the news. Ever heard of Phoolan Devi? She was a real life bandit queen, and now they have made a film on her life. Films just rework those themes and add whatever they need to attract people." She finds that sharing this common interest in films and serials with her students makes it easier for them to discuss certain serious themes in the texts they are studying.

Referring to one popular custom in some Hindu weddings, which is also sometimes shown on film, where the groom's shoes are hidden, she asks, amidst her students' laughter, if they have ever seen such a custom in weddings in Mauritius. She promises to show them such a scene on her laptop the next time they meet, or, if she finds the link, to send it to them soon so they can have an idea.

"You know," she whispers, "We have a no-mobile policy during class time. However, if there is a video or clip that is related to what I am teaching, I will not hesitate to share it with my students via Bluetooth. Then they can play the clip and follow it line by line as they read from the book, in order to hear the proper intonation and rhythmic quality of the poem."

"Do you often do this?" I ask, feeling amused.

"Actually, not that often. But I find that technology is an integral part of my classes, even if I do not use it at every moment. Last year, when I was teaching Shakespeare's ***The Tempest,*** *I had decided to show them a film adaptation of the play. Before we read Act 1, I showed part of the film pertaining to that Act. Afterwards, I went back to the text, explained it to them, line by line, and then carried out a discussion on that section."*

"What difference did it make, to see a film version of that play," I am curious to know.

"Well, I have found that my students approach the text with more enthusiasm, since watching the film adaptation before whets their interest and makes them anticipate rediscovering certain characters that they may have already identified with."

Using technology to teach literature

Sharda believes that teaching has to be different nowadays, and teachers have to take into consideration the fact that technology is very much part of their students' lives. It is not, as Sharda often reminisces, like the old days when she would go to the British Council and sit there for hours, looking for notes and preparing her classes. She recalls how sometimes she would go there and find out that the book she was looking for had already been loaned out, so she would have to come back some other day. She considers that things are different now, and that teachers, too need to evolve. Technology, then, for her, cannot be dissociated from her own teaching of literature. It is just not possible to continue teaching the way that she herself had been taught, when her teachers had used teacher-centred expository methods which involved considerable lecturing. Sharda believes that literature teaching should not be confined to the textbook; instead the teacher must go much beyond the text. She feels that students will understand better if technology is used to create an interest in students so that they focus on what the teacher is saying in class.

Ever since Sharda has started using her laptop in her classes, she finds that teaching literature has become easier, when she does not always have access to the multimedia room. Sharda often thinks that if there is technology but no access to the facilities, then it is as if there was nothing. Her laptop, with its fairly large screen, is more than enough when she has to show something to her two Grade 12 students or her twelve Grade 11 students. She also brings a pocket projector which she bought herself for her teaching. She sometimes cannot believe how a conventional class can change whenever she adds images or video clips, since her students become focused and are also better able to discuss afterwards. There is also the personal pleasure she derives when she gets things to work, without having to resort to a technician or support staff to set up something for her, and the reaction of her students makes her feel that the effort is worth it.

For the last four to five years, she has thus been using PowerPoint presentations and videos to get her students' attention in class. Merely talking, or just reading out from a textbook, she often thinks to herself, does not work anymore. Once she has shown them something, she knows that they will continue thinking about it on their own. She also uses social networking to consolidate her ties with her students since she believes she has to reach out to the next generation; she has thus created groups both on WhatsApp and Facebook to share materials and links with them. Sharda finds that it is easier to send them notes in advance so that at least they are familiar with aspects of the text when it comes to discussing in class. She usually gives them notes first on the background, gives them indications on possible aspects to research, such as the poet's life, the period in which he lived, his other works and so on. Usually, if she finds a useful internet site with very good notes, she will share the links with them. She finds that

her students do go and check those links out because afterwards they comment on what they found on the website. Sharda likes to provide them with the opportunity of seeing the texts they are studying from a different angle; sometimes contemporary writers are themselves very much present on the internet and she finds it more refreshing to get her students to go and read blogs, book reviews and interviews, which also provide interesting insights into the author's life and works.

We have been having an interesting conversation about the importance of literature.

Sharda says to me, "Literature is one of the ways we can connect the past to the present. That's what I try to do with my students, by getting them to connect situations that are represented in literature with similar events around them or from the past. There are some universal traits in literature that go beyond time, and literature allows us to see that trend."

"So, is that when the students start relating to the text?" I ask.

She replies, "When you give examples, that's when they understand, really."

Relating the text to real life

Moving on to more serious matters, she asks them to highlight some of the differences they see between Anamika and her future groom, who is much older than her, but supposedly matches her in terms of qualifications and social status. Turning towards her students, she asks, "Would you have accepted to marry someone who is much, much older than you, whom you never met before?" The girls, surprised at this question, start laughing and then answer that they would never accept such a situation. She then comments on the presentation of the mother-in-law figure, who is often presented in a negative light in Indian serials, and who unfortunately lives up to the stereotype by ill-treating Anamika. She asks them to comment on the mysterious discovery of her burnt corpse at her in-laws, and asks them whether they have heard of the 'Sati' tradition in India. Since a few students have heard about this, she lets them explain, and then uses this to discuss the real life problem of brides being burnt because of insufficient dowry.

Then, shifting to her own experiences, she comments on how a lot of emphasis is placed in Asian families on children, especially boys to succeed well academically, and how middle class families are often comparing their offspring's academic performances. Sharda points out how the same happens to Anamika in the novel, where her certificate gets framed, not as a personal achievement necessarily, but as something to add to her eligibility for marriage. Some students

laugh as Sharda questions them about their families and their reactions towards their own academic performance.

Peer teaching sessions

After the discussion, Sharda gives her class a few questions to discuss in pairs. From time to time, she responds to a query from a student or adds an additional idea to her explanation. She wants to make sure that her students leave the class with a clear idea about the text. Another initiative that she has taken since the beginning of the year has been to set up peer-teaching sessions, with the authorisation of school administration, where Sharda has called upon past students of hers to come and carry out briefing or discussion sessions on specific texts. During those sessions, empathic tasks, essays and contextual questions on ***Fasting, Feasting*** and ***The Tempest***, for instance, are discussed. She has set up such sessions because her students will soon sit for their mock exams at school, which is going to be a full-fledged paper just like what they should be expecting for their O' level examinations at the end of the year. While she is confident they will not have any issue for poetry, she thinks that they will require those revision sessions for the other two texts. She however has had to limit some of those sessions because some of her colleagues did not approve of this practice.

"I think it all boils down to how literature has been taught to them at lower secondary," Sharda states gravely.

I ask her to elaborate. She then tells me, "That's where the foundation lies. When we get those students at Grade 10, it's sometimes too late. The damage has already been done."

Differences between teaching at lower secondary and teaching at upper secondary

Sharda enjoys teaching literature at both lower and upper secondary. Teaching at lower secondary is, for her, an opportunity to bring her students to love literature and appreciate the beauty of language, form and structure. In this era where youngsters seem to be mostly interested in vampire stories and Christopher Pike[36] novels, she finds it refreshing when she is able to get some of her students to appreciate the beauty of sonnets or poems by the Romantics. Her aim, she sometimes tells herself, is to make her students dream. She has found that she has had greater success with girls than with boys; the former found it easier to connect with the themes that those poems were introducing. However, not all her colleagues share her point of view about literature. Literature, especially in lower grades, is allocated only a period or two on the timetable; for the end of year examinations, literature is, in Sharda's school, only one of the sections of the language paper. This is something she intends to change, by introducing a separate literature paper and giving more weight to the literature component at lower secondary

[36] Bestselling author of young adult and children's fiction, who specialises mostly in thrillers and horror fiction.

level. This, she hopes, will bear its fruits in the years to come. Sharda believes that literature has a purpose. She has even gone to her rector to convince her to make English literature compulsory till Grade 11 level. She believes that doing so can help her students write better English and also enhance their own reading culture through the appreciation of literature. She finds it a tragedy that students miss out on such experiences since literature can lead students to criticise and appreciate works of fiction and also develop their reasoning faculties, which can help in other subjects.

As far as upper secondary students are concerned, Sharda believes that all depends on the school in which the teacher finds herself. Although she tries not to compare, she however finds that there are great discrepancies in students' profile and learning styles. In one of the more academically prestigious schools in which she previously worked, she found that she barely had any issues with starting a text. The students knew who Shakespeare and Keats were. That was because they had done their homework whereas in her current school, she finds herself being the first to inform the students about those authors and poets. Somehow, she feels that the groundwork for this appreciation to take place has not been done, and she perceives this as a possible failure for teachers for not having anticipated such an issue. This failure, she often thinks, is because not enough importance is given to the teaching of literature at lower grades. She believes things have to start much earlier, at grassroots level, by making lower secondary students work on literature, write poems, and think about language and literary devices. This is where they learn that there is more to literature than prose fiction, or having to write a few lines for an essay.

The fear of literature dying out in the secondary school curriculum

One of Sharda's fears is that literature, especially in state schools, is going to die out. There used to be two classes of literature at Grade 11 level only a few years ago. Currently, Sharda teaches the only Grade 11 class, which consists only of 12 students. The rector has even hinted that if there are not enough students who opt for literature later on, she will not offer literature as an A' level option at the school. Sharda feels that a lot depends on teachers to make their class interesting. However, a lot also depends upon students' attitudes towards the subject. Literature teaching, she finds, is becoming more and more an arduous task with unwilling students and when results reflect students' attitudes towards the subject, it is unfortunately the teacher who is held accountable for these results.

Students' attitudes to the subject

Absenteeism, she finds, is not only a problem at Grade 11 level, but even higher up. Although teachers, in her opinion, are doing their best, there are still students who feel it is easier to just stay home and revise or take private tuitions. This means that there is a discontinuity when, in one week, someone shows up and another decides to be absent, and then the next week, the same story is repeated with someone else. Sharda finds that this puts considerable strain on her, since she has already prepared her lesson plans, and her notes for two or three weeks and then she ends up rushing to complete all the work when they decide to turn up. Sharda deplores the fact that there is so much record of planning to be done for every period when very often there

is also circumstantial teaching. If someone asks a question or a matter gets discussed, where does that feature in the lesson plan? She realises that what she plans is often different from what she ends up doing in class but then, as she often tells herself, you cannot write, step-wise, how to proceed in a literature class. Even if she does not complete a text, that is alright because in the end she is teaching the techniques related to the study of literature and how to answer types of questions.
She however has no choice than to proceed anyway; the least she could do is to do something to get them to understand their text and be able to answer the questions for their examinations.

For the past few years, Sharda has noticed that many students who take up literature at upper secondary level are not those who really wanted to do literature as a subject. She therefore has realised that many start off with the subject with a lot of indifference, which, she has to admit, is very disturbing for a teacher of literature. Some students even have told her that they do not like the book. So, she had to find ways to get the students to find something they could relate to, telling them that approaching a text with negativity can make the subject seem like an obstacle to overcome and hinder the learning process. Sharda believes that getting them to like literature is one of the biggest challenges she has had to face as an educator, especially when young people approach the subject with little hope that they will learn anything of value from it. Sometimes, it is not literature that a student does not like, but a particular text, which after all, she thinks, is natural. She finds some of her students enjoying poetry but not really responding to the heavier themes in ***Fasting, Feasting***, for instance. It is thus with a lot of effort that Sharda gets her students to find something they can comment on, by using real life references and experiences. She finds that even Shakespeare is exciting to teach, especially when students are able to connect and find universal traits of character in plays such as ***Macbeth***.

"I am grateful, you know, that I did my postgraduate degree in Education before teaching," Sharda tells me.

"How has it helped you?" I ask.

"Well, it has helped me in a number of ways. I felt empowered with skills and resources which I then could use in my career as English language and literature teacher. When I was following my B.Ed in India, model lessons, as well as the various modules in Education, Psychology and English, helped me address many issues in my teaching. I also knew what to do with my students once I had them in class."

Teacher preparation

According to Sharda, the literature teacher has to master the text and do a lot of research to be able to prepare properly. Key elements need to be identified so as to highlight those when discussing with students. While there are some teachers who complain that they do not like specific texts, she considers that if a text is on the prescribed list, there must have been something valuable in it. All, then, is a question of time and effort to sit with the text and extract what is important from it. Sharda believes that the good literature teacher is not the one who has prepared a lot of notes but the one who can make a difference in class. She is sympathetic to those who go down what she considers to be the easy way, since there are several texts to prepare, read and master before going to class, questions, assignments and exam questions to prepare. Then she wonders, "If I find a text difficult, what will my students think of me?" While she tries to develop her students' own grasp of literature and get them to speak in their own words, she understands the need and reassurance for notes, especially from critics who have done a good work of analysing and providing critical insight into the texts. In many cases, some of these critics have often been contemporaries of some of the writers under study and who better to give an idea of what was going on at the time, or what the author was thinking, than those people?

A dynamic process

Sharda would like her students to move away from clichéd notions surrounding literature. Teaching literature, especially poetry, is a dynamic process. Sharda does not go only by the textbooks. She uses the textbooks as a starting point, and then makes references to things that she knows her students will be able to relate to. Connecting literature to the present through real life situations ensures that her students will be able to understand. While she prefers using discussion as a strategy, she finds that her students still feel shy about participating. She also realises that many of them have not reached a level of maturity to discuss deeper issues represented in literature. What they usually do is to go on the internet, and search for notes which they will later on repeat, word for word. Very rarely does she hear them say "I feel" or "But Madam, what about..?" Here, she finds she has to tell them all the time, and this becomes tiring after a while. She tries to encourage them to participate more through group work and sharing. Sometimes, getting them to translate important quotes from the text into Kreol assists in making the text more relatable. Integrating a bit of theatrical work also has been helpful to get her students involved in the study of literature, where she gets them to read the text in a dramatic way or to re-enact a few scenes in class. The one thing that prevents her from using role play more extensively is the time constraint that she faces, and she thinks it is sad not to have more opportunities for such activities, which her students would have enjoyed.

Her reaction to some of the challenges in teaching literature

Sharda thinks that relying too much on resources and notes could potentially be harmful; notes can be helpful only as far as one knows the text. If notes are the entire basis of one's understanding of a text, then one will undoubtedly have a narrow and biased view of things. Reading the text and thinking about it lead to the student having her own informed opinion. In

addition, Sharda has often noticed that even some of the simpler notes she gives need additional clarification on her part, so that her students can understand.

What will they remember, later on?

After a lot of reflection, Sharda considers that she made a blunder when she initially came to this school; not being used to giving notes to her higher-achieving students in her previous school, she had started giving notes when she had noticed that the level was not too high here. Giving notes was also a reaction to the initial fear she had when she started noticing that students were not so regular in class or that they were missing out because of events on the school calendar. "What if they don't do well?" had been one constant worry at that time. Eventually she had had to review the notes she was giving since they were still too abstract for many of her students. Sometimes she also worries that she has not provided enough explanations about certain aspects of the text. Her instinct had been to give them as much information as possible. However, she takes reassurance in the fact that her students are able to understand how to work out and respond to the questions set to them. She would never think of getting rid of notes; that is too much ingrained in the Mauritian culture, but she has herself rarely had the habit of giving extensive notes. To be fair, Sharda knows that most of her students will pass but she does not believe that the whole point of studying this subject was just to receive notes and pass the examinations. "What will they remember, later on?" she sometimes wonders. If their teacher has put in enough effort, she believes that the real love for literature is what will remain. But how can one develop that love?

Developing curiosity and love in the study of literature

Sharda does not think there is anything more than what she does already that she could do to make her teaching more innovative. Sharda believes that literature teaching goes much beyond giving notes. The literature teacher needs to love the subject; without that passion, she doubts that anyone could effectively teach literature. She also believes that this love has to start very early, though exposure to literature from lower secondary. Grade 10, according to her, might be too late to start initiating students to appreciate literature but she does realise that very often this is where the hard work starts. However, when she considers what texts are proposed at lower secondary, she finds that these are not really conducive to the type of appreciation she wants to develop.

She prides herself that she has been able to inculcate some form of research skills in her students. They will often, out of curiosity, go and try to learn beyond whatever she tells them in class, whether it be a blog or a webpage or even an article, they will try to check and find things out. It sometimes amuses her whenever one of her students comes to her with a fascinating titbit about the author or the text; it gives her great pleasure to see her students discuss what they have uncovered themselves and which makes them perhaps see the literary text in a different light. Of course, some of them will learn their notes by heart, which is why she tries to give them a variety of sources they can read and inspire themselves from, rather than taking and copying one set of notes only. Only in that way can she feel more confident

about her students' understanding of literature, because at the end of the day, for Sharda, these students have to pass, and pass with good grades.

Changes in the literature syllabus

Sharda appreciates the fact that the syllabus has changed over the years. When she used to be a student, the syllabus consisted mostly of classics from England. To teach classical, canonical texts, teachers used more conventional methods of teaching and giving notes. She prefers the mix of the older and the more contemporary and diverse texts in the present syllabus, which enables her to comment on the presentation of contemporary issues in society and use technology to improve her students' understanding of those issues. The opening of the canon does not mean that older texts should be removed, however. Sharda believes that there should be a balance between those different sets of texts. The one challenge she has noted with newer texts is the lack of reference material and notes so that some teachers face difficulties since they have to start from scratch, with their own personal interpretation and notes. Contemporary texts are more relatable for students, she finds, and they often come up with their own references, which consolidates both her and her students' understanding of the texts and their issues.

She has been planning to have a collection of short literary texts for the Grade 7, which would assist her students in appreciating the beauty of the language and the different styles of writing while also including questions based on the texts. Sharda believes that students who have to fill up their subject option form in Grade 9 are not well informed or well acquainted with literature. What they know is from their experience with abridged texts like ***Tales from Shakespeare***, or ***Wonder Tales from Greece***, which they usually cover in one term and are more like a set of short comprehension passages than *real* literature. She envies the private confessional schools where either French or English literature is compulsory till Grade 11. Over there, the fact that they end up doing literature till this stage means that they are exposed to literature more and many of them end up liking it and taking it at higher level. However she knows this depends on government policy regarding subjects being offered in state schools and she feels that literature has been forgotten by the authorities concerned.

"I know how to teach poems. But I really do not know what is important at a specific level. I tend to overlap," she tells me earnestly.

We had been discussing on her teaching of poetry, just after having observed one of her classes.

Curious, I ask, "What do you mean?"

She replies, smiling, "Of course, I tell them what examination papers require from them and what questions come out. I tell them they need to look at the atmosphere,

the tone, the stylistic devices and even the significance of the title. They should be able to recognise an ode or a sonnet or a rhyming couplet. All these are important. But for me, what is essential is that they need to know in depth what poetry is about. Basically, we talk about the central idea and how the poet has been able to convey those feelings that she has throughout the poem. So, my approach to teaching poetry is not that much different in O' level and in A' level. I just point out the differences in the papers afterwards, when we go deeper into the analysis of individual poems at A' level."

Teaching poetry to Grade 11 students

This time, Sharda is carrying out a poetry lesson. She intends to cover Christina Rossetti's poem, "A Birthday" from the collection ***Songs of Ourselves***. Sharda currently has around fourteen poems from the collection ***Songs of Ourselves*** to complete in her syllabus for Grade 11. When she had taken over from a previous teacher the last year, she had found that the teacher had initially selected stories from ***Stories of Ourselves***, which is a companion anthology to the ***Songs of Ourselves*** collection on the Cambridge International Examinations list of prescribed texts. Generally, text selection is discussed at the level of the department at the end of the academic year. Texts are selected that have longer shelf-life, that is, which will still be offered by CIE over a number of years. This is to ensure that students do not get penalised if ever they have to sit for the paper the next year and find that CIE has updated its list. Sharda finds that her colleagues also appreciate texts where notes and criticism are readily available. Another aspect they take into consideration is the length of the text as some texts can be bulky. However, Sharda is aware that some shorter texts might actually be more difficult to prepare and teach, so such decisions are not taken lightly.

Generally, as she herself as done, the teacher who takes charge of a particular year group and paper has the final word over the selection of texts, and Sharda is happy that her choice of poetry was approved, even though she met with some initial resistance from colleagues, who found poetry too difficult to teach. There was a reluctance to start something that had not been prescribed for some time. When she joined the school, Sharda refused to conform to this idea that literature consisted only of those few texts that some teachers had selected for themselves. Since she was going to be the only one teaching literature at Grade 11 level, after working a few of the poems in class and discussing with the students, she decided to shift to poetry instead of continuing with the short stories. Sharda has worked in schools where things sometimes get done collegially; this, she finds, is not always the case in her current school, where everyone is on her own. She attended one meeting where textbooks were selected and where it was decided who would prepare examination papers. Generally, those teachers who are teaching particular texts also prepare their own papers.

Sharda's love for poetry comes from the time when she was a student of literature. She feels particularly grateful to have studied in a private confessional school where literature was very much present throughout the years she studied there. She considers the literature classes she

attended as a student to be exceptional, where literature was never just something that happened inside books within a classroom. They were often encouraged to attend talks, seminars and theatrical representations on literature. She recalls having once gone to the Plaza[37] to watch a play and had been amazed at what she had seen on stage. Given that the play was later on discussed in class made her feel that literature was alive and that she was part of it. She remembers loving the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth or Keats, and their love for nature, which was communicated by the teachers she had. She considers such a conducive atmosphere to be the reason why her love for literature has survived for so long.

Differences between teaching poetry and teaching prose

Sharda finds that there are many differences between teaching poetry and teaching prose. Since her first session on poetry, Sharda has explained to them how various devices contribute to the overall meaning of the poem. She has also taught them to recognise some of the more prominently used in poems such as alliteration, metaphor, personification and imagery. Now that she has moved onto the third poem in the collection, she is not very worried since she finds them reacting positively to poetry. Sharda's students have told her that they like how a poet expresses their feelings directly in a few words. While some of the students find going deep into the analysis of the novel to be challenging, they do not face the same problem with poetry since the texts are quite short, not very complex and the themes, such as love, or nature, are easy to connect with. To make poetry even more familiar, one activity she has done recently is to get them to write poems on a number of subjects, using some of the devices that she has introduced to them. One such instance was on Mother's Day, where all the students wrote a poem on that occasion. Besides her own affinity with poetry, another reason for shifting to poetry was that she has found that her students connect more easily with the poems than with the short stories, which they found more challenging. She is glad that she was able to really discuss what a poem was and to introduce them to the types of poems on the syllabus.

Usually, before tackling a poem in class, Sharda tries to gather as much background information as she can find to send it to them, either in the form of notes that she has written, point-wise, on important aspects of the poem, or links to information on the author, period or text. In fact, she had already sent them some notes for the whole selection of poems on the syllabus during the holidays so that they could prepare. Her students, by now, know what is expected of them and try to work towards the standards that she has set for them.

Sharda often encourages comparisons across poems to identify common or contrasting themes. She sometimes tells them to categorise the poems according to the themes and then allocates each group in class a specific theme to work on and present. She also thinks it is important to know the background and context of the poems as well, since the selection consists of poems by different authors. She always starts a text by talking about the author first since literature, as she often tells her students, is about life, and what one writes reveals the sort of person one is and where one comes from.

[37] The Plaza Theatre, inaugurated in 1933 in Rose Hill, is one of the few theatres in Mauritius.

Sharda starts the session by inviting two of her students to read the poem, one stanza at a time. Once the poem has been read, Sharda asks her students if they have found notes on the poet or on her work. She asks them a few questions about the author and the themes in the text. Since the major theme in the text is 'love', she tries to relate it to their own experiences by asking them if they can understand the feelings in the poem. Some of the girls laugh at her question while others stay silent. Sharda knows that it was a sensitive question to ask but she feels comfortable enough with those students to ask this question. One or two students jokingly answer on this issue, upon which Sharda gently reminds them of the seriousness they need to demonstrate in this subject. Some of the students smile; they have clearly heard this from her a number of times now. After Sharda has reminded them how to do their best for this subject, they resume their lesson.

Subject choice and students' attitudes to literature

In her previous school, students took great interest in English literature, but they were also concerned with their grades because they were competing for a state scholarship and they knew they had to excel. She did not have to push them; they would themselves do the needful to be informed or up to date on the subject. She has realised, however, that most students are not really interested in taking this subject. She finds that people's outlook on this subject is crucial; many people, especially parents, do not find literature to be a viable career path. When it comes to subject choice, it is practicality and parental interest that mostly predominate, rather than the student's personal choice. Then, on the other side, she notes those who did not have any choice but to take this option. In some private schools, she notes that subject options are also more flexible, because some of them do not compete for scholarships, and she finds that many students then opt for literature in those schools. In her present school, Sharda is aware that the level of her students is not on par with some of the schools she has worked in before. However, she derives great satisfaction in knowing that she has been able to get them interested in literature and can work on a number of things with them to improve their understanding of literature. Her students can analyse and come up with arguments, even though there is much to be worked upon.

Being a reactive teacher

Sharda is always attentive to the slightest reaction of her students. She believes that a teacher needs to focus on her students and how they are reacting to what is being read and discussed in class. The slightest twitch of eyebrows might mean that the student is having a doubt about something, and therefore the teacher must react, rather than go on with lecturing. Sharda believes that an unsettled class cannot be conducive to learning. She feels that there needs to be engagement between the teacher and the students. Sharda feels she would never be able to work in a situation where students are restless; it would mean that something is lacking in the way she is carrying out the class. As a teacher, she believes that she should be the mistress of the situation and should try to get them to focus entirely on her in order for them to participate and follow the class, especially when there are large classes. She feels that she has to reach out and connect with them all the time because some of them can become laid-back or even lazy

with their work. So, specific guidelines, in her opinion, are essential to get them to work effectively. She sometimes even jokingly blames the ease with which the whole class has adopted technology; in fact even if they do not show up in class, they can still benefit from the notes.

The use of class discussion

One of the strategies she uses in class is discussion. Sharda has to admit, though, that in her current school, discussions are not as interactive as she used to have in her previous schools. Very often, discussions that she initiates end up being question-and-answer sessions. She is also aware of those who drift off or get distracted and then automatically say "Non, j'ai pas compris la, Madame[38]" whenever she tries to probe into what they have understood. Some are so quiet that she is not always sure if they have learnt something. Fortunately, not all her students are like that; some of her students actually try their best in class. Questioning allows her to find out how much they have understood and she knows that they will rush to answer if they know or stay quiet if unsure.

With reference to specific lines in the poem, Sharda then asks the girls a few questions which she invites them to reflect upon. As she discusses the poem more generally, she alludes to some contemporary references which she is sure her students will be able to understand. She begins with some information about the writer's life as well as the context in which Rossetti lived. In the 19th century, she points out, people did not always have the best of healthcare, alluding to those people whose death through illness, especially Rossetti's father, marked her. Then she points out at the title of the poem and tells them, "When you have a poem, you have to justify why the title is called this." She then invites her students to comment on reasons Rossetti would have named her poem, "A Birthday". Some of the students point out that she probably wanted to celebrate her own birthday or show how special the day was to her. Sharda nods and then tries to connect the theme of love to that of the birthday. She asks her students why this birthday is even more special this time. One student points out that she is in love and that being in love is actually the birthday she is referring to, because she feels reborn.

"Yes," replies Sharda, "Being in love is like a rebirth, isn't it?" The girls laugh quietly upon hearing this. Sharda continues by saying, "You can see that day is very special; how does the poet show that?"

She also asks them to focus on the indentation in every other verse of the poem, asking them, "What does that impact on the reading of the poem?" Since the students hesitate to answer, she points out the repetition of the words "my heart", which stand out due to the indentation, and which brings the reader to what the poet is feeling. She also asks the students, "Don't you think this stanza is about lonely love? The poet's love is not here; it's only her feelings and her anticipation which are described in the first stanza."

[38] Translated from French, "I did not understand this part, Ma'am"

Moving on, she invites another student to read out the first stanza again. After she has read, she asks them what figures of speech they have noticed in the poem. Some students refer to the use of similes used throughout the first stanza. Others point out the visual imagery used in the text. "It's a celebration of joy, isn't it? En plus, c'est beau a voir![39]" she points out. Together, Sharda and the class try to identify the words which connote specific themes such as freedom, celebration and joy. She also points out how the lack of punctuation leads the reader to keep reading, upon which one student exclaims, "run-on lines", which Sharda approves. She then draws their attention to specific words, pointing out how one word in poetry can suggest a considerable amount. She uses the example of the apple tree mentioned in the poem, which could stand for greenery, nature, bounty and fertility. She indicates to them that there are other such symbols in the text and invites them to find them out.

Language proficiency

"How is she describing her love?" she asks the class, "What does she want us to feel about that love? There are so many things you can say here, if you look at the words used in this poem. So, say something!" Ever since she has started teaching literature, Sharda has been aware that language is a challenge that the students need to overcome. One barrier, she finds, can be the language, especially Shakespeare's English, which baffles her students at times and makes them miss out important aspects of the text. While simple language do not generally present any difficulty, it is usually poetic language, with its dense meanings that confuse the students. Once the students were able to connect with the themes, discussing how language was being used became easier to grasp, provided enough work was done to get them acquainted with stylistic devices and figures of speech.

Going back to the stanza, Sharda then adds that the poet wants to describe love in its magical form with all its depth and innocence. After getting another student to read the second stanza once more, she refers to words like "silk", "pomegranate" and "grapes", and tells them "It's all about glamour, vouzot[40]! You know what a pomegranate is, right? It's what we call 'anar', in Hindi. It represents sweetness, fertility and the exotic here." Sharda then points out that the poet or the persona is willing to do anything to maintain that love. She draws the girls' attention to the command phrases and the imperative form of the verbs used in the second stanza, which contrast with the imagery in every other verse in that stanza. Overall, she indicates to the students, despite those imperative verbs, there is still a sense of submission on the part of the poet in the second stanza.

As she speaks, the students take down notes which they find relevant. Sharda reminds them to underline all the important lines that she has pointed out earlier during the lesson and comments on some of the major aspects that stand out in this poem. She invites them to ask any questions they might have. As she concludes this lesson, she again points out the exuberance of the poem,

[39] Translated from French, "In addition, it is beautiful to see!"
[40] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "You guys" (colloquial usage)

and asks them, "If you had to retain a verse from this poem, which one would be more memorable?" Some of the students respond with quotes from the poem.

Assessment

Then, as homework, Sharda tells them to write a small comparative study on their own with another poem, "Pied Beauty", by Gerard Manley Hopkins. When it comes to assessment, she usually gives questions to prepare. There are the questions that she gives as homework after practically every lesson, but which are mostly for their own reflection and which they do not have to submit. Every fortnight, she gives essay-type questions to write which will be marked by her, and where she will provide feedback basing herself on marking criteria and model answers from the Cambridge International Examinations website[41]. She often discusses the model answers with her students, telling them why such and such essay scored so many marks and what were the qualities in that essay. She feels that such discussions have helped her students become aware of the importance of writing well for their tasks and examinations, although Sharda is not sure how much they will be able to internalise. However, she tries to get them to refer to the marking criteria and the examiners' expectations as they write. Finally there are the term examinations as well as the end of year examinations. Sharda knows that preparing students for the exams is crucial. She knows that she needs to get them ready, which is one reason why she uses the peer teaching sessions.

"A teacher should not give up or be detached," Sharda emphatically states, "Just look at me: I make sure they sit around me. I am always accessible and a part of them. In literature, you need that. They need to see you discussing; they need to feel you connected as well."

"I guess it is not always easy to carry on, against all odds," I suggest.

"Giving up is not the right attitude! We are struggling to keep literature alive in our schools. We can't just go to class and say, "open the book; we will continue reading" when the students neither care nor relate to the content. You have to find what can be related to real life all the time; only then will they be interested! The students do not really care who is teaching them, as long as they feel they are being taken care of"

I then ask her how she maintains such a relationship. She smiles as she says, "I am in touch in a number of ways. I have their phone numbers and am in contact via Whatsapp and other social networking sites. This is the second year that I am teaching these girls. I already know their strengths and weaknesses and they, too,

[41] Cambridge International Examinations Resource Centre, http://www.cie.org.uk/i-want-to/resource-centre/

know I can be trusted. In fact, students come to me at every moment of the day, not just for literature but because they know I will listen and help."

"Do they work harder, knowing that they have your support?" I ask.

Laughing, Sharda replies, "Not everyone! But I have discussed with them and asked them to take pledge, which I hope to hold them to, that they will do their best in my class, and not give up."

As she wraps up her class, Sharda reflects upon what has kept her going all these years. She attributes this to her passion to teach. Some days, she is nearly discouraged by indifferent students who require constant effort to get them involved. However, when she sees the amount of progress that can be achieved, just by taking steps to guide students closely, she thinks it is worth the effort.

"Remember your pledge!" she calls out to the girls, as the bell rings and the girls prepare to leave her class.

5.4 Synthesis

In this second set of narratives, the experiences of Vedika and Sharda reveal that they too face tremendous pressure in terms of accountability and equally have to worry about examination considerations. Where some difference may be noticed is in specific choices aiming at the deeper understanding of students, especially as far as social and cultural references are concerned in the texts that they are studying. What emerges also from those narratives is the more readily-admitted deep-seated belief of those teachers that the purpose of learning literature transcends the more pressing worry of obtaining good grades, and that opportunities should be provided to students to fully explore texts and develop their own understanding, instead of relying on the teacher's notes. However, here again, we do see that those narratives do not consist of accounts of one-dimensional teachers who are seemingly single-minded in their vision of literature teaching. Doubts do arise in their minds, and examination-related worries also crop up and impact upon their handling of the literature class.

My journey as researcher has given me the opportunity of encountering people whom I consider as my peers in the sense that we are bound by our common interest in English literature and the teaching of this subject. As each narrative unfolded within these last two chapters, a fascinating picture of the phenomenon, as lived and described by these participants, emerges. This study, while celebrating diversity and uniqueness of the participants' voices, also contains, embedded within each narrative, elements of my own journey as researcher and resolutely acknowledges and re-establishes the presence of the researcher's voice in the interpretation and re-storying process. This was, however, not a smooth process. In fact, as I considered the different profiles of teachers making their pedagogical choices, I was confronted

with my own biases as to what really constituted 'good' teaching of literature. As I pursued the exploration of pedagogical choice in literature teaching, I was troubled by the fact that my own conceptions of what literature was and how it could be taught, in a way, shaped my initial understanding of my participants. This partly informed an initial configuration of the teachers as belonging to two distinct ends of a continuum. As I delved into the world that they shared with me through their stories, a more complex image of the literature teacher emerged. Paradoxically, as my comprehension of pedagogy grew fuzzier, I gained more clarity on my own experience as researcher and more insight into the experiences of my participants.

In the next chapter, the themes addressed in the representative narratives in **Chapters Four** and **Five** as well as the additional narratives (see **Appendices 19** and **20**) will be subject to a cross-case analysis where the complex nature of making pedagogical choices will be discussed in more detail.

PART THREE:
Building up the Thesis

Orientation to Part Three

Part Three marks the movement into a deeper analytical phase of my study. The earlier two chapters (**Chapters Four** and **Five**) constituted a first level of analysis, with data produced together with the different participants, which then were synthesized, reconstructed and re-presented in the form of narratives to represent slices of life illustrating the different pedagogical choices that English literature teachers had to make at upper secondary level. The different narratives enabled me to highlight the different possibilities of pedagogical choice enacted by the different participants, leading to the various influences that have impacted upon these pedagogical choices.

In **Chapter Six**, I proceed with a cross-case analysis of the different narratives to generate the more telling themes being produced in the field across the different contexts under study. These themes suggest that pedagogical choices are being informed by a number of influences which could broadly be categorised as intrinsic influences (pertaining to the teacher), school influences and external influences (namely, accountability processes, curricular influences such as examination issues and literature teaching approaches, and the general conceptions about English literature). Out of these, what is more striking is the importance of examinations, accountability processes and teachers' beliefs and conceptions about their subject and their students.

Moving on now to a deeper level of analysis, in **Chapter Seven**, I relate the findings of my study to the existing literature to discuss to what extent the Mauritian cases of pedagogical choice in the literature classroom are supported by findings from existing studies and theory. I also take note of surprising elements which were not accounted for in the literature.

In **Chapter Eight**, I venture into an interpretive stance as I try to map out my understanding of pedagogical choice in the light of my findings. **Chapter Nine** concludes the study with an overview of the thesis, and reflections on the various possible implications of this study, its limitations, future possibilities for research, and my personal position with respect to the phenomenon, the research findings and the contributions of this study to methodology and knowledge production.

Chapter Six: Cross-Case Comparisons

6.0 Introduction

In the two sets of narratives, "Instrumentalist Choices" and "Going beyond the Academic", the storied lives of the teachers suggest that pedagogical choices are made under different conditions and as a result of a variety of influences. While resonating across the eight narratives, many of these influences suggest different nuances to the understanding of decision-making within English literature classrooms across different contexts and among different teachers. In the first set of narratives, I refer to the teachers as "Instrumentalists" since their overall actions and motivations evoke a more utilitarian and goal-centric approach to literature teaching. The second set of narratives, referred to as "Going beyond the Academic", differs from the first in that it offers a holistic view of literature teaching as part of a broader sociological and cultural project, which suggests that pedagogical choices in the literature classroom have wide-ranging ramifications and developments. These two sets of narratives thus represent the different forms these teachers' pedagogical choices take, alongside their justifications for their choice of pedagogy. Cross-comparison of themes in the eight narratives yields insights into how specific forces impact on the pedagogical choices of English literature teachers. It also enables deeper study of some of these forces and the different ways they affect the pedagogical decisions and choices made by the teachers.

6.1 Orientation

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first, I set out to extract the types of pedagogical choices made by the teachers from the different narratives and draw parallels and contrasts across the different subunits of the case study. In **Section Two**, I explore the themes that emerged from a narrative analysis of the participants' data presented in the previous two chapters. I outline the process whereby these emerging themes were further clustered alongside similar themes before proceeding to a detailed cross-case analysis, with close reference to the narratives where the themes are the most evocative.

6.2 Section one: An overview of pedagogical choices across the different subunits

The previous two chapters presented the range of contexts within Mauritius where teachers with different profiles engaged in pedagogical choices at different levels. This section discusses these different levels of choices, which are broadly categorised as follows: planning choices, instructional choices, text choices, and assessment choices.

6.2.1 Planning choices

The participants responded differently when asked how they planned their lessons and the teaching of literature in general. Most suggested that considerable thought went into their planning, especially in considering their students' level and learning needs. Such planning involved careful structuring of learning, selection of texts (discussed in sub-section 6.2.3 below), choice of approach or teaching model, and lesson planning or design.

In the first instance, the teachers noted that it was important to determine what should be taught in class; that is, the learning they wished to see happening in their literature classrooms. This entailed important concepts pertaining to the study of narratives, such as plot, setting, characters, themes, tone and mood. Such subject matter knowledge had already been introduced at lower secondary level, but teachers were very aware that not all their students would necessarily have been exposed to it. Other aspects that needed to be learnt were stylistic devices relevant to particular genres, and contextual, social, historical and cultural information pertinent to situating texts within particular literary movements, or periods. Some texts were also framed within particular critical standpoints, such as feminism or post-colonialism, and these critical frameworks also required explanation so that the students could engage with the text more deeply. The attitudes, behaviour and skills that constitute students' "literary competence" also needed to be developed (Culler, 1975). In this regard, while the participants did not specify the kind of competence they sought to nurture, they hinted at related notions such as critical thinking, understanding points of view and motivation and developing empathy.

The choice of approach was also an important planning choice. The teachers described what they wanted to develop in their students and decided on specific steps which would lead to such development. The choice of approach was often determined by the teachers' personal beliefs as to what constituted effective means of teaching literature, as well as prior knowledge and experience. In general terms, approaches varied from teacher-centred to student-centred, with a number of teachers engaged in direct instruction and establishing their formal authority in class, while others preferred a more horizontal relationship, where the teacher was more of an inductive facilitator of learning. This is demonstrated in the narratives of teachers such as Vedika, Sharda, and Smita. Such approaches involved paraphrasing the original text, to make it more accessible to a young, modern audience, teaching the text from a narrative or narratological perspective, engaging with it as a social and cultural construct, and using the study of literary texts to make connections with the rest of the world and to develop empathy and deeper understanding. While these approaches or literature teaching models may have theoretical underpinnings, teachers used or adapted elements of these approaches implicitly in their teaching; this is discussed in Section 6.3.2.

Lesson planning was also a way for teachers to map their planning choices. Some were not required to keep detailed records of their teaching. For instance, Smita was grateful that her school management did not insist on such records. On the other hand, Ravin was expected to keep extensive records of his planning, and to note progression over time, which could be checked by the administration at any point. Teachers tended to come to class without an actual

lesson plan, since most were continuing a previous session, such as proceeding with the following scene or chapter, which did not require additional preparation. For some of the teachers, lesson planning was more of an administrative formality than a pedagogical tool, which they had to provide to satisfy school management as well as Quality Assurance Officers from the Ministry of Education.

6.2.2 Instructional choices

6.2.2.1 Choice of teaching strategies and activities

A number of teaching strategies and delivery methods were noted in the different narratives, depending on the learning objectives set by the teacher. The Figure below illustrates some of the major teaching strategies noted across the different narratives and the rationale provided for some of them.



Figure 6.1: A repertoire of instructional choices across the narratives

Some of these strategies and activities are discussed further in the thematic analysis in Section 6.3. It is however important to note that, rather than a mere list of discrete items located on a linear plane, in practice, these strategies were carried out with respect to specific pedagogical aims pertinent to individual educators in their own classroom contexts. Thus, someone's use of brainstorming or questioning might serve one purpose in one lesson, but have a somewhat different objective in another lesson, or another educator's lesson. These strategies would also be experienced differently by individual students or groups of students

across the different contexts. Overall, the data suggests a palette or repertoire of instructional strategies dynamically deployed by the participants, and a variety of rationales for the different choices they made in their classrooms. The diversity of teaching and learning activities noted suggest funds of knowledge (Moll *et al*, 1992) that inform a repertoire of possible activities that are strategically chosen with respect to different internal and external influences. While still making some distinct choices, the various participants did not have pedagogical strategies that were fixed or permanent. Rather, their pedagogical choices varied, depending on the situation, their audience (mostly students, but also sometimes including peers and managers), the goals for their lessons, amongst others. The pedagogical choices that were observed and discussed with the participants thus are not static and monosemic; rather they are imbued with the immediate, local specificities inherent to their contexts. How teachers thus choose to represent themselves through their actions in class thus reveal their pedagogy is not fixed but rather relational and contingent to a number of influences, which will be discussed in the following sections.

6.2.2.2 Choice of learning environment

The teachers seemed sensitive to the learning environment that they and their students helped to create, and which impacted on their pedagogical choices. For example, Kishan was aware of noisy surroundings which would have made the teaching and discussion of literature difficult and thus opted to use the multimedia room, which was further away from the classrooms to teach his text without being interrupted, while also making use of multimedia to facilitate understanding. Vedika was conscious of the dynamics created by conventional seating arrangements in class; one of her first choices in her classroom was to disrupt the hierarchy by sitting next to the students instead in front of the class. While this might not have been directly related to the teaching of Shakespeare, the fact that she physically moved her table and chair closer to her students created a more intimate circle and helped to establish trust between the students and their teacher. Smita, also reworked her class space with her Grade 12 class, using a U-shaped seating arrangement which would allow every student to see who participated, and enabling frank discussion. Sharda tried to establish a comfortable zone in the classroom where her students could converse safely, and her extra sessions outside of class hours led to her becoming closer to her students, thus making literature classes more attractive.

As Sam's situation shows, the classroom was not always a harmonious space. Every moment spent in his company in class meant being subjected to his brand of humour and wit, which he felt was important for his students to step out of routine thinking and engage in critical thinking on the issues raised in the novel ***Nervous Conditions***. He justified his methods by commenting on the requirements of literature teaching, which, according to him, required students to leave behind comfortable notions and engage in out-of-the-box thinking and independent learning.

6.2.2.3 Choice of learning support

A variety of choices were outlined in the narratives as far as teaching and learning resources were concerned. Interestingly, there was a tendency to lecture or converse with their students as a main pedagogical move, with additional tools and resources used as support on a few occasions. The whiteboard was principally used to highlight key notions, write down main points from the texts studied, or set quotes or questions for the class to work on. Kishan and Sharda used their laptops to provide a more varied experience of literature in their classrooms. The audio-visual stimulus provided via video or music clips assisted learners to visualise and relate more easily to the content presented to them, which was often inaccessible, mainly due to the language barrier. Sharda, Kishan and Vedika also extended the limitations of the physical classroom by continuing discussions on social media platforms such as Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook. On the other hand, Sam distrusted technology and thus relied on the notes he compiled or prepared handouts as supplementary reading.

6.2.3 Text choices

Two broad scenarios arose from the narratives when teachers explained how they selected literature texts, or had limited input in such selection, with nuances from one narrative to another. Given that texts set at upper secondary for Grades 11 and 12 were meant to be chosen from the list of prescribed texts from the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), it was interesting to note the various reasons provided by the teachers as to how and why specific texts were selected. Those who did not individually select texts pointed out that selection was often a collective decision that involved the whole department. In Kishan's case, it even involved their "sister" school, since a common paper would be set for both schools on the same day. In many cases, however, participants were quick to point out that their individual tastes were often taken into consideration. Indeed, Vedika and Rita stated that they could swap with a colleague, should they not wish to teach a specific genre, text or author. Other participants were not so fortunate; Smita did not always appreciate the texts she was assigned to teach, and her uncertainty about how to approach specific texts grew when she had to deal with some that were totally unfamiliar. For instance, she found it extremely challenging to explain the significance of absurdism as a movement in Pinter's ***The Birthday Party*** to her Grade 12 students. Others, like Ravin and Rita, used their prerogative as heads of department, to choose the texts they wanted. In Rita's case especially, text selection was a very sensitive issue, and she applied great care in this regard. The reasons for her selection are discussed in the following section. Some texts were chosen because of their short length or availability on the market, while others were prized because they were well-known and thus, promised the availability of notes and research material online and in libraries, which would make them, in Ravin's words, "easier to prepare".

6.2.4 Assessment choices

Teachers who participated in this study tended to resort to small oral and written tasks to evaluate their students in class and most used questioning as their preferred choice of evaluation while teaching. Questioning often accompanied the reading of texts in class, and was a way for the teachers to draw attention to certain aspects of the text, check for students' understanding, or to revise certain key elements, even though different teachers used it as part of different approaches. Sam's ironic and "provoking" questioning was different from Smita's more conversational and casual questions about texts and characters, pointing to the different dynamics between teachers and students. General discussions were often used in class to check students' understanding of the text, and did not hesitate to correct any confusion or misconception identified during these discussions. Vedika used class presentations on a regular basis, giving her students time to research the scene or act they had to cover before presenting a kind of position paper based on a question set by her. This was often followed by general discussion with the whole class, interspersed by her own comments on the subject and on the presentation. Besides getting her students to paraphrase the original Shakespearean text, Vimla also resorted to model examination questions, which she felt would prepare her students for the examinations. This enabled her to familiarise them with the terminology as well as the general orientation to essay-type questions. This exercise was a formative one since, after correcting them, she would discuss the answers in class and highlight where they could have improved on the quality of their work. Ravin regularly set class tests after having completed a chapter or a few scenes in order to check understanding. Such types of assessment were part of the school calendar across a number of subjects and Ravin had to abide by the rules. The different participants were able to exercise relatively more freedom when it came to choosing formative assessments, even if many prepared their students for the end-of-term summative tests or examinations.

Examinations, especially the mock examinations at Grade 11 and Grade 12 as well as term tests and end-of-year examinations were means by which the teachers could not only assess their students but also provide an academic grade. These examinations were set internally, with the task often allocated to a single teacher, although he/she was obliged to consult his/her colleagues to ensure that the assessment would be suitable. These were not personal choices but rather institutional decisions taken by school management, which occurred across a number of schools in different areas. Most students expected to receive a term grade for their performance during the term, and a number of tasks were set, culminating in the term tests. As far as externally-set examinations at the end of Grade 11 and Grade 13 were concerned, teachers had no say in the matter, except perhaps in the choice of texts (which would then dictate students' choice of examination questions) from the list of prescribed texts for specific literature papers. The importance of these examinations is examined in more detail in the following section.

6.3 Section two: Thematic analysis

The eight narratives provided insights into the pedagogical choices made by teachers of English literature. Using an inductive approach, I scrutinised the narratives for emerging themes that would assist me in answering my second research question, namely, "What factors influence teachers' choice of pedagogy in upper secondary English literature classes?" Since an interpretivist stance was adopted, close study of the different narratives revealed that the eight teachers' experiences were unique in their description of the decision-making processes and choices made. Moreover, the teachers' different life stories and experiences suggested that different combinations of influences were at play. The narratives implied that pedagogical choices in the literature classroom could not be reduced to one factor in isolation.

Figure 6.2 below presents the themes from the narratives which were initially generated during the process of narrative analysis. This entailed identifying meaningful elements within the narratives, which were then grouped together to identify emerging themes pertinent to the phenomenon, and which would allow better understanding of how the teachers proceeded to make their pedagogical choices. Thereafter, the themes were organised in a clockwise manner to constitute a set of overlapping categories which highlight the interconnectedness of multiple, rather than singular forces and influences on teachers' pedagogical choices. The emerging themes were further clustered in colour-coded groupings of four broad conceptual categories (see Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.2: Generated themes from the narratives on the factors influencing pedagogical choices

The themes were further clustered into cognate groups as represented in Figure 6.3 below:

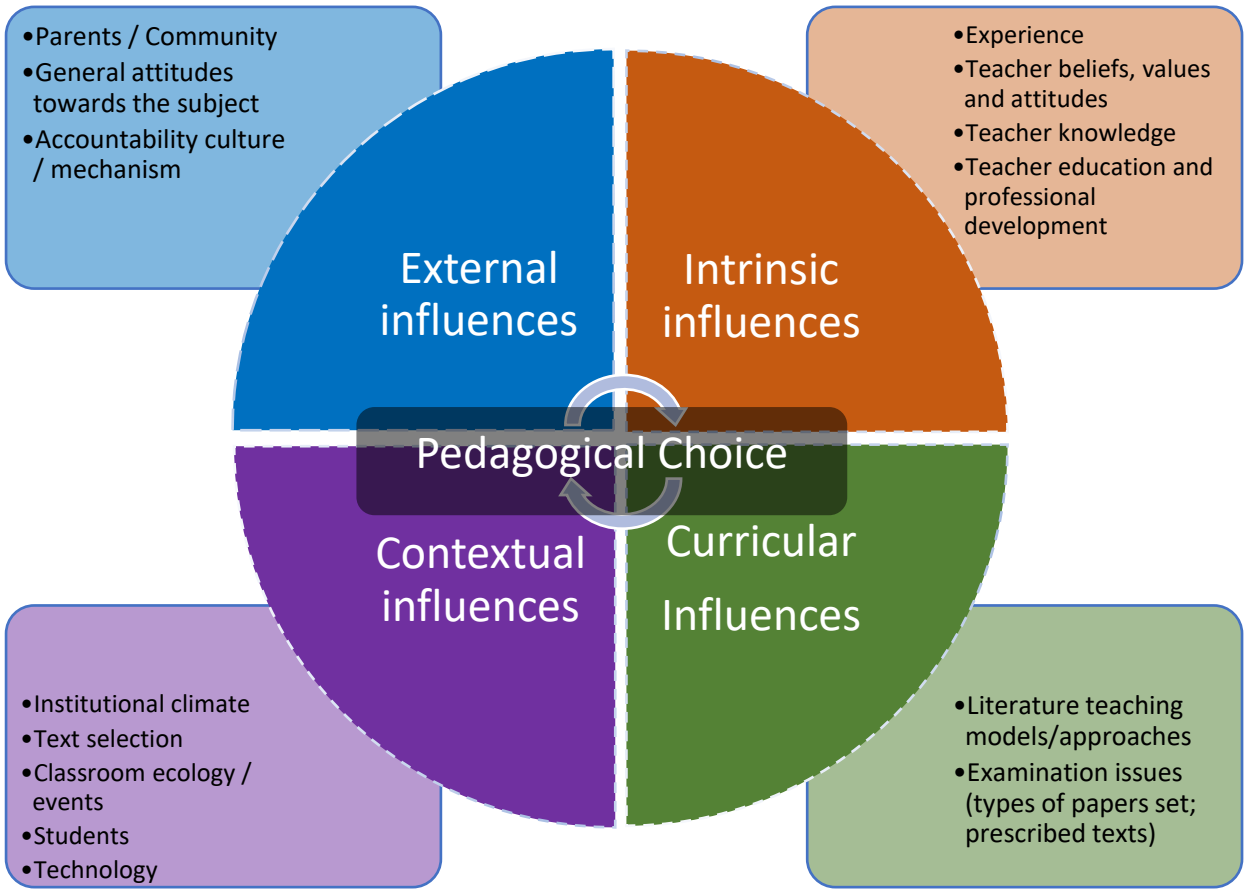


Figure 6.3: Refined thematic categories

Figure 6.3 represents the charting of different themes into overarching categories, which relate to intrinsic, school-related, curricular, and external influences, highlighted using the same colours as in Figure 6.2. The dotted lines outlining each category suggest the porousness and interconnectedness of the different categories as far as decision-making is concerned. In the following sections, I outline and expand on these themes as they are manifested within the different narratives in order to discuss their impact on the participants' pedagogical choices and derive deeper insight into the phenomenon.

6.3.1 Intrinsic influences

Some of the most pertinent issues raised by the participants which influenced their pedagogical choices pertained to their own past learning experiences, their beliefs and motivations concerning the teaching of English literature, and the impact of professional training on the way they approached the teaching of the subject. The teachers thus commented on the various ways that these intrinsic forces shaped their lives and their experiences as English literature teachers.

6.3.1.1 Pedagogical approaches used by their own teachers

In all eight narratives, the participants evoked the importance of their own schooling and the way literature had been introduced to them, whether at secondary school, or during their undergraduate studies. While some had already developed personal affinities to certain genres or authors due to their exposure to literature at home, their narratives revealed that their schooling had a strong impact in shaping their attitudes towards the subject and, subsequently, the teaching of the subject. The various narratives suggested that memories of their own experiences of English literature as students, remained deeply anchored in these teachers. The way they were taught, the texts they were exposed to, and the methodology used by their teachers seemed to have contributed to who they currently were, as literature teachers. Delving into these personal slices of life could thus assist in explaining their current pedagogical choices.

As the teachers went back in time in their narratives, it emerged that their own teachers displayed a range of pedagogical stances in their teaching of literature. Positive memories suggested classes where the teachers created a conducive atmosphere for learning, and where students were actively involved in the study of their texts rather than being placed in a passive, receptive mode during literature instruction. Reminiscing on his past experiences, Kishan commented on the effectiveness of role play as a strategy, which he had taken up in his own classes as a result:

> Yes, yes, [role-play] made it memorable! That's why I prefer this type of teaching, where students make sense of what they are learning and not just remembering their teacher's notes. Sometimes, what you need, is to get the students to get into the minds of the characters they are studying to make sense of the whole text.
>
> [Extract from Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2]

The fact that he had been engaged in learning by enacting scenes from the text convinced Kishan of the usefulness of such, and similar, strategies. Ravin shared a similar view in his narrative when he noted that the opportunities provided to role-play added an extra dimension to his learning experience. The modelling provided by his teachers through the use of tone and voice as well as their blend of teacher-centred and learner-centred strategies convinced him that he, too, could create captivating classes.

At times, the school culture heightened positive experiences of learning literature. Sharda described the overall atmosphere in her school, which led her to appreciate literature at a personal level:

> Sharda's love for poetry comes from the time when she was a student of literature. She feels particularly grateful to have studied in a private confessional school where

> literature was very much present throughout the years she studied there. She considers the literature classes she attended as a student to be exceptional, where literature was never just something that happened inside books within a classroom. They were often encouraged to attend talks, seminars and theatrical representations on literature. She recalls having once gone to the Plaza[42] to watch a play and had been amazed at what she had seen on stage. Given that the play was later on discussed in class made her feel that literature was alive and that she was part of it. She remembers loving the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth or Keats, and their love for nature, which was communicated by the teachers she had. She considers such a conducive atmosphere to be the reason why her love for literature has survived for so long.
>
> [Extract from Sharda's narrative, Section 5.3]

Sharda's experience, which reflects Sam's views on linking literature to life, highlights the importance of moving beyond the textbook and linking the text to students' experiences to create meaningful learning experiences.

Some genres seemed to evoke different feelings in the teachers. For instance, Vimla, who did not enjoy her lacklustre literature classes at upper secondary level, was led to appreciate poetry, which was introduced to her with great passion, and which she now took great pleasure in teaching, alongside her favourite genre, drama, to her students. Rita also appreciated her poetry classes, which she felt "awoke a sense of wonder for the mystical which steadily unfolded over the years[43]." However, as a student, her other classes did not appeal to her, but evoked uncertainty and anxiety since she could not connect to the texts, especially novels set in a different era. As her narrative suggests, this had a profound impact on her own understanding of literature teaching:

> This leads her to think that teaching literature also has to take into account the experiences of the learner. She believes that literature is not only the teacher's concern and that student's input is essential to know what is happening in their minds as they encounter and think about literature.
>
> [Extract from Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3]

On the other hand, the participants pointed out that negative experiences also shaped their understanding and subsequent teaching of literature. Memories of such experiences included a general feeling of dissatisfaction and unease with their literature lessons, largely due to being disconnected from what they felt were unfamiliar themes and context within the texts they were studying, not knowing exactly what they were expected to learn and how this learning could be of use to them, and finally, uninspiring teachers, whose pedagogical approach did not lead to enjoyable lessons.

[42] Founded in 1933 in the town of Rose Hill, the Plaza Theatre is one of the few theatres in Mauritius.
[43] Vimla's narrative, Appendix 19a

The participants felt that the propositional content of the literature text books used by their own teachers was culturally irrelevant and obsolete. As Mauritian teenagers, many of the participants felt disconnected from the thematic concerns discussed within those texts. Interestingly, many of these teachers ended up teaching the same or similar texts in ways that seemed close to how they were taught. Even though they had themselves not appreciated being disconnected from the texts in the syllabus, some seemed to be repeating the same cycle as teachers, although they now raised issues such as students' academic level, the reluctance with which some opted for this subject, or the limited time they had to complete the syllabus to explain why they ended up teaching this way.

Moreover, while some of their teachers seemed to have successfully engaged them to appreciate the taught texts, the participants alluded to the predominantly teacher-centred approaches to literature teaching, which did little to promote their understanding and appreciation of literature. Such pedagogy usually entailed their teacher providing explanations and notes with very minimal input solicited from them. As the participants reminisced about their own learning experiences at secondary level, they also demonstrated keen awareness of their state of helplessness in class at that time. Overall, teacher-centred classes, which a few participants found to be effective, were perceived in a negative light by the majority of the teachers. Yet, the very fact that some of the participants eventually taught the way they had been taught suggests limited awareness of pedagogical alternatives, or perhaps an instrumental approach to achieve their pedagogical goals.

Other aspects noted by the teachers included the emphasis on completing the text and syllabus at any cost, and teachers skipping sections from the text, and not explaining in depth, which in the cases of Rita and Vedika further alienated them from the plot and the themes. The fact that some of them were rarely able to participate as learners in the meaning-making process of literature study alienated them. On the other hand, many of the participants recounted that being expected as learners to prepare lines with limited teacher support or explanation about how to execute such, caused them to reject such pedagogical moves in their own practice as teachers. Vedika described how limited support during her English literature class left her and her classmates stranded and unable to decipher the Shakespearean language they were told to "prepare". On the other hand, more contemporary texts resonated with her, since she could make sense of then by relating the themes or the plot to her own life. She and her classmates often resorted to discussions which would deepen their understanding of the text, with the teacher a distant figure that would validate their views without really engaging with them:

> Vedika regrets that, when she was a student, her teachers did not really take the trouble to make her like the subject. They were always rushing to complete the syllabus and laying emphasis on the examinations. One of the decisions she took early on in her career was to work the opposite way, by thinking of how her students would like a teacher to be.
>
> [Extract from Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2]

When she started teaching, "she had thus made it a point to explain clearly to her students what she expected of them and how to achieve those expectations[44]".

In contrast, the narratives of some of the other participants suggest interesting parallels between their own learning experiences and their current teaching contexts. For instance, Rita, Sam and Ravin commented on the difficulties their students face in their literature classes. Since some of the teachers struggle to find elements that would interest their students, they find themselves embracing strategies adopted by their own teachers, despite their indictment of such practices. If the chosen texts fail to appeal to the current generation of Mauritian learners, and present barriers in terms of cultural, social and linguistic understanding, questions can be raised not only about teachers' degree of agency in their selection of texts, but also about the significance of students in the process of such selection.

The participants were keen to point out that the central element in their own learning process as literature students had been the teachers who taught them, their qualities, and their attitudes towards teaching literature and towards their students. Through the tinted lens of nostalgia or through darker memories of negative learning experiences, these recollections shed light on teachers, who, through their personality or teaching style, became positive or negative role models for the participants.

There seemed to be great appreciation of "inspirational" teachers, who through their charisma, were able to share their passion and love for literature with their learners. Sam seemed to admire such teachers, whom he described as being of a "different calibre[45]", and who went out of their way to make their students enjoy and understand the text, even if they mainly taught in a teacher-centred manner. Sam's teachers' love and passion for their subject had a lasting impact on his own views of literature. He considered that his teachers' "smile, their body language and their convincing arguments could create that interest in literature in their students[46]".

Smita's initial school experiences of literature were not really conducive to learning, resulting in her decision to move to a different school where she would be able to engage differently with the subject at A-level. She recalled learning literature with a different teacher in the new school:

> [T]hey still felt the intensity of that scene, because the students and their teacher had both entered that world of fiction. Whenever she recalls this scene, Smita marvels at the ability of that teacher, who was able to create such an atmosphere in class through the reading, explanation and analysis. She also recalls how the discussions helped them, while analysing the character of Iago, for instance, to see the other side of the picture, or to develop empathy for Desdemona for the way she was not trusted and met with a violent end, or to understand the plight of the man of colour with the experiences of Othello. That teacher also introduced them to a number of literary critics, which allowed the students to understand how other writers thought about **Othello**. These

[44] Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2.
[45] Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b.
[46] Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b.

had been dimensions they encountered under the guidance of their teacher. Smita, years after, still keeps this mental snapshot of that class as an example to follow in her own teaching of literature. She admits to herself that people do sometimes look up to their teachers, just as she admires this teacher who always reminded her to give her best, and she too would like to be remembered in this way.

[Extract from Smita's narrative, Appendix 20a]

On the other hand, the participants pointed to the damaging impact of learning from teachers with negative attitudes to the subject and their learners. The need for proximity to students and being attentive to their needs thus seemed to be reactions against the examples set by such negative role models from their past. Both Sharda and Kishan, for instance, stressed the need for communication with their students and made themselves available after normal school hours, especially via social networking sites.

Two main trends can be noted in terms of influences on the teachers' current pedagogy, namely *acceptance* and *rejection* of the type of pedagogy that they were exposed to at school. In more than one case, they reported how a "good" or "bad" example changed the way they taught. For instance, many of those who had been in a teacher- and text-centred class shifted to a more learner-friendly stance in their own classes as a reaction against their own learning experiences. On the other hand, despite having had some learner-centred learning experiences, some still opted for either a mixed approach, as Kishan did, or a largely frontal style of teaching, as Ravi and Rita displayed in their narratives.

This suggests that teachers' learning experiences could impact on their current pedagogy, but might not be pervasive in all cases. Caution, hence, needs to be exercised in assuming that the teachers' own learning experiences were the sole determinant of the way they teach English literature. Rather, the narratives suggest that these learning experiences established modes of thinking and behaving which were later reinforced or changed by other forces.

6.3.1.2 Teacher beliefs, values and attitudes

The participants' convictions on various aspects of their profession, ranging from conceptions of literature and its teaching to their opinions on their students, or the context in which they worked seemed to inform the type of teaching and assessment of literature they adopted. Indeed, they were vocal when it came to how literature should be taught, especially when their views clashed with other influences, such as the institutional drive towards productivity.

Kishan explored the notion of subjectivity with his students and explained to them that "literature is dependent upon people's perceptions[47]." He implied, in his narrative, that studying

[47] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2

literature reinforced empathy and understanding and kept note of such changes in his students. Kishan's pedagogical choices, notably classroom discussions, presentations and individual work, thus aimed to develop personal, informed responses to literature. This was the result not only of his experiences (positive and negative) of being taught literature, but also due to his convictions about the worth and effectiveness of such an approach. However, his enthusiasm for developing appreciation and understanding of literature seemed to be hampered by the constraints of professional performativity, which, in his institution, had direct implications for his future as an educator in his school. He was required to ensure that his students passed their examinations, which perhaps explains why he eventually concluded that a "middle way" that balanced learner-centred and teacher-centred pedagogies was appropriate.

Sharda's view that "literature is one of the ways we can connect the past to the present[48]" and her belief that literature is dynamic, informed her strategy of encouraging her students to make connections between the situations in literary texts and actual situations happening around them or from the past. This allowed her to explain the universal nature of literature, as it embraces aspects that nearly everyone can relate to. Her belief that literature is about life informed the way she usually started any text in class, with a discussion on the author's life and times. This encouraged her students to seek contextual and biographical clues within the text. Sharda's own experiences as a student also shaped her belief that literature teaching goes beyond the text and could be fostered by means of a number of approaches, including "talks, seminars and theatrical representations on literature[49]", which "made her feel that literature was alive and that she was part of it[50]" and which she felt would stimulate a student's artistic understanding. She also noted that:

> Sharda believes that literature teaching goes much beyond giving notes. The literature teacher needs to love the subject; without that passion, she doubts that anyone could effectively teach literature.
>
> [Extract from Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

She added that, the literature teacher needs to be close to the students:

> In literature, you need that. They need to see you discussing; they need to feel you connected as well.
>
> [Extract from Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

This led her to enact pedagogical practices in her own class that would provide learning experiences beyond just the textbook.

Sam's beliefs about the purpose of literature not only influenced the way he carried out the teaching of the subject but also coloured his attitude towards his students. His conviction that his students were not making enough effort led him to feel that teaching literature in such conditions, where it was simply a convenient subject choice, was "a waste" since the students

[48] Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3
[49] ibid.
[50] ibid.

were "neither interested nor willing to participate[51]" in class. Sam also expressed his frustration at the language difficulties faced by his students, as he felt that it was impossible to teach literature when he had "to stop each time to explain a sentence[52]". He regarded this as a "serious handicap[53]" to his teaching.

Sam was of the view that literature is a mirror to life and that the subject is different from other subjects, as one needs to use one's mind to "interpret and appreciate things[54]." According to him, "teachers try too hard at developing a systematic way to teach literature[55]". He believed that it was important to assist learners to first create connections with their own life:

> He believes that the beauty of literature does not lie in the text only but also beyond it, through comparison with real life situations. In the end, as he often thinks, literature is life. Everywhere there are the same issues and problems and the reality of yesterday which an author may write about could well be today's reality for the student in his class.
>
> [Extract from Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b]

Sam's view of literature was that it was about emotions, feelings, values and life, and that it could not be compared to things that were "dry". He considered literature to be the ideal platform to instil human values through what the authors convey. Sharing his love and appreciation for literature was thus a way of expressing and sharing his own dreams and values. For him, discussion and classroom talk about literature, values and life lessons were essential conduits for such sharing in class. One way to understand the essence of life through literature would be through character study, which Sam felt would develop students' sense of empathy and enable them to learn more about human emotions.

Like Sam and Sharda, Vimla believed that, beyond examination requirements, literature is about making sense of life and life experiences. The study of literature thus needs to go beyond looking at one text or language. She also tried to relate to her students' lives and personal experiences. Vimla was of the view that English literature is different from other subjects where students learn about certain facts from the teacher, a textbook or another source. In literature, it is important to develop different interpretations. She noted that, while everyone has his or her own way of thinking, this needs to be actively brought to the fore. In literature study, one can say what one likes as long as it can be supported by evidence from the text.

The narratives thus highlighted the discrepancy between what students expected to learn in the literature classroom and what the teachers sought to teach. Many students thought that English literature at upper secondary level, would be an extension of what they had done

[51] Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b.
[52] Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b.
[53] ibid.
[54] ibid.
[55] ibid.

at lower secondary, which was mostly an introduction to (generally) smaller, simpler texts that were usually canonical in nature. At lower secondary, the focus was on language development (or a language model) and, in some cases, an exploratory narrative study of literature, with an emphasis on basic aspects such as plot line, setting, characters and themes. Moreover, students were not encouraged to go beyond a certain descriptive level, and perhaps an initial level of analysis of knowledge in most subjects.

Some of the teachers noted that there is more to the study of literature than learning facts about the literary texts, especially at upper secondary level, or being able to describe plot, setting, character and theme. However, students' experience of the subject at lower secondary level did not prepare them for the fact that English literature could be used to promote a "better" understanding of life and human psychology. Moving to a context where they were not only acquiring new information, but were also expected to develop critical thinking and engage more independently with that knowledge would possibly have been a challenging experience, which often resulted in a sense of alienation and disconnect. In some situations, the teachers assumed that students would make the transition between these sets of expectations as they shifted their understanding of literature as taught at lower secondary level to that of it being taught *as literature* in its own right, in all its complexity. The disconnect was compounded in some cases when students had skipped the earlier formative years of exposure to literature, and were discovering, to their great dismay, how different the subject was from its lower secondary version, and other subjects.

Rita's pedagogical choices seemed to be coloured by her own sense of insecurity about imparting pedagogical content knowledge in her classroom. As she pointed out, this could be partly due to her own mixed experiences of learning English literature, her personal views on literature, and the pressure of negotiating the most appropriate pedagogy to address learners' needs and at the same time ensure that they pass. Rita's own experiences of, and beliefs about, literature made her wary of certain types of content while teaching. Her belief that some texts could lead to exposure to conflict and violence, even if not directly, affected her selection and treatment of texts. She admitted to deliberately avoiding certain sections of specific literature texts because they contained what seemed to her to be sensitive material which could hurt her students, or material that she did not wish to explain to them. The fact that she saw herself reliving painful moments in her life while discussing these texts with her students caused her to avoid choosing such texts. Thus, even though Rita explained that she was protecting her students from the negativity and violence presented in some texts, her choice of texts was in fact motivated by her own search for a safe space and security. This resulted in uncertainty as to her own pedagogical decisions, and her reluctance, in some cases, to step out of her comfort zone, whether in the selection of texts or in the choice of pedagogy, despite strongly espoused views on learner-centred pedagogy.

On the other hand, Rita's belief that good performance in English literature was connected to enjoyment of reading led her to involve her students more:

> This leads her to think that teaching literature also has to take into account the experiences of the learner. She believes that literature is not only the teacher's concern and that student's input is essential to know what is happening in their minds as they encounter and think about literature.
>
> [Extract from Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3]

Such convictions influenced her choice of activities in class, where she involved students in discussions and role play to motivate them. This was an attempt to help her students express themselves through their own voice while helping them "think about the characters, go in depth, look for evidence in a text, develop their critical skills and enjoy themselves in the process[56]."

Her belief that "literature is the study of human beings[57]" and about emotions and feelings influenced her to use anecdotes and topical references so that the students could relate to what she was explaining. To make literature more interesting, she thought that it should be taught in a more dramatized way.

Smita had strong views on literature's potential in "developing analytical and critical skills[58]" and believed that it could be interpreted in a number of ways. These informed her use of class discussions as a means of bringing those skills to the fore. Like some of the other participants, she found that making allusions to real life events and personal experiences could draw students more deeply into the text, while at the same time bringing her closer to her students. She also cited other possibilities brought about by the literature class:

> Literature is also, in her view, about getting to learn about the past, to get to know new cultures and learn about how people react under different circumstances.
>
> [Extract from Smita's narrative, Appendix 20a]

According to Smita, literature offers possibilities for introducing philosophical issues to young people, especially through the deep issues raised in literary texts. She also believed that some texts called for deeper analysis. As far as teaching was concerned, Smita considered that literature teaching was not a scientific process and that everyone had their own way or style of doing so. From her point of view, there are no tried and tested methods in literature, which enabled her to elaborate her own style.

Vedika believed that the literature class was a space to explore new ground along with her students. According to her, creative means should be employed to introduce literature so that students appreciate it. Such appreciation would, she believed become "the keystone to deeper understanding and critical appraisal of texts[59]."

[56] Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3.
[57] Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3.
[58] Smita's narrative, Appendix 20a.
[59] Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2

For Vedika, literature represented "a lot more than just storylines and details about characters[60]"; she used it to explore the cultural context and background of texts which enabled her to teach about "humility, generosity as well as the darker side of human nature through the characters and themes in the texts they have covered[61]." Vedika maintained that literature mirrors life, so much so that "the text thus becomes a neutral zone where moral issues or any other issue may be discussed through the actions of fictional characters[62]" and where human experiences that students were not familiar with, could be introduced.

Most of the participants expressed their personal beliefs about the meanings they ascribed to literature as a subject as well as their thoughts on how it should be taught. However, while most agreed that literature fosters the holistic development of the individual, the presence of countervailing forces led to situations of tension or compromise, as far as teacher's pedagogical choices were concerned.

6.3.1.3 Teacher education and professional development

The participants had followed different professional pathways, some having gone through professional training, such as an Educator's licence[63], a PGCE[64] or a B.Ed.[65], while others had either dropped out, or not undergone teacher training. Did those who had undergone professional training use their pedagogical knowledge in their teaching, and were those who had not, still able to present a pedagogical rationale for the way they were teaching? The narratives present a range of insights into this issue.

Sharda was of the view that her postgraduate degree in Education that she completed before joining the profession, empowered her with skills and resources that she ploughed back into her teaching of English language and literature. As she pointed out in her narrative:

> When I was following my B.Ed. in India, model lessons, as well as the various modules in Education, Psychology and English, helped me address many issues in my teaching. I also knew what to do with my students once I had them in class.
>
> [Extract from Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

Ravin noted that his Bachelor's degree in Education assisted him "in terms of classroom management, lesson planning and evaluation":

> Moreover, he has been exposed to educational theories and general teaching strategies which, he feels, have made him more focused in terms of lesson aims and objectives, which is particularly useful for his literature classes.

[60] ibid.
[61] ibid.
[62] Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2
[63] A professional teaching qualification, equivalent to the first semester of the PGCE
[64] Postgraduate Certificate in Education
[65] Bachelor's Degree in Education

[Extract from Ravin's narrative, Appendix 19b]

Equipped with such training, Ravin felt confident in his first years of teaching that "he would be able to tackle anything that would crop up in his literature class".

Rita had some professional training which made her more sensitive to the needs of individual learners, while she previously adopted a more teacher-centred approach:

> She recalls that she used to perceive her students as empty vessels to pour knowledge in, in the past. This is no longer the case. She has come to terms with the fact that not all students assimilate information in the same way.
>
> [Extract from Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3]

She added the PGCE introduced her to different strategies, which she tried to implement in her literature classes.

Kishan was completing his PGCE at the time of data production. He acknowledged that, while he had initially been confused as to how to proceed in his literature class, the PGCE introduced him to "strategies, methods and a bit of pedagogy and psychology; so this has helped [him] get into the shoes of the students, to understand how they would like to be taught[66]." Thus, while he had not yet embarked on the literature didactics[67] module, he found the general education modules to be relevant to his teaching. Vedika dropped out of a PGCE course and felt that, had she continued, it might have improved her teaching of literature. As she pointed out in her narrative:

> The little she has acquired from her first modules have helped her in planning her lessons more effectively, carrying out brainstorming sessions and working on developing the interest of the learners.
>
> [Extract from Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2]

Vimla derived her subject knowledge of English literature from her university studies but that did not prepare her to teach literature as a subject to young people. However, Vimla admitted that she had decided not to go for professional training since she was not convinced it would help her at the time. Without additional training, both ended up devising their own ways to teach literature. Sam was one of those that were sceptical about the usefulness of professional training. Although he had considered going for training, his beliefs about training, as well as his experience and pedagogical knowledge acquired in the field of education prevented him from doing so. Moreover, he was suspicious of some of the strategies recommended in teacher training courses that he felt waste time rather than promoting learning. He also seemed unconvinced about the professional knowledge of some of the PGCE holders

[66] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2

[67] At the time of data production, the Subject Didactics III module was one of the three subject didactics modules offered as part of the PGCE course by the English department at the Mauritius Institute of Education. In this module, trainees were exposed to the rationale behind the teaching of English literature.

working in his department, which, in a way, confirmed his deep-seated beliefs about the inefficacy of professional training.

Smita holds an Educator's licence from the Mauritius Institute of Education, but nevertheless believed that most people went for professional training in order to earn more or increase their prospects of getting promoted. She did not believe that her professional qualification was of any help in her teaching, especially since her institution did not place much emphasis on lesson planning. As she admitted in her narrative:

> While Smita finds some of the theories and approaches she was exposed to during her professional course to be helpful, when it comes to an actual classroom situation, however, lesson planning and pedagogy do not even come to her mind. Smita believes in being spontaneous in class and [the] decisions she takes depend on how the students are during the lesson and how they react in relation to the learning outcome she has set for her class.
>
> [Extract from Smita's narrative, Appendix 20a]

Overall, the majority of the participants that had access to teacher training and professional development claimed that they benefited, although they were not very specific in articulating what content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge they had gained to enable them to come up with their choice of pedagogy in class.

As in the case of Vimla, some of the teachers ended up devising their own way of teaching literature, especially in the absence of effective role models, or extensive experience of learning literature. In certain cases, despite not having had access to didactics modules in literature teaching, teachers believed they were still able to devise effective methods to prepare their students for the examinations. Others, again without training, explored pedagogical approaches to literature teaching which had been devised after years of experience and preparation. These approaches did not emerge in a vacuum; teachers often relied on their own experiences as learners, either at secondary or tertiary level, or derived implicit understanding of addressing the teaching of specific texts through the research and notes they accessed during preparation. The various pedagogical decisions they took seem to indicate the reduced significance of initial professional teacher education programmes, which in some cases, were little more than a milestone in the participants' professional life. Holding an Educator's licence or a PGCE would ensure a salary increment, at least, at the time of data production. It was significant that most of the participants who had undergone training did not make reference to the literature teaching approaches or models they would have been exposed to. Their relative silence on this issue suggests that such modules had little impact on their practice. On the other hand, participants like Ravin and Rita acknowledged the value of the pedagogical knowledge they gained during professional training, which they could use directly in their daily instructional activities. The pertinence and validity of professional training, especially in relation to the pedagogical content knowledge that is dispensed as subject didactics in relation to literature teaching can thus be questioned. The fact that some of the participants chose to focus on the pedagogical knowledge rather than the content knowledge or pedagogical content

knowledge dispensed in the didactics modules as having positively influenced their teaching of literature could arguably point to the limited impact of such modules.

6.3.2 Curricular influences

6.3.2.1 Literature teaching approaches

Section 6.3.1.2 outlined the teachers' personal beliefs about the aims of literature and literature teaching. In the absence of clear guidelines in the National Curriculum Framework (2008), which addressed English literature only as a component of English language at lower secondary level, the participants mainly derived their formal understanding of the literature curriculum at upper secondary level from the UCLES. The apparent lacuna in the national document (which only presents the official curriculum for the nine compulsory years of schooling) regarding the teaching of literature as a subject (reviewed and updated in the latest National Curriculum Framework document (2015)) meant that there were no definite Mauritian guidelines pertaining to the teaching of English literature as a subject at upper secondary level. Teachers were able to obtain information on the texts, aspects and themes to teach at upper secondary level from the syllabus documents provided by Cambridge International Examinations; some retroactively derived a suitable pedagogy for teaching literature from the learning objectives set in the Cambridge syllabus documents at Grades 11 and 12.

Other sources cited as useful included literature guide books, information from the internet, or revisiting information, or even actual notes, the teachers acquired at school or university.

Curricular influences could thus be described as fluid, with teachers located along a continuum ranging from those who were uncertain or unaware of what and how they were supposed to teach, and therefore had to come up with strategies to obtain that information, to those who had a definite understanding of the pedagogical content knowledge and the subject matter knowledge they required to teach literature. Some teachers also described their numerous trial-and-error attempts in their initial years of teaching through which they affirmed they own style of teaching. Some of the participants, such as Vimla, had not undergone professional training and had thus devised what they thought of as their own way of teaching the texts allocated to them, even if Vimla hesitated to label her pedagogical practices, as "her own style", given the various influences on her teaching. She described the systematic way she went about teaching the text, derived from what she understood to be the examination requirements. This entailed exposure to Shakespearean language, summaries and notes on different sections of the text, in her case, ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, and practicing examination questions. Her choice of classroom discussions as a means of generating deeper engagement with the literary text was derived from an understanding of her students' language proficiency and literary competence. She expected and knew that many of them would be reading and preparing their texts and could thus proceed with discussions.

Alongside this continuum, pedagogical choices also hinged on careful planning, which took into consideration the classroom climate, learner profiles, learning objectives, teacher beliefs and values, and their conceptions of the subject. These concerns were apparent to some degree among all the participants, regardless of whether or not they had received professional training. Sharda and Ravin stated that their professional training had prepared them with pedagogical knowledge which enabled them to engage with the curriculum for literature teaching even before they started working. Vedika and Kishan had, for different reasons, not yet had specific professional training in literature teaching but elaborated their own models of literature instruction based on their research and on the initial professional training they had received. Therefore, some teachers were prepared from the onset with subject matter knowledge pertaining to the texts, genre, and literary aspects to cover, as well as pedagogical content knowledge while others elaborated their own pedagogical content knowledge based on their understanding of pedagogy and their varied experiences of learning and teaching literature.

The teachers were vocal about the place and importance of English literature alongside other subjects in the national curriculum, even if there was no formal document prescribing what should be taught at upper secondary level. Since it was offered as a distinct paper at Grades 11 and 12 for the national examinations, the participants located it as a subject distinct from English language at upper secondary level. Thus, most of their views pertaining to language addressed difficulties in accessing and understanding the contents of the set texts rather than building students' language proficiency. However, a few, such as Sam, pointed to the need to boost language practices at lower secondary level in order to produce a more well-read student profile at upper secondary level.

The participants framed English literature at upper secondary level as a complex subject, with multidisciplinary links with other domains such as Sociology, Psychology, History, and the Arts, amongst others, which would be developed through in-depth study of the texts. While for some, literature was the stylistic and creative output of key or emerging literary figures, others posited that it had the potential to assist learners to develop empathy, and greater understanding of themes, characters and style. Indeed, teachers such as Sharda, Smita, Kishan, and Vedika identified positive change and growth in maturity as a result of literary study. Most of the participants attributed abstract, holistic qualities to English literature (for instance, "literature is life[68]"; "literature is about life[69]"; "literature is a mirror to life[70]"). Such notions drove specific teaching practices within the classroom, suggesting how closely pedagogy mirrored teacher beliefs about the subject. However, such conceptions were also problematic as they led to an interpretation of the subject content which clashed somewhat with broader educational goals within the formal curriculum at upper secondary level. According to the participants, understanding literature requires training to regard the text as a gateway to greater understanding of oneself, others and society; yet this was not what was formally

[68] Ravin's narrative, Appendix 19b & Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b
[69] Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b
[70] ibid.

assessed at the end of the year. Some teachers thus clearly sensed and referred to this tension between the implicit requirements of the subject and its externally-validated learning outcomes.

While participants like Sharda and Kishan focused more on the skills pertaining to stylistic analysis, others seemed to focus on plot progression, characterisation and thematic study of texts, depending on the texts they were teaching. While most of the teachers favoured direct instruction, often interspersed with an interactive and discursive approach to the text, characterised by discussion and questioning, a few, such as Ravin and Vimla preferred to use questioning to check students' understanding of the text. Most also provided some form of notes, whether through dictation, as Smita did, or handouts, which Sam provided to his students.

The participants used a number of approaches or models of literature teaching even though, regardless of whether or not they had professional training, they did not assign specific labels to the strategies they used. The fact that they did not conceptualise their lessons in terms of pre-existing models or well-established approaches that would have been introduced to them during professional training suggests that many of the participants did not "apply" these teaching models. However, the rationale for not doing so was not necessarily that they considered certain approaches and then made their choices, but seemingly because they did not seem to be aware of these models, and the pedagogical rationales behind them, even though they were quite capable of providing pedagogical justifications for what they were doing in class.

Vimla's narrative noted that, she systematically involved her students in paraphrasing the original Shakespearean text she was teaching into Standard English, since she understood that her students would not be able to understand the original early modern Shakespearean English. According to her, this bore fruit since it allowed students the time to assimilate the language as they translated it, so that they were used to it by the time they reached Act II of ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. However, this took her class more than a term to achieve. Other teachers, such as Ravin, Rita and Smita, joined their students in reading the original text aloud, after which they would explain the key elements. Vimla's strategy to make the text itself more accessible to her students rather than explaining the gist of the scene stands out from the strategies employed by the other teachers.

The thematic approach, that is, bringing to the fore the different themes in the text, was widely used by the participants. This was often embedded in a larger analytical framework based on narrative elements of the text, which would include study of the plot, setting, characterisation and motivation. For many of the participants, addressing the themes of the text under study seemed to be the easiest way into the text, and enabled students to have a deeper understanding of the main ideas and issues presented. It was noted that students found it easier to identify and retrieve themes in some texts than others, depending on the accessibility of the language, or students' (and often teachers') prior experience of the genre or author. While all the teachers agreed on the importance of getting their students to understand themes, they facilitated this in different ways. Some posed questions, while others made the themes explicit

by directly explaining them or linking them to elements that would be familiar or topical to their students' experiences.

Sam, Vimla and Sharda highlighted the need for the text to be meaningful to students at various levels. Understanding the literary text as a plotline with key themes and characters was not sufficient; it was also important for students to appreciate the context in which it was written and to understand the text not only as content but as a cultural product. However, the participants noted that it was challenging for teachers at Grade 12 level to provide in-depth understanding of the cultures and societies that were the settings for texts. Some, especially African and Indian texts, were scrutinised using approaches falling under the cultural model, where elements of the culture in which the text was set were discussed at length to facilitate better understanding of the text. This implies the need to bridge a cultural gap in order for some texts to make sense to students, most of whom were not familiar with the English literature canon. For instance, Sam discussed representations of women in Zimbabwe, as depicted in ***Nervous Conditions***:

> Sam continues by commenting on Nyasha's 'Englishness' as it is manifested in the text through the attitude and the way she dresses. He then asks them to imagine a typical, traditional African family, and tells them to imagine [what] the women would look like. He conjures up an image of voluptuous women who are comfortable with their bodies. In contrast to these women, Nyasha's own body seems to stand out, almost as in rejection of the lifestyle of the village. Sam does not want his students to just see the novel as a series of words on a page, but to actually visualise the people being depicted in the novel by using their own imagination.
>
> [Extract from Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b]

It was important for Sam to not only discuss feminism in relation to individual female characters but also to help his students understand how the text presented a unique kind of feminism in its depiction of womanhood. While he felt that there were similarities he could draw on in the life experiences of young women in Mauritius and Zimbabwe, he realised that his students might not understand the social and cultural lives depicted in the text. He sought to fill this gap through discussions and notes on Zimbabwean culture, which he later integrated with his students' own life experiences.

Another common practice amongst the participants involved the teacher eliciting personal responses from students on the plot, themes and characters in the text. Allowing students to express how they felt about a particular situation or character not only enabled them to mentally project themselves into the text but was also an effective means to evaluate their comprehension. Sharda noted that this personal model of teaching literature helped students to connect with the text:

> Sharda knows that her students do not relate that much to **Feasting, Feasting**, and that this may hinder their understanding of key events in the text. She however personally finds that this text probably contains more relatable contextual references for the girls than the other texts on the syllabus. Since one of the competencies required for this subject is to develop informed personal responses, Sharda often tries to get her students

to voice out in class. To achieve this, she starts asking some general questions about what the girls may have seen in Hindu or Muslim weddings in Mauritius. 'Is it always a happy moment for everyone?' she asks. Some students reply that it is obviously a joyous moment, but then another student chips in with 'When you have to organise a wedding at your place, it's always very tiring! You never get to sit down and appreciate anything!' This elicits laughter and agreement from her friends.

[Extract from Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

Inviting her students to express their views on various aspects of the text enabled Sharda to establish more links with the text, which could be exploited and discussed.

It was also striking that, apart from questions and tasks aimed at stimulating deeper comprehension of the texts, the teachers did not engage much with language development, as would have been the case at lower secondary level, where the emphasis was mainly on a language model, that is, using literature to consolidate language skills. At various points in their narratives, the teachers were quick to point out that it was essential for them to adhere to the requirements of the Cambridge Examinations syllabus. This could explain why they focused their strategies on developing literary competence rather than language proficiency at upper secondary, even though many also indicated that language was major barrier to students' deeper engagement with texts.

A generic or "genre" approach to teaching and studying texts was also adopted by some of the teachers, who highlighted that the stylistic features of each genre made an aesthetic difference to the reader's experience. For Vimla and Kishan, having to teach a Shakespearean drama meant that their students needed to be introduced not only to the main narrative elements such as plot, setting, characterisation and themes but also to dramatic features and conventions. Smita faced a similar experience with a 20th century American drama, which she felt was very different from Elizabethan drama and thus had to be well introduced to her students. This involved explaining concepts such as Absurdism and Modernism as artistic and literary movements, which she felt were essential aspects that her students needed to be acquainted with. Vedika also reinforced her students' understanding of dramatic conventions in her teaching of Shakespeare's ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, linking specific dramatic effects to the nature and performance of the play. Kishan enhanced his students' understanding of dramatic conventions by using video clips of a dramatic performance of the play being studied. Like many other Mauritian students, his class did not have ready access to drama performances and the clips helped to address this lacuna. While teaching poetry to his Grade 11 students, he identified key poetic devices and made sure that their individual presentations also emphasised the distinct features of poetry, as well as the characteristics of the sub-genres within poetry.

To teach those different genres, some of which were deliberately chosen, as in the case of Vimla, or imposed, as in Smita's situation, the teachers had to deploy a number of strategies. Few demonstrated complete ease in teaching all of them. Some had begun to specialise, focusing, as Vimla did, only on Shakespearean drama; a safe territory where the teacher felt most at ease. In general, the narratives suggest that genre teaching mainly depended on personal affinity, past experiences of learning and prior knowledge of the text or author. In some cases,

such as Ravin, or Smita, having to teach a genre like Absurdist drama, with which they had neither affinity, nor intimate knowledge, became a stressful task, and they remained tentative in their delivery of information. Smita's experience when confronted with questions she could not answer revealed the degree of unease that teachers experienced when encountering new texts, authors or genres on the syllabus. The generic model, therefore, required some in-depth knowledge of the subject matter on the part of the teacher, who had to prepare if he/she was not familiar with the texts or genres that he/she had to teach. The strategies employed to address this issue, such as looking for notes on the internet, or buying guides to the text, were effective, but only to a certain extent, especially when the teacher had to explain the text in depth.

A number of literature teaching approaches were thus noted in the different schools visited, ranging from a narrative or thematic approach, to the cultural model, the personal response model, the generic approach and the paraphrastic approach. Some of the participants' choices, such as opting for paraphrasing, explaining cultural concepts and themes, or linking elements of the text to their students' personal experiences, were often the result of strategic choices made in order to achieve specific instrumentalist goals, the principal one being deeper comprehension of the text under study, and the themes present in those texts as well as the stylistic devices used by the authors. These were construed as effective in equipping students with the relevant subject matter knowledge as well as the critical competencies to work on set questions for their examinations.

While the above-mentioned strategies principally aimed to achieve examination-readiness among students, some strategies moved beyond comprehension of the text, or comparison with other texts. In some cases, the teachers used the texts, themes and discussions on these to raise awareness of a number of issues. As noted previously, some of the participants held strong views on the positive attributes of literature as a subject. For them, literature teaching was the means by which the developmental agenda of education could be furthered. Intercultural understanding, tolerance and empathy were seen not as corollaries of the literature class but as one of its objectives. Discussing texts together in class or amongst themselves also fulfilled a larger sociological aim of preparing young people for dialogue within society. This was practiced by teachers such as Sam, Vedika and Sharda, who saw it as an opportunity to teach their students about life and to instil reflective and critical thinking aimed at developing maturity. It often entailed greater interaction between teacher and student, and between student and student, and sometimes led to digressive moments that seemingly strayed from the initial intention behind the class, but subsequently led to deeper engagement with the topics raised during the discussion. The contrast between such developmental goals and the personal approach could lie in the fact that the latter was used to make the literary text relatable, whereas in the case of the former, the process of discussing and analysing literature was meant to be a transformative experience, and to lead to change (more maturity and more tolerance) among the students.

While the participants emphasised the need to view literature through a humanist and developmental lens, in practice, this was not always the case, with the teachers being divided on the way they approached English literature as a subject at different points in their narratives.

The teachers in this study made specific contextual choices which illustrate the complex nature of pedagogic engagement. The person who opted for a process-oriented approach to literature in one lesson could easy shift to a more examination-oriented stance in the next. Closer scrutiny reveals that even those who enacted the more liberal and learner-centred pedagogy still seemed to be mindful of examination issues.

As noted at the beginning of this section, the teachers did not explicitly refer to literature teaching models, as referenced in literature didactics or theory but rather put together strategies aimed at achieving certain pedagogical results. The different narratives suggest that, even if the strategies employed were not underpinned by a theoretical base, the participants were aware of the pedagogical objectives they sought to achieve by means of specific instructional choices. Teachers thus enacted a series of strategies and a variety of approaches to literature teaching in their classrooms without being explicitly aware that they were adopting strategies that belong to an existing set of theoretical approaches. Very often, they devised their own approaches, some of which were directly or indirectly inspired by existing literature teaching approaches. The fact that some of these teachers had no professional training suggests that personal experience, individual research and the modelling of peers or past and current role models could have assisted in formulating these personalised approaches to literature teaching. It was telling that even without the formal nomenclature and jargon of literature teaching approaches, which would be dispensed in the course of professional training, many of the teachers were able to enact a pedagogically sound literature teaching methodology. This raises questions as to the relevance of such content in literature didactics courses, even though the dilemmas faced by many of the participants in their planning and teaching of literature suggest that pedagogical decision-making could have been facilitated if they had been exposed to such concepts during professional training.

6.3.2.2 Examination issues

The issue of examinations was perhaps the most widely evoked element in the eight narratives. In one way or another, the participants either implied, or directly stated, how examinations, especially summative examinations at Grade 11 and Grade 13 levels, were determining influences on their pedagogy. Preparing students to be "examinations-ready" was a marked concern, irrespective of the type of school they taught in. The narratives also revealed how their students' academic performance was inextricably linked to teachers' performance as dispensers of content. It was not enough to have a class that enjoyed and appreciated literature; that class also had to perform well during the end-of-year examinations, which were not in the hands of the teachers, but were regulated by an external body, the UCLES. The predominance of this theme in the different narratives suggests the pervasiveness of the performativity culture within the domain of education, which leads to the commodification of teachers and students alike. All the teachers focused on preparing their students to pass their examinations, though they chose different approaches to do so. The teachers thus showed that they were very much

aware of the potentially damaging influence that such an imperative might have on their pedagogical choices in their literature classroom.

The narratives reveal the strong significance attached to end-of-year assessments by various stakeholders such as school management, teachers, parents and learners, which seemed to place considerable stress on students and teachers alike. A number of teachers were thus quite vocal in expressing their unease about (what they perceived as) potential deviations or digressions from their programme of study, in case they would be questioned or blamed by parents. This meant that they would often discard strategies that would take time to enact in class, and focus on those that would enable students to be "text-savvy" in the least possible time. The fact that these assessments were not set by the teachers as part of their regimen of assessment tasks, but were part of an international examination, could suggest why teachers displayed so much disquiet about their students' state of preparedness and felt so uncertain about their own preparation. The examinations were therefore not only a deadline, signifying that work had to be completed by a certain time of the year, but also became an impending event that was, at the same time a test for both teacher and student.

While, by their very existence, such examinations were understood to be a logical extension to the programme of study, it could be argued that they acted as an external locus of control of teachers' instructional planning and choice of pedagogy, diminishing their sense of agency, while imposing their own logic on teachers' pedagogical practices. Teachers did not have the flexibility to teach the way they wanted, since the assessment objectives presupposed that specific aspects and skills would be covered so that students could answer the questions. Given the integrated nature of many of the examination questions, it would be challenging for teachers to teach only to the examination, even though many admitted that their practices tended towards this kind of readiness. This was also mirrored to a lesser extent in local "mock examinations" and end-of-year examinations in Grades 10 and 12, which were often prepared by the teachers themselves but aimed to give students an overview of the examination conditions at Grade 11 and Grade 13. Students were required to have a certain level of content knowledge and skills to be able to sit for examinations, and similar pressure was noted when it came to these formal assessment requirements, this time set by the school.

The outcome of these examinations was also crucial, as they impacted on students' promotion to higher grades at upper secondary level, in the case of Grade 10 students moving to Grade 11, or Grade 11 students moving to Grade 12, and on their employment opportunities as well as enrolment in higher education, in the case of Grade 12 students. Those teachers that displayed considerable concern about examinations thus engaged in strategies which maximised the use of their time in class. Conversely, the fact that some could not "complete" their texts on time, as was the case with Sam, caused anxiety. Those teachers who predominantly focused on an examination-oriented pedagogy thus privileged pedagogical choices such as the delivery of notes on key aspects of the texts, looking at different types of examination questions, discussing and practising these questions and consulting guides and internet sources. Thus, whether the examinations were set externally by the *UCLES, or by the school itself, most of the teachers found themselves not always able to engage in the broader*

sociological project which most of them saw in the teaching and learning of English literature. However, a few, such as Sharda, managed to resist or work around the constraints by infusing these elements into their teaching, while not denying the seemingly core imperative of examination-readiness.

Many participants were thus driven in their pedagogical practices to focus on the need to "prepare [students] to be able to answer a variety of questions for the examinations[71]." This entailed exposing students to the type of questions that could be expected for assessment in the different papers as well as providing support in working out answers, by referring to the marking criteria from the Cambridge International Examinations website[72] as well as model answers to discuss expected answers. While some participants stated that such practices tended to occur once all texts had already been taught, others resorted to such preparation parallel to the teaching of the texts, thus establishing thinking about the text and discussion in line with the sort of responses that would be expected in the examination paper. A great deal of that preparation thus entailed guiding students in essay writing, which is the assessment format for the examinations.

Smita reveals in her narrative how her preparation for teaching at upper secondary level inevitably led her to research not only the syllabus but also the examination requirements "to know what was expected to be taught[73]". Her concerns with regard to the examinations seemed to direct the content of her literature class as well as its delivery, leading her to read past examination questions and purchase study guides which would provide additional support and background knowledge to her students. She also encouraged her students to compete for a state scholarship, which hinged on their best performance during the examinations. There was also the realisation that participating more actively in classroom discussions could assist students in overcoming difficulties in expressing themselves later on paper.

Kishan found it natural to provide his students with practice in activities that fostered their writing skills and allowed them to manage their time and the length of their answers, which he knew could "determine whether they get a good grade[74]". He thus spent time providing feedback "on common mistakes and [addressing] specific aspects which have resulted in lower grades than expected[75]." Kishan's main preoccupation pertained to his students' academic performance during their examinations, which would, whether he liked it or not, be used as a gauge of his own effectiveness as a literature teacher. The imperative to ensure that students passed was felt so strongly that Kishan found that his teaching had become "examination-oriented", which he acknowledged as being antithetical to innovation and creativity, at least as far as his own practice was concerned. "Completing the text and the syllabus" thus became essential for his students' readiness for examinations and he found himself compromising "on what his teaching could have been, if he had free reign over every

[71] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2
[72] Cambridge International Examinations Resource Centre, http://www.cie.org.uk/i-want-to/resource-centre/
[73] Smita's narrative, Appendix 20a.
[74] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2
[75] ibid.

aspect of his class.[76]" While it could be argued that preparing students for examinations need not entail sacrificing deeper understanding of texts, Kishan seems to imply that "deeper understanding and appreciation of the text" as well as developing critical responses were often set aside to focus on exam-based questions.

Kishan's apparent lack of agency in how he managed the learning in his classroom seemed to suggest that his school placed emphasis on the end-product of the schooling system, with greater focus on performance and results, even though he might personally hold more constructive ideals as to what a literature class might be. In this tug of war between the bureaucratic need of the school administration to achieve good end-of-year results, and his personal beliefs regarding how literature should be taught, Kishan was often forced to accept "school realities", where fewer students opted for English literature since it was not as "scoring" or "fruitful" as other subjects. This resulted in Kishan being quite tentative and unsure about some of his pedagogical choices; he needed to know "that he is on the right track and not getting confused, whether it is in terms of content or preparation for examinations[77]." His narrative also highlighted that "teachers are often very likely to be blamed for the poor performance of their students[78]" which explained his efforts to prime the students in his care to perform well during the examinations. This unease also stemmed from changes in the literature paper, with the removal of empathic questions, which Kishan used to recommend his students work on for the examinations. It caused Kishan to wonder whether his students would be able to transfer their understanding of the text to the examination paper.

For some of the participants, the focus on assessment did not seem to stem only from pedagogical concerns. Indeed, Vimla admitted that "it becomes difficult to teach according to one's desire, when one is held accountable for students' performance in their examinations[79]." In contrast to Kishan, Vimla found that she had enough time to complete the texts and carry out revision, which she noted was only possible because her students generally performed well academically. Even then, the belief that they might not do their share of independent research and study pushed her to provide notes that they could use for revision for the examinations. As depicted in her narrative, she worried that many of her students were unable to answer one of the revision questions and this caused her to change her plans and devote nearly an entire lesson to addressing this issue.

Ravin, on the other hand, preferred to assist "his students in developing their schema and understanding of things, which will useful in answering the examination paper.[80]" This pedagogical choice suggested a more skills-oriented approach, where Ravin preferred arming his students with the requisite skills for textual analysis, rather than examinations-oriented pedagogy. Ravin's realisation that his notes acted as "the bridge between the meaning of the text and his students' understanding[81]" revealed the dire situation in which he found himself,

[76] ibid.
[77] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2
[78] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2
[79] Vimla's narrative, Appendix 19a.
[80] Ravin's narrative, Appendix 19b.
[81] ibid.

where his students could not make sense of the texts in the syllabus without assistance. Moreover, like some of the other participants, he was aware that students had not opted for this subject out of a wish to learn more, or because of any affinity with literature, but "to get through the examinations[82]" and score high marks. Ravin considered that his notes could only provide temporary support as the examinations seek personal informed opinions, which he did not feel his students were ready to put on paper. He provided questions and timed classroom assessments which gave students the opportunity to work within set parameters. The fact that all the teachers who worked with a particular year group, collaborated to set the papers at Grade 10 and Grade 12 levels (where mock examinations are usually held in preparation for the actual examinations at Grade 11 and Grade 13[83]) meant that Ravin had to ensure that he had covered what the other teachers had.

Some participants pointed out how important revision was in the school calendar. With students ceasing to attend school in the third term, teachers are often pressed to complete their texts even earlier so that revision is initiated at an earlier stage. This explains the numerous references to "completing" texts, even if individual teachers interpreted the term in their own ways. Vimla, for instance, considered reading the entire text together in class to be essential while Sam and Rita's interpretation was that it entailed having read key chapters and discussing the entire text. Smita worked out her timetable in such a way that she completed all her texts by the beginning of Grade 11, which gave her ample time for revision and preparation for the examinations, which usually entailed giving out revision questions. This placed her under pressure and often made her question the quality of her teaching. She regularly provided information about the types of examination questions as well as "indications as to the kind of language expected by the examiners[84]."

In helping his students revise, Ravin shared some of the weaknesses he had identified amongst his previous students with his class, such as not reading the instructions on the examination paper closely enough, or paying attention to which sections in the paper they should be answering. He also felt that it was important to update his students on the changes occurring with regard to the examination papers, such as the recent removal of the empathic question. Like some of the other participants, Ravin was of the opinion that the empathic questions had their place as they tapped essential skills pertaining to students' literary competence. Thus, he continued to use such empathic tasks "to build up a better understanding of events happening in the texts he was teaching, although he often found that only a few responded to such questions[85]" for the examinations.

Vedika also anticipated that her current class would display some of the weaknesses she had noted in past students. She was particularly worried that "while some students might

[82] ibid.

[83] Each of the two formal examinations (at Grade 11 and Grade 13) was the summation of two consecutive years of study. The teacher thus had Grades 10 and 11 to prepare the students for the examinations at the end of Grade 11, and the same was done over Grades 12 and 13 to prepare the students for their Grade 13 examinations.

[84] Smita's narrative, Appendix 20a

[85] Ravin's narrative, Appendix 19b

be proficient at understanding, interpreting and analysing the text in class, they do not really know the proper way of answering questions[86].” Vedika thus found herself having to explain how to “derive guidance and information as to how to prepare themselves for the examinations[87].” Pre-empting possible difficulties later on regarding revision for the examinations, she established the habit of students keeping notes in an all-purpose notebook that could be used “for any classwork, assignment or even revision for the examinations[88].” She consciously tried to lead her students away from over-dependence on notes by getting them to write their own. However, Vedika was aware that her students’ experience and understanding of literature depended on the teacher. Like Kishan and Vimla, she felt that her students’ readiness to sit for the examinations would also be a test of her ability to prepare them for assessment.

Teachers such as Vedika and Sam experienced difficulties in preparing students for summative assessments. This usually entailed setting tests or end-of-year examinations, correcting scripts and allocating marks. As she engaged in this preparation, Vedika also reflected on the fact that some teachers seemed reluctant to award top marks to high performing students for internal assessments. She attributed this to insecurity on teachers’ part, especially since most students did not score highly in the final examinations. A similar situation was illustrated by Sam who noted in his narrative that he found it difficult to award top marks to a student, although he provided a slightly different rationale, claiming that he had a very distinct notion of what type of answer deserved such marks.

While the teachers attempted to prepare their students to meet the standards set by these examinations, which were externally assessed by Cambridge International Examinations in the United Kingdom, they also seemed puzzled as to their poor performance, even though they commonly identified aspects such as limited content knowledge, language proficiency, maturity and engagement with the texts as being the “usual suspects”, or the predictors of middling to poor performance. The anticipatory moves made by Sam, who would not award marks from the top tier to his best performing student, suggests hesitancy to adapt and interpret the mark bands in the face of the Cambridge “examiners”.

Similar to Vedika, Sam expressed concern that his notes could be reproduced during the examinations instead of helping his students develop their own thinking. He warned his students against not demonstrating originality. Although Sam preferred lecture-based classes, which he found to be effective, he tried to awaken individual, personal responses through his questions and comments. He acknowledged the value of group work, but felt that “examination-related concerns[89]” put “excessive pressure on teachers to complete the syllabus[90]”. Indeed, Sam considered his students’ chances of passing to be the result of his own efforts, which he implied, had been directed “more pointedly towards examination-related

[86] Vedika’s narrative, Chapter Four, Section 5.2
[87] ibid.
[88] ibid.
[89] Sam’s narrative, Appendix 20b
[90] ibid.

questions[91].” Even then, hindrances such as absenteeism, as well as school activities, impacted his work plan, leaving him struggling to find time for revision and question practice.

In their narratives, the participants revealed that English literature, as an examinable subject, seemed particularly challenging. They were unanimous in their view that, while multiple interpretations were acceptable, there were also expectations regarding the proper way to answer a question, with attention to framing arguments and providing supporting evidence. Concerns were also expressed about students’ language proficiency, which some participants, such as Smita, felt would impact on their performance in the literature papers. Sharda also noted the fragmentation of knowledge which was taking place with the teaching of literature, where students “study the text with an examination question in mind[92].” Hence, as she revealed in her narrative,

> The text … becomes a collection of themes, setting, plot, characters and so on, which are studied individually, rather than [as] a whole.
>
> [Extract from Sharda’s narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

Like the other participants, Sharda made it a point to explain the requirements of the examination papers as well as the types of questions that could be set. However, she felt that going after questions as a means of revising was not effective; rather, she focused on teaching the skills pertaining to literary study, so that her students could independently describe how writers had created specific effects in their texts. In contrast to most of the other participants, the prospect of not “completing” a text did not seem to worry Sharda excessively since she considered that the techniques pertaining to the study of literature as well as how to answer different types of questions were more important than reading the entire text in class. When she initially joined the profession, giving notes was a pedagogical move which Sharda identified with her fears regarding her students’ results at the end of the year. Even though she later realised how abstract and ineffective her notes had been in terms of examination preparation, and had, since then, changed her mind-set, she still could not totally negate the sense of security she felt after giving out notes and considered that this become an expectation that was “too much ingrained in the Mauritian culture.”[93] Sharda’s belief that her students were not just meant to revise notes to pass the examinations provided a different view of the aim of literature teaching in the Mauritian classroom, even if she could ultimately not escape the imperative of preparing students for examinations. Peer teaching sessions were a means to get her students examinations-ready since “these students have to pass, and pass with good grades”.

From their narratives, it did not seem to occur to some of the teachers that they perhaps needed to ensure that their input in class during the school year also led to the development of the core skills and knowledge required to address literature examination questions. What became apparent from their narratives was an almost unanimous view that preparation for examinations took precedence over any other rationale for pedagogical choices in the literature

[91] ibid.
[92] Sharda’s narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3.
[93] ibid.

classroom. This resulted in a number of pedagogical stances, which can be broadly divided along the two strands initially identified. One set of practices was largely examination-centred and sought to develop as much proficiency and adeptness as possible to answer examination questions. While not all of the teachers in this strand focused solely on developing readiness to answer examination questions, the tendency for direct instruction – including explanations, notes and handouts – in order to understand how to tackle examination questions, was quite evident. Little time thus seemed to be devoted to developing an informed personal response on the part of students.

While examinations remained a primary motive for the pedagogical choices adopted by the teachers, there was still the notion that developing skills pertinent to literary understanding, and taking the time to personally and critically appreciate texts would subsequently lead to broader understanding of the literary qualities of the texts under study. These teachers felt that it was important to take this developmental path to literary competence, hence establishing a different set of benchmarks for literary understanding and responses to texts during classroom interaction, which would prepare students to address the very specific requirements of the examination papers in the long run.

The different stances adopted by the educators towards assessment suggests a disparity in attitudes concerning the place and role of assessment within English literature teaching. The difficulties they experienced in assisting students to make the link between classroom assessments and end-of-year examinations, whether they were locally or externally set, school management's view that examinations were an essential mode of assessment (perhaps in an attempt to draw parallels between term assessments and end-of-year examinations) when other more formative methods of assessment were perhaps within reach, and the difficulty that some teachers faced while trying to relate some of the more abstract objectives of literature teaching to the assessment benchmarks outlined by the examining body add to the complexity that teachers seemed to face in their planning and teaching.

6.3.3 Contextual influences

6.3.3.1 The institutional climate

The institutional climate refers to the general conditions pertaining to the running of the school and comprises the school environment, school policy, the administration, and relationships with other colleagues. The school context proved to be an important issue impacting on the participants' pedagogical choices. Significant differences were apparent in the various school profiles in terms of school climate and the expectations that teachers had to live up to, especially in terms of student performance.

Rita, Sam and Sharda worked in state secondary schools, where English literature was taught as a component of the language syllabus at lower secondary level and was then offered as an optional subject in its own right ("Literature in English") at Grade 10 level and again, at

Grade 12 level. These teachers revealed that in their schools, there was strong emphasis on students and teachers' performance and that both were expected to do their best to ensure that students pass their examinations. Decision-making tended to be curtailed by deadlines in the school calendar, which adversely impacted on completion of the literature syllabus. Moreover, these teachers pointed out that the administration had set processes to ensure quality work, which required teachers to account for every single activity in class. Lesson planning could thus be perceived as a means of ensuring teacher accountability and answerability to school management. Sam, for instance, pointed out dismissively that he only recorded lesson plans in anticipation of visits by Quality Assurance officers from the Ministry of Education, while he usually relied on his own preparation and experience. Sam's suspicion of teacher training and Quality Assurance Officers suggested unwillingness to open up to alternative ways of teaching, as is evidenced by his flat refusal to embrace technology, which he considered to be antithetical to the more organic experience of teaching literature. However, he compromised in terms of some of his practices, enacting pedagogical practices that he felt were essential while keeping records of planning, which he felt were not important, yet necessary as evidence of performance. Such a compromise, in the face of previously admitted ideals about literature teaching, illustrates how the more holistic objectives behind literature teaching could be compromised by institutional and systemic pressure.

Nonetheless, in these three state schools, where the three participants were comparable in terms of age and experience, there seemed to be differences in the degree of freedom and independence with which pedagogical choices were made. Despite her definite views on the power of literature to evoke emotions and feelings in students, Rita engaged the most in an assessment-driven pedagogy, and there was a sharp distinction between what was professed and what was enacted in class. Ravin lay midway, with a progressive stance towards literature which was often tempered by examination concerns and being answerable to the head of his school and ministry-mandated Quality Assurance officers. At the other end of the spectrum lay Sharda, who, while keenly aware of the constraints and expectations imposed on educators, managed to use the space and time allocated for teaching, to her and her students' advantage, enabling what was taught to be enjoyable, but still relevant. These teachers had, at some point, been heads of department, and thus had the prerogative to finalise text selections; in all three cases, however, this selection was done in a collegial manner. Relations between department members were cordial, and while Sam had the opportunity to comment on his peers' practice, Rita, who supported sharing of practices amongst members of the department, found herself unable to facilitate this due to differences in opinion. In all three schools, the participants thus operated alone in their literature classroom.

A different picture emerged with regard to decision-making in the classroom among Ravin, Kishan and Smita, who worked in private-aided secondary schools. These schools were run differently by their respective managements. In Ravin's school, literature was compulsory until Grade 10 while it was compulsory up to Grade 11 in Smita's school. In Kishan's school, it was an optional subject from Grade 10. These different conditions could explain why literature is taught the way it is in these schools. Thus Ravin found himself teaching groups of 20 or more students at Grade 10 level and almost as many at Grade 12. However, in Smita's

school, the numbers tended to dwindle beyond Grade 11 and Smita had around 12 students in her Grade 12 class. On the other hand, Kishan only had three students in his Grade 12 class. The numbers also impacted on the type of pedagogy chosen by the teachers. The participants found it more difficult to engage in group work with large or very small classes. The relatively small numbers in Grade 12 meant that Smita could re-arrange her classroom seating arrangements to foster more communication. These participants' experiences regarding accountability also differed. Smita was not required to produce write lesson plans as evidence of her work, while Ravin had to keep extensive records of his planning and present these to his rector and management. Kishan stated that some sharing of practices took place between staff members at the boys' school and the girls' school, although Kishan was the only teacher in his school teaching literature at Grade 12 level. What came out quite strongly from Kishan's narrative was the need to ensure good academic results, especially since the school generally took on a lower academic tier of students while nearby state secondary schools tended to enrol more academically successful students. Kishan was made to feel that his survival as a teacher depended on his students' good performance, which imposed additional pressure in terms of decision-making.

Vimla, and Vedika worked in parastatal secondary schools. Subject choice was a very pertinent issue for these teachers, especially since students with no background in literature (who had not opted for the subject at Grade 10 level) could take this subject at principal level in Grade 12. This raised a number of issues, especially in terms of language proficiency, since those who opted for literature as a last resort were not necessarily academically strong. This policy arguably ensured that the subject remained viable, but it also meant that teachers were working with students who had little literary competence and who would require coaching in the basics before tackling the eight to ten books in the syllabus. In terms of text selection, decisions were taken collegially in the department but individual members were free to voice their preferences. Moreover, it was possible for colleagues to swap texts as per their inclinations and experience. However, as Vimla discovered, it was difficult to validate her teaching as the teachers operated more or less in isolation and were not always inclined to share practices, despite cordial relations.

The institutional climate also impacted on the ways some educators tried to blend in or follow the trends set by management or their peers. For instance, Smita recounted that, despite restrictions on text choice, she appreciated the relative pedagogical freedom she was allowed within her school. She even came to resent some of this freedom, which denied her the possibility of conferring more deeply on the validity of some of her choices, especially since she felt unprepared to teach some aspects of literature. A similar concern was expressed by Rita, who desired more collaboration, but hesitated to impose it on her colleagues, even though she was the head of department.

Vedika's choice of pedagogy in class was initially motivated by a strong desire to make a difference in a new setting after trying to fit in. Having recently moved to a new secondary school, she endeavoured to establish her own style of teaching, even though she felt she had to be more reserved than usual self when she started teaching there. She displayed willingness to

break down the artificial barriers separating teacher and students by moving her desk to the side of the classroom, thus becoming more accessible to the students. Moreover, she displayed innovation in her proposals for field trips and out-of-classroom lessons to create an improved learning environment. Her choice of classroom assessments and teaching strategies reflected a certain degree of openness and willingness to establish communication rather than strengthening the hierarchy. These were deliberate choices to establish herself in her new setting but they also suggest how important it was to her to ensure that students felt comfortable and derived as much as possible from the literature class. Once she began to settle down, the learner-centred approach she had adopted was consolidated in her practices.

The institutional climate thus impacted the participants' pedagogical choices in a number of ways.

6.3.3.2 Text Selection

In the teaching context, decision-making can be expressed in a number of ways. The selection of texts for upper secondary English literature classes, while itself arguably a pedagogical choice, depended on a number of factors, and the participants had mixed views on how empowered or disempowered they felt regarding this process, and how such selection impacted on their teaching. They stated that selection of texts had to take into account what was offered on the Cambridge International Examinations[94] prescribed list of texts. For some, deciding on the text from the list was an individual matter, as was the case for Sam. In most cases, however, text selection was described as being the prerogative of the head of department or a departmental decision. Rita stated that texts were chosen at departmental level, bearing in mind the availability of texts in the local market, their appeal to students, and their accessibility in terms of language. Individual department members were free to swap with a colleague if they preferred a text or genre. Rita tended to avoid texts with violence and sexual connotations, and ensured that those with such content were not selected, especially if she was going to teach a specific paper. Sam and Ravin finalised texts for the whole department, although they consulted with their colleagues.

In Kishan's case, the members of the English departments of the boys' school and the girls' school met to decide on the texts, mainly to ensure that the schools were teaching the same thing so that it would be easier to prepare common examination papers. An important consideration was the shelf life of the chosen texts; great care was taken to ensure that those selected would remain on the prescribed list for a few years, illustrating the department's anticipation of casualties in the examinations and the need to prepare for students who would have to re-take the paper the following year. Sharda was in a similar situation, with the department choosing the texts and ensuring that they would be on the syllabus for more than two years[95] and that there would be sufficient notes available on them. Moreover, Sharda had

[94] http://www.cie.org.uk/

[95] Cambridge International Examinations bases its literature examinations on set texts which change from time to time. There is a risk that, if a student fails a particular year, the text that he/she was studying might no

the option to change the text which had already been selected before she joined the school. She opted for poetry instead of prose for the Grade 10 students, since she felt it was of value to introduce this genre at that level, and because previous text choices by colleagues had tended to avoid poetry.

The teacher's affinity with the chosen texts was significant to the participants, some of whom considered it as an expression of independence. While the whole department was involved in selection of texts, Vimla pointed out that she had a say in which texts should be taught, and generally opted for texts she felt comfortable teaching, notably drama. In Vedika's school, department members discussed the appropriateness of texts in relation to their students' level and ability, and the degree of difficulty and enjoyability, with a marked preference for shorter texts that would be culturally or personally relevant. Vedika was usually informed in advance of the texts that had been chosen at departmental level, so that she had enough time to prepare before the term started. Alternately, if she did not like or want to teach a specific text, she sometimes had the leeway to swap with a colleague. This meant that she approached whatever text she had to teach with equanimity and confidence. However, in Smita's school, the head of department would usually choose the text, and while members of the department were free to voice their opinions, the final decision rested with the head. For instance, even though she did not agree with the selection of ***The Birthday Party***, she had no choice but to go ahead with this text, which made her feel insecure as she was afraid her students would find out that she did not much care for the text they were studying. Moreover, since colleagues rarely shared, Smita was not sure that what she had planned for her students in terms of teaching and learning activities was pedagogically sound.

The participants thus experienced different degrees of freedom in the selection of texts. Those that enjoyed more independence displayed greater enthusiasm and were more willing to engage with students on various aspects of the texts. In contrast, tentativeness and uncertainty were noted among the participants that had a limited say in the selection of texts and limited support in preparing to teach them. What was notable, was the teachers' attempts to select texts that were more accessible to students, taking into consideration the latter's language proficiency, limited exposure to literature, and the overall limited culture of reading. "Lighter" texts were therefore selected by some participants in the hope that this would assist students, especially those who had limited exposure to English literature, to pass.

The participants' descriptions of the process of text selection revealed who had the power to decide on the texts to be taught by the teacher, and to be studied by the students. Some heads of department involved the whole department in the selection process, while others made the choices themselves and communicated the list to the teachers. Some teachers were allowed to express their views, but these were seemingly not taken on board or were ignored, as in the case of Smita. Having a limited say brought to the fore the teacher's limited agency and his/her dislike of the text could negatively impact the classroom situation. The narratives thus showed distinct differences between teaching texts chosen by the teacher and teaching those that the

longer be on the prescribed list, and a different text might be selected the following year, which would require more time and effort if he/she is re-taking the examinations.

teacher did not select or like. While it could be argued that a literature teacher should be able to teach any text, in reality, their approach to such texts could be subjective. Some teachers thus only taught texts that they liked while others were able to get out of teaching specific texts by swapping with a colleague.

6.3.3.3 Classroom events

Factors that enabled pedagogical choices in the English literature classroom included working patterns, the general mood set by the teacher's instructional style, communication and the relationship between the teacher and the students, spoken and unspoken codes of conduct and teachers and students' norms and values.

The narratives suggested that the participants were generally ready to address their teaching agenda. Some expressed their frustration at changes in plans due to school events, or student absenteeism. In such cases, the teachers had to change their plans or adapt their teaching to the circumstances. For instance, Rita went to class unsure if all her students would be present, and the fact that her students had not prepared the text, as she had instructed them to, placed her in a difficult position where she had to change her initial plans on the spot. This could be detrimental to planning and completion of the syllabus.

One common denominator across a majority of the literature classrooms observed was the class size. Participants repeatedly mentioned the class size directly or indirectly, commenting on class size as an indicator of students' alleged lack of enthusiasm in selecting the subject and while learning in class. Teachers were aware that the literature classroom was significantly different from the language classroom, and adapted their pedagogy accordingly. The relative small sizes of Mauritian literature classes was not surprising to note in the field, given the downturn in the number of students taking the subject. Given that literature is one of the least demanded subjects at upper secondary level, this would impact on class composition and size, which would in turn impact on the pedagogical choices of literature teachers as well as the dynamics within the classroom as a lived space. Thus more discursive and relational strategies were put in place in classes where numbers tended to be lower. Kishan, for instance, explored the use of multimedia and role play in class, which was made possible by the few students he had. The classroom was often described as the decision-making space, where pedagogical choices were not only planned, but also changed "in the moment", depending on the situation. Sam and Sharda thus did not mind digressing as long as they were able to discuss this fully with their students. At the last minute, Vimla decided to change her plan to discuss a new scene and instead discussed a revision question, which she felt was much more urgent. With three students in his Grade 12 class, Kishan found that he could easily change his planned lesson, depending on the discussion or the learning needs of one or more of the students. In such a case, the teaching and learning process seemed to be personalised, with efforts made to foster productive class dynamics. Therefore, while some teachers actively engaged with their students through interaction and discursive practices, leading to decisions being negotiated rather than imposed, others did not always involve their students in this process. Moreover, classroom situations were shown to be complex spaces where pedagogical choices involved

instant decision-making and selection of alternate courses of action by the teacher to address the diverse classroom situations that could crop up. These decisions were as much part of the lesson as what had been planned.

6.3.3.4 Students

One of the themes which cut across the narratives was the teachers' understanding that their pedagogy was very dependent on the students they had in their class. They were unanimous in referring to their students as one of the most important factors impacting on their teaching decisions. Depictions of students were complex as the participants displayed ambiguous reactions to them. A few, such as Sharda and Sam, reminisced, with a tinge of nostalgia about their previous stints in so-called "star" schools, academically-oriented institutions which have regularly produced laureates, and recipients of state scholarships. While such reminiscence was enjoyable, these memories only made it more challenging for some of the teachers to adapt to their new working contexts.

The students' academic profile was at the centre of a number of descriptions in the different narratives. Most of the participants expressed concern at students' academic level and a few were doubtful about their performance in the summative assessments for English literature. In many cases, students were described as academically limited. Moreover, the participants emphasised that poor language proficiency could limit students' understanding of literature. For example, Sam said that he was not sure whether he was teaching vocabulary or literature as he was constantly having to explain challenging words to his students. Kishan resorted to paraphrasing or providing summaries of poetry because "getting students who have not been accustomed to poetry to read verses and make sense of what lies between the lines and between the words can be quite difficult[96]." Vimla used paraphrasing as a learning strategy so that her students would become familiar with the original Shakespearean text she was teaching. Moreover, she chose to focus on basic understanding of plot and theme before going into deeper analysis, as she was aware she might "lose" them. Rita even used Kreol to explain as she found that her students were not able to understand when she explained abstract terms in English. In Smita's case, language proficiency was not only a student issue but cut across the entire institution, as the school culture favoured French as the language of daily communication and interaction. This presented a challenge when it came to teaching literature and she resorted to as much English as possible in class.

Students' interest in and engagement with English literature also seemed to affect teachers' pedagogical choices. Many of the participants pointed out that, with the exception of a few cases, many of their students had little or no interest in the subject. Vedika hypothesised that their experiences of learning literature at lower secondary level had a negative impact, so that when it came to choosing subjects at Grade 10 level, many were reluctant to take this subject, anticipating that they would be taught as they had been at lower secondary:

[96] Kishan's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.2

> [T]he case is different at upper secondary level where she finds that many students come with their own prejudices about the subject, which they then underestimate. For instance, they come thinking that English literature is a boring subject, or that it is quite light and a scoring subject. This is one reason which pushes quite a few of them to opt for literature when they cannot find better subject options.
>
> [Extract from Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2]

Indeed, students approached Vedika, who had recently joined the school, to ask who would be teaching them literature. This suggests that much rested on the pedagogical style of the teacher. The participants thus had to deploy various strategies in order to capture the attention and interest of their students. These included discussions, using multimedia, presentations, and group work, amongst other pedagogical choices. Teachers like Vedika, Sharda and Kishan also embraced communication techniques that would bring them closer to their students.

Sam's persistence, in the face of his students' lack of interest, to get them to react through discussion and questioning indicated the passion he still felt for the subject. His narrative suggests that getting his students to prepare texts in advance was challenging, which often led him to providing notes in class since he could not proceed with discussion of the text when most of the students had not read it. His frustration at having to proceed through comprehension tasks rather than plunging into literary analysis could stem from his hopes of having a class that would be as curious as he was.

The participants were unanimous that prior knowledge of literature made a considerable difference in the way teaching and learning took place. Many students opted for English literature at Grades 10 and 12 level with little to no prior exposure. The teachers were thus aware that some of their students had little literary competence and would have to learn the essential literary features and stylistic figures. What made the experience even more challenging was that these students reportedly showed little interest in the subject. Some simply required a subject to pass while others thought that it was easy and accessible. That did not prove to be the case, and the participants thus found themselves using notes and handouts to partly address the problem.

Building a working relationship with students proved easier for some participants and more difficult for others due to a number of reasons. It was challenging for some teachers to negotiate their status between being a source of authoritative knowledge and being a co-constructor of knowledge. Some of these complex negotiations seemed to jar with the espoused models of literature teaching of some of the teachers such as Ravin and Rita, and to some extent, Sam, who despite his strong desire to develop independent, critical thinking in his students, resorted to an authoritarian delivery style. However, Vedika, Sharda and Kishan, for instance, elaborated their pedagogical practices around a more democratic, learner-centred paradigm, with learning activities that were more discursive in nature. Establishing a working relationship while teaching and learning in this subject also seemed to raise another thorny point: that of maturity. Some of the participants commented on their students' limited maturity and stated that mature engagement with texts and context was essential for the proper

understanding of literature. However, they were not clear as to how this elusive "maturity" could be fostered. It could be surmised that a deficit model positing a lack of maturity would not be likely to promote a positive working relationship in class. Other teachers did not seem to have difficulty in establishing a good "wavelength" between themselves and their students. Indeed, some of the narratives seem to suggest that literature teaching approaches such as the cultural model or personal model could have opened up more avenues for sharing, and discussion. It could be posited that relating events, themes or ideas to one's own life could create stronger bonds between the teacher and the students and facilitate the learning process, as Kishan and Sharda discovered in their interactions with their students.

6.3.3.5 Technology

The participants also discussed whether the availability of technological tools, resources and support impacted on their pedagogy. The narratives revealed mixed feelings towards technology but most of the participants acknowledged that its availability provided an opportunity to improve the teaching and learning experience. The one exception was Sam, who admitted that technology was something he did not associate with literature teaching because it was "dry" in comparison to "spontaneous and lively[97]" literature.

The narratives suggested that the teachers used technology to add an extra dimension to their teaching. Smita, Kishan, Ravin, and Vimla used it as support for their literature teaching. In their cases, multimedia was used to consolidate understanding of plays by showing the learners dramatic adaptations or film versions of the text, to depict the nature of performance. This entailed using a multimedia or audio-visual room, especially for Kishan, who tried to avoid disturbing his colleagues. Vimla believed that technology could undoubtedly enhance the teaching of literature and resorted to it in the knowledge that she would receive support if required. On the other hand, Rita, while acknowledging the usefulness of technology, considered that the technical hassles of setting up a laptop to project or play something were not worth the effort, especially since technical support in her school tended to be scarce. It thus seemed that pragmatic or operational factors also impacted on some of the teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of technology in the literature classroom. Moreover, Rita was of the view that information technology and access to the internet had not really brought any benefits to her students:

> They may be more technology-savvy but they do not use it to become better informed. While they seem to have access to an almost infinite store of knowledge via the internet, many of her students do not bother researching the authors and books they are studying. When asked to carry out research, quite a few just download the notes and present them as they are in class, without any personal opinion. She sometimes suspects that technology itself might be diverting her students' attention, with online messaging and

[97] Sam's narrative, Appendix 20b

social media leaving less or no time to actually read. They then expect Rita to come and tell them what is happening.

[Extract from Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3]

Rita initially assumed that she could exploit what was being touted in the educational field as the "digital native"; the fact that young learners had much more intimate access to technology and its possibilities in their life. What Rita's narrative also brought to the fore was her predicament in the face of a drive towards more technology within pedagogy. As part of the older generation of teachers, she was of the view that the move towards more technology in the classroom was rushed and that initiatives such as the electronic tablet, which were recommended to teachers, were not sufficiently well supported in terms of training. Technology thus seemed to add an extra layer of anxiety and uncertainty to the confirmed pedagogical practices of a generation of teachers being asked to move with the times:

> The process of teaching and learning might become smoother, but ultimately, she feels that the benefits of integrating IT in education are exaggerated at times.
>
> [Extract from Rita's narrative, Chapter Four, Section 4.3]

Technology also was depicted as an opportunity for teachers to review their interaction with students. Like most of the other teachers, Kishan and Sharda demonstrated consideration and care for their students. However, both also broke down certain barriers[98] by establishing proximity and readiness to communicate via social networking sites and software. This enabled them to be within reach if students required any help in their studies and also allowed them to go beyond the four walls of the conventional classroom. Sharda's network of past students whom she could call upon to assist her current batch in peer tutorials as well as her provision of online material to facilitate her students' understanding suggested that she did not hesitate to innovate and take risks to further her students' learning. Kishan and Sharda thus made use of technology to improve the quality of the management/administrative relationship between themselves and their students. Using social networking websites and software such as Facebook and Skype not only allowed the teachers to be in touch with students, but also provided a platform to share links and resources which did not depend on the physical classroom for dissemination of knowledge. Using technology ensured that Kishan's students would cooperate since "he finds his students much more willing to carry out research work when he is connected to them[99]." Sharda used her mobile phone to share resources with her students, a risk she was willing to take.

As Vedika pointed out in her narrative, the teachers used the immediacy of the internet to extend discussions as naturally as possible online, without having to wait until the next face-to-face lesson:

[98] In many Mauritian schools, the use of electronic devices (such as mobile phones) by teachers and students alike during class time is prohibited. Recent initiatives by the Ministry have opened up the use of digital tablets at both primary and secondary level.

[99] Kishan's narrative, pg.

> These students are always connected in one way or the other to the internet! Since they do spend time online, I often get them to carry out research on specific aspects that I have identified. But sometimes, some go out of their way and carry out research on aspects or themes that interest them, which they later on share online or in class.
>
> [Extract from Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2]

The advent of technology meant that traditional roles pertaining to the teacher and the student had to be reviewed. Democratic access to information and sharing it with students would no longer be the sole prerogative of the teacher even though some teachers made sure that they were able to review the materials being shared. This "flipping" of roles was taken on board by some of the participants, who also made maximum use of their learners' digital skills, while honing the latter's critical thinking and research skills. For instance, Smita encouraged her students to bring the information they had found online in order to discuss it and evaluate its usefulness. Sharda commented on the changing nature of teaching and learning in a digital age, where teachers also had to evolve and embrace new ways of teaching literature:

> Technology, then, for her, cannot be dissociated from her own teaching of literature. It is just not possible to continue teaching the way that she herself had been taught, when her teachers had used teacher-centred expository methods which involved considerable lecturing. Sharda believes that literature teaching should not be confined to the textbook; instead the teacher must go much beyond the text. She feels that students will understand better if technology is used to create an interest in students so that they focus on what the teacher is saying in class.
>
> [Extract from Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

Technology changed Sharda's pedagogical practices. Her laptop and pocket projector became familiar fixtures in her literature class, and it was relatively effortless for her to illustrate a point by showing a clip or a video file. Moreover, having gone out of her way to make herself accessible, whether it be on Facebook or WhatsApp, she ensured that she did her best to reach out to the next generation.

6.3.4 External influences

6.3.4.1 Subtle presences: Parents

Although mentioned almost as an afterthought, parents were often on the participants' minds as distant, yet powerful influencers of pedagogical choice. Vedika was well aware of their reach. She noted that when she watched a particular vignette clip, she could not help wondering what "the reactions of parents and administration[100]" would have been, if she had

[100] Vedika's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.2

been as unconventional as the teacher in the clip. There was thus internal expression of fear at the thought of being reprimanded by either parents or the school administration.

Vimla also noted that parents could intervene in their children's subject choice:

> She realises that there are many students who are similarly guided by their parents towards subjects that they do not really like. The attitude of others towards English literature is something that Vimla finds challenging as an English teacher. She finds that people tend to look down upon literature, especially many parents who disparage their children's choice of subject and ask them, sometimes, even after the students have made their choice, the following question, which the students come to class and echo, "Literature? What are you going to do with that?
>
> [Extract from Vimla's narrative, Appendix 19a]

While many teachers attributed subject choice to students, few realised that parents were often behind such choices and therefore needed to be considered. This raises an important question about who the real decision-makers are, as some teachers might be trying to convince pupils who might be just as powerless as their teacher in the face of parental decision-making power. Parents were probably pushing their children towards or away from certain subjects. Vedika also reflected on the fact that some students might express resistance precisely because literature might have been chosen by their parents rather than being their choice. Sharda mirrored such thoughts in her narrative:

> She has realised, however, that most students are not really interested in taking this subject. She finds that people's outlook on this subject is crucial; many people, especially parents, do not find literature to be a viable career path. When it comes to subject choice, it is practicality and parental interest that mostly predominate, rather than the student's personal choice.
>
> [Extract from Sharda's narrative, Chapter Five, Section 5.3]

With parents questioning subject choices more actively, Smita pondered on parental pressure resulting from questions about how studying literature would affect their children's future job prospects. Therefore, the teacher not only had to face such questions but was also under pressure to ensure that the students in his/her care performed well. Parental expectations regarding text and syllabus completion were also one of Sam's preoccupations. He recalled a recent case of a student dropping out of the subject with full parental support, and wondered what students told their parents in order to avoid trouble.

It thus seemed, at least from the participants' point of view, that they felt accountable to parents, who were likely to question them at any time on some of their pedagogical choices in class. Parents were thought to be monitoring whether selected texts were being fully covered, whether notes were being given, and whether regular assessments were being carried out. In some cases, parents' presence or intrusion into the classroom space was deemed undesirable. What emerged from the narratives was the hidden force represented by parents, which some teachers seemed to articulate quite clearly. Whether it was a private or state school, the influence of parents seemed to be equally felt.

6.3.4.2 General attitudes towards the subject

Throughout the narratives, there were echoes of how perceptions of the subject impacted on the way teachers taught it. The participants seemed sensitive to the fact that the subject they were teaching was inherently different from *other subjects* in terms of its content and learning objectives, but were equally aware of the often stereotypical views that people had about English literature (for instance, that it is irrelevant and of no use in the current job market). Some thus felt the need to justify or validate the importance of English Literature, not only to themselves, but to students, colleagues, their superiors, and students' parents. Parents often questioned the usefulness of choosing literature, and raised doubts as to the employability of someone specialising in that subject. Rita described in her narrative how colleagues in other subject areas treated her in a condescending manner due to assumptions that language or literature teachers are cut off from the world. Vimla pointed out how stereotypes could travel up the hierarchy, with her former rector privileging science students despite the school regularly producing laureates on the Arts side.

Such views inevitably clashed with the internal image and beliefs expressed by the participants regarding the importance of their subject area. On the one hand, some teachers internalised this conflict, taking it as a fact, which they saw expressed in the dwindling subject choices each year. Others chose to fight the stereotypes, as Vedika did, by presenting the subject to prospective students of literature in such a way that they forgot earlier unpleasant experiences of learning it.

6.4 Synthesis

This chapter presented the dominant themes that emerged from the eight narratives with regard to pedagogical choice. The narratives revealed that a range of intrinsic, contextual and external influences enabled, moulded and in some cases, negatively impacted on teachers' enactment of pedagogical choice. Beyond the enactment of these choices, questions pertaining to teacher agency and teacher professionalisation can be raised. In the following chapter, the themes that were discussed are further abstracted and related to the existing literature to better understand the phenomenon of pedagogical choice.

Chapter Seven: Analysing findings in relation to existing literature

7.0 Introduction

This study explored the pedagogical choices made by secondary school English literature teachers in their teaching of English literature at upper secondary level. While there is a rich body of literature on decision-making in different domains, insufficient attention has been paid to pedagogical choices in the teaching of English literature in the context of a small developing island state. The study thus brings to the fore the various influences impacting on pedagogical choice to open up the discussion on the role of teachers in the educational context. In answering the study's two critical questions, **Chapters Four** and **Five** consisted of a selection of narratives representing the different choices made by teachers in their planning for teaching, instructional practices, deployment of resources, and their assessment of English literature as a subject. **Chapter Six** presented the themes developed from a cross-case analysis of the eight narratives. The current chapter compares the study's results with those of previous studies to determine the differences and similarities, as well as those findings that offer new insight.

7.1 Structure of the chapter

This chapter is divided into three sections. **Section 7.2** summarizes the various findings pertaining to the first critical question and **Section 7.3** identifies the more abstract trends from the broad themes and subthemes identified to address how and why literature teachers at upper secondary level make their pedagogical choices. The findings are then compared with those from the existing literature. This section furthermore addresses the gaps in the literature and identifies areas for further research on the phenomenon of pedagogical choice.

7.2 Overview of the findings

This section provides a brief overview of the study's findings on how English literature teachers make their pedagogical choices at upper secondary level. The first critical question aimed to explore how English literature is taught at this level.

7.2.1 Choice and different conceptions of English literature

Ambiguities pertaining to teachers' conceptions of the subject were noted, with teachers oscillating between conceptions of English literature as a taught and examinable subject (with

a bound curriculum with set texts) and conceptions of such literature as an art form (with intertextuality and multiple influences as its by-words). This resulted in a range of pedagogical approaches to texts that at times emphasized one aspect, and at other times, the other. This finding is in line with Vera and Juan's (1991) conclusion that divergent claims surrounded the nature and purpose of English literature.

7.2.2 Choice and second language learning

The literature points to the resurgence of approaches that emphasize literature's contribution to language proficiency (Carter, 2007; Paran 2006, 2008). This is pertinent to a context where English is a second language for the majority of learners. However, the findings show that literature approaches tend to follow one of the four propositions made by Paran (2008, p. 7) regarding the inclusion of literature in English as Second Language (ESL) contexts. He describes literature as being "discussed only as literature; any focus on language is on its literary effects". While Paran acknowledges the different permutations whereby literature can exist in the classroom, he identifies a gap in existing research on the way it is currently taught in ESL contexts and how teachers perceive the subject (Paran, 2008, p. 69). This study sought to provide more information on such a context, and explore the pedagogical choices made in order to offer insight into the nature of literature teaching and the various influences that impact on it.

The teachers noted that, at times it is difficult to convey the more conceptual or symbolical elements arising from a thematic, stylistic or critical analysis of texts to their students. This resonates with Showalter's (2003) observation that it is difficult for teachers to define the object of study or to convey the literary "value" of the text to their students; this could perhaps explain students' discouragement when confronted by value statements about the importance of literature when their personal literature experiences are generally fraught with issues of language and contextual understanding. Showalter (2003) also suggested that expanding the literary canon to include works from all around the world impacts on what is taught in English literature classes.

7.2.3 Choice of texts, genres and literary movements

While the list of prescribed texts from the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) offers Mauritian teachers of English literature a wide range of authors from a variety of contexts, many chose texts that could be considered more "traditional", as in well-established canonical authors. This could suggest a general unwillingness to embrace texts, genres and writing traditions which they themselves might not be comfortable or conversant with. The stated reasons included issues of practicality, where teachers used texts they were familiar with, or which they had studied and where there was an abundance of literary

criticism and study materials on set texts. For others, it was more a simple matter of catering to the readership, which meant identifying genres and books that their students would be able to read, rather than choosing them on literary merit. Text choices were also determined by teachers' experiences of having studied specific texts, be it at school or at university, which provided a familiar platform where there was little or no need for extra preparation on the teacher's part. This represents a cycle of habituation, where teachers engage in routine 'motions' in relation to the texts studied, thus reducing the element of the unknown and perhaps avoiding the dilemmas involved in teaching new or relatively unknown texts. Opting for the familiar suggests perpetuation of the past, a comfort zone consisting of familiar pedagogical terrain for the teacher.

Genre and period were also critical elements in the choice of texts, with some teachers being wary of particular literary movements like modernism, absurdism, postmodernism and postcolonialism, since this required additional preparation and intertextual knowledge which they were not confident of having. Little seems to be mentioned in the literature about selection of texts by others, and the study thus highlights the importance that teachers attached to being consulted on such choices, and their ability and agency in selecting the texts they wanted, rather than those deemed suitable by a head of department or school.

While previous studies tended to focus on issues of practicality or student-centred concerns as far as text selection is concerned, which was also the case for many of the study participants, it is significant that text choice and attitudes to texts were also often related to issues of personal comfort and the freedom to choose. The choice of texts, amidst the variety offered by UCLES, perhaps warrants a more in-depth study across the country, especially in light of some of the less pedagogical reasoning that went into the selection of texts in some cases. Given the different statements made by the participants on their deep-seated beliefs about the value of literature in enabling deeper understanding of life and social diversity, their relatively limited engagement with the full potential of the syllabus is an interesting finding.

7.2.4 Choice of Approach

The findings, described in the narratives of **Chapters Four** and **Five**, suggest teachers' marked preference for text-based approaches and the building up of literary analysis skills, informed by strategies aiming at building up greater understanding of themes, plot, characterisation and the use of stylistic devices. Language in the texts was studied mostly for its stylistic or atmospheric impact, thus moving away from language models that highlighted the use of literature for language teaching, and which had been a predominant condition for the inclusion of literature at lower secondary level in Mauritius. While students' limited command of literary language and literary analytical skills are explicitly mentioned, the shift from one predominant approach at lower secondary to another at upper secondary is barely mentioned. There is a possibility that students' difficulties in adjusting to the requirements of the upper

secondary syllabus could be linked also to problems linked to understanding the more complex language of unabridged literary texts.

At upper secondary level, there was a shift to a deeper engagement with literature texts, putting the onus on the learner to assume greater responsibility in deriving meaning from them. Time was thus devoted to the task of interpretation, entailing the activation of students' schema and, where possible, intertextual references to contribute to sense-making. Additional knowledge in the form of background information on authors, genres, literary movements, societies and cultures were integrated within the lessons to provide deeper insight into the texts. Since different papers were set for the English literature examinations at Grade 12 level, this also encouraged exposure to different genres and their characteristics, which the participants in the study incorporated in their teaching. While not a prerequisite at this stage, critical theories such as feminism and postcolonialism had been noted in some teachers' approaches to texts, again, to facilitate deeper understanding of texts, although deeper engagement with those critical lenses as means of understanding Mauritian society as a postcolonial, independent nation was not really visible.

Even though some of the teachers had gone through professional training, which included at least one literature teaching methodology module, teachers were not so vocal about the contributions of their professional development courses upon their practice. Some pointed out the benefits of lesson planning or classroom management, while only one participant mentioned the benefits of learner-centred literature pedagogy as acquired during professional training. While such responses do not necessarily point at teacher education as being deficient or irrelevant, they do raise interrogations as to the perceived usefulness and impact of teacher education programmes (Briton, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2006; Grossman & McDonald, 2008, Rowan et al., 2015) as well as what informs pedagogy much more actively in the workplace.

Guerin et al. (1992, 2005) identified traditional methods to the study of literature as being historical, moral and biographical. Thus, under this perspective, literary texts are studied in their historical context, as a product, or evolution, of a particular social or artistic trend, or for their didactic content, which would assist in the socialisation of citizens in society. In other cases, texts were also studied as part of a writer's body of work, or as being an exemplary piece of literary fiction. These different rationales behind studying specific literature texts were only partially adopted by the teachers in this study, who mostly touched upon historical elements as part of "setting the scene" or historically or culturally grounding the texts being studied. Instead of reflecting on the didactic content of texts, most of the teachers preferred to focus on thematic study, using these to bring about broader understanding of issues which would later on be related to real-life situations that students would be able to understand.

Sage (1987) posits cultural, linguistic and educational reasons for teaching literature in a second language context, suggesting that literature removes barriers to cultural understanding (Sage, 1987, p. 14). This helps in developing what Barrette, Paesani and Vinall (2010) consider as "transcultural competence", or the ability to shift from one cultural perspective to another.

In this study, some of the teachers engaged into discussion of cultural elements in the texts, such as meanings, values, ideas, norms and traditions in their teaching. Sam, for instance, ensured that his students knew how different (yet also similar) Zimbabwe was from Mauritius in practical terms, by broaching upon food, clothing and living conditions. Sharda sought a common ground between Indian and Mauritian cultures to address the depiction of Hindu weddings by discussing those events from her students' own experiences and perspectives. The participants explained their choice of strategy as being essential in obtaining some kind of engagement and interest from their students, pointing out how some of these texts were culturally and contextually opaque to their students.

As mentioned above, literature classes were sometimes infused with political discourse. The teachers who engaged in such discussions attributed such discussion orientations to the orientations they themselves had during their university years, which they felt would also open up the discussion in the classroom. Most of the teachers however saw the literature class as an opportunity to develop, beyond literary understanding and appreciation of texts, better understanding of people and society. Others saw the study of literature as an opportunity to understand life via fiction; a means of broadening the young minds under their care. Showalter seems to go in the same direction when she considers how English literature has become "an arena in which the most fundamental questions of human existence" (2013, p.27). This quest for the intangible experiences of human beings seems to be at the root of some of the participants' endeavours, as they set in place instructional strategies that would bridge the gap between the student and the text. The argument that "the end of literary teaching is not simply the admiration of literature; it's something more like the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to the students" (Frye, 1964, p. 129) seems to be supported by the student-centred approaches that aimed at developing students' personal response and engagement with what they were reading.

As pointed out in **Chapter Six**, while some of the teachers were obviously elaborating their lessons based on some established literature teaching models, such as the cultural model, or personal model, they were not familiar with the terminology used. Further discussion clarified that they had, as a result of their own understanding of, and learning and research on, texts, come up with their own version of these models. The teachers in this study had enacted a number of instructional strategies that bore some resemblance to the three broad literature teaching models, proposed by Carter and Long (1991), that is, the Language, Cultural and Personal Growth models. It could be presumed, however, that even if the teachers had not encountered these models, they might still, during their research, come across readings that framed approaches to texts that could have been inspired from these models. Findings suggest that the language orientation was comparatively less adopted while teachers went more into text-based approaches using thematic, narrative and stylistic lenses (and sometimes a synthesis of these approaches) to discuss the various components within the literary texts. Such approaches are well-documented in the literature (Barette, Paesani and Vinall, 2010; Bloemert, Jansen & van de Grift, 2016; Khatib, 2011; Maley, 1989; Sage, 1987) and seem to provide defined pathways into literature analysis. Moreover, the teachers in the study were conversant with strategies that they could use to stimulate students' preparation and personal responses,

which are congruent with Rosenblatt's (1982) transactional or reader-response theory, as well as critical learning approaches (Freire & Faundez, 1989; Wells & Nicholls, 1985) aimed at studying the texts through a social or critical perspective.

7.2.5 Choice and a higher goal

Despite the different calls to accountability, many of the participants still declared that they had retained some of the holistic reasons behind literature teaching. These entailed student-centred pedagogical choices going beyond literary analysis. The teachers in this study were concerned about the quality of their teaching and for some of them, teaching literature was a means to pass on formative messages about life and promote a better understanding of what it meant to live in and contribute in a society. This necessity to ensure that the literature class was also a space for the betterment and improvement of the students could be likened to what Erikson (1963) identified as a sense of generativity, or an interest in guiding and preparing the next generation, which, according to him, is one of the stages in human development. Beyond the professional requirements of being an employed teacher, the views of Erikson could be extended to teachers and teaching, especially when describing pedagogical attitudes and practices that go well beyond the formal requirements of the class. Kotre (1984), extending upon Erikson's work, suggests that generativity is the desire to invest oneself in practices and work that will outlive the self. While this concept seems to be associated with age and experience, and varies in terms of beliefs and motivation over time, it could be argued that the sense of generativity could also be present (even at an earlier age) in some teachers as they get deeply involved into their teaching and caring for their learners. Norris and Sawyer posit that the curriculum is itself "an opportunity born within the immediacy of collective transactions – the generativity of a moment" (2016, p. 17) and that it expresses "intergenerational discourses that are grounded in the past yet stretch in the future." The conception of the curriculum as a set of pre-packaged representations, prescriptions and expectations of desirable behaviour suggest that curriculum writers also have their visions of the future that are enshrined in their documents.

While showing great awareness of the systemic constraints limiting their pedagogical choices and practices, many of the teachers in the study demonstrated great interest in developing students in front of them along humanistic lines, with learner-centred strategies that aimed at giving a voice to students and promoting active student participation and engagement. Does literature lend itself to generative aspirations? The desire to impact the lives of the students seem to be a strong point for some of the teachers in this study, who sought to transcend the current time and space limitations of the classroom lesson to impart timeless truths, or develop in their students the ability to empathise and understand a variety of viewpoints. Erikson's work also suggests two kinds of generativity which could be applied to teaching, namely technical generativity and cultural generativity. Under the former, teachers seemingly show a desire to pass on certain key knowledge, attitudes and skills to their students, who might be perceived as the intellectual 'heirs' of this knowledge, and through whom the

teacher could relive those experiences of discovery and growing maturity. Cultural generativity, described by Kotre (1984) as more directly concerned with the development of a specific way of thinking or mindset based on certain values or principles which are passed from one generation to the next. Teachers like Vedika, or Kishan, expressed their great satisfaction whenever their students were able to grasp one particular aspect of a text, while Sam and Rita were often trying to lead his students to this change.

A study carried out by Peterson, Smirles, and Wentworth (1997) however suggests that there are inherent risks in correlating generativity to only democratic processes or humanistic motivations; their study, based on parents of college students found strong social support networks but also highly authoritative parenting styles. The pedagogical choices of some of the teachers in this study could be said to be infused with the desire to promote the development of the next generation (Kotre, 1984). However, are the students being exposed to encounters with philosophy or critical approaches because the text lends to such interpretations under scrutiny, or because teachers want to imprint their own deep-seated beliefs onto the next generation? Reading teachers' intentions from the lens of generativity could lead us to reflect more deeply on the pedagogical intentions behind certain instructional practices which could pass as "constructivist" or learner-oriented. Since the findings also suggest the strong influence of accountability mechanisms, it would also be interesting to explore much more deeply the motivations of those who still opted for a spirit of generativity, which would in principle run against an in-the-moment, goal-oriented system that valorises results rather than the process. With a strong emphasis on developing humanist concerns, empathy, holism and cultural sensitivity, could English literature itself be incorporating elements of generativity within its structure? If teachers are now engaged in 'flattening' out the curriculum into itemized teaching, what implications are there for the future of this subject? Conceptualising the English literature class as an attempt at selfless generativity, or an enactment of effective teaching could thus yield some interesting insights into teachers' beliefs and motivation to teach.

The above approaches seek to provide to the teacher and the student a variety of experiences within the text as well as tap into the experiences and personal response of the learner. Responses from teachers exposed to this model, however, showed that they were not always confident about adapting some of those approaches for a secondary level audience, even if they were familiar with those approaches from their academic and professional training. Time constraints, the need to complete the syllabus as well as students' language proficiency were some of the common reasons given. Some teachers conceded that some of those approaches could result in a rise in interest and participation but they voiced out their concern as to whether such activities could lead the students to successfully answer an examination paper. A few teachers explained their preference for the stability and conformity brought about by lecturing and giving notes in class, which, seemingly satisfied the expectations of students (and parents) that they were obtaining substantial support.

What could be interesting to further explore is how teachers assist students in making that transition from text and plot-oriented conceptions to deeper thematic and stylistic understandings of texts. Nadal (2012) points out that the reticence of students could be due to

the dichotomy between the requirements of the lower secondary syllabus and those of the upper secondary could explain their reluctance to engage in higher-order thinking. Nadal goes on to speculate whether the delimitation of the literature curriculum at lower secondary does not in fact hinder the development of higher-order skills at a later stage. The findings from this study are congruent with this argument. Some of the teachers observed were very conscious about the challenging task that lay ahead of them. Interviews with the participants in this study suggest that teachers seem to think of the lower secondary and the upper secondary literature curricula to be distinct from each other, and how they often have to start afresh to make sense when students join the literature class at Grade 11 or Grade 12 level.

7.3 Choice within a complex ecosystem

Discussions of how literature is taught at upper secondary level has inevitably led to the pedagogical moves or choices that the teachers were engaged in, and what prompted those choices. The thematic analysis of the narratives, followed by the cross-comparisons of the narratives in relation to the emerging themes, led to some initial insights into the development of pedagogical choices. As elaborated in **Chapter Six**, the broad categories of influences upon pedagogical choice are briefly summarised below:

- Intrinsic influences
    - Teachers' own experiences as students
    - Teacher beliefs, values, attitudes and preferences
    - Teacher education and professional development
- School influences
    - Institutional climate
    - Text selection*
    - Classroom events
    - Students
    - Technology
- External influences
    - Parents
    - Curricular influences
        - Literature teaching models/approaches
        - Examination issues
    - General attitudes towards the subject

These categories broadly correspond to some of the themes outlined in **Chapter Two**. For instance, Shavelson and Stern (1981) posited three broad categories, which they termed as "antecedent conditions" to explain teachers' pedagogical decision-making, namely:

- Information about students (including their ability, participation and behaviour)

- Nature of the instructional task (that is, the goals, subject matter, students and activities pertaining to that specific task)
- Classroom and school environments (including group dynamics, pressures in and outside the classroom, assessment requirements, and general climate)

Findings from the study, elaborated in **Chapter Six**, suggest that teachers' pedagogical planning and the choices they make are the result of a number of influences, such as academic standards and curricular influences, student needs and requirements, text influences, and classroom context and are consistent with the reviewed literature.

7.3.1 Fluidity and interconnection among the different influences upon pedagogical choice

The narratives suggest different sources of influence upon the teachers' ability to make decisions and the choice of pedagogy in the teaching of English literature. The importance of life experiences and biographical influences could be felt especially in the affinity (or not) that teachers had developed with respect to specific genres, authors and texts and as well as some of their approaches, which were based on (or sometimes, as a reaction against) the way they were themselves taught. There is thus some congruence between the findings and the literature reviewed on the influence of biography and personal experience on teacher thinking and action (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991; Butt and Raymond, 1987; Clandinin, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Knowles, 1992; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991). Life experiences were instrumental to a number of beliefs and conceptions about teaching among the participants. This seems to confirm Samuel's (2008) emphasis on biographical forces as one of the key influences upon teachers' pedagogy and professional identity. The teachers often had in mind "where one came from" (Samuel, 2008, p. 12) although this varied from participant to participant. While this suggests the potential of life history research in uncovering deep-rooted conceptions about literature teaching and learning, which sometimes go against conceptions introduced at a later stage, during professional training, noted discrepancies between admitted conceptions of teaching and practices in some cases suggest other influences at play. Pedagogical choices were, hence not practices that had been imported wholesale from teachers' personal experience only, but strategies that had also been reflected upon and deemed to be useful in their own current teaching contexts. Such finding tends to agree with literature that situates teacher's pedagogy as part of a process of reflection (Putnam & Mumby, 1993; Schon, 1987).

It would be challenging to separate the biographical influences of learning experiences (most of which were evoked in school contexts), experiences of schooling, and professional training from contextual forces within their professional milieu since these so-called categories are in fact porous and influence each other. The complexity of the decision making process is outlined by Carter (1990) and Johnston (1993), especially located in the ecology of the classroom and school (Kagan, 1988) could help explain the challenging experiences of literature teachers in their classroom. For instance, personal beliefs about teaching literature

could be traced to the teacher's own experiences of learning and could still be impacting upon the teacher's current practices while in other cases, a supportive school environment could also be an enabling factor for the teacher who would be able to implement certain strategies that she might not have been able or allowed in a different school, or with different students. In the same vein, the affordances of technology in the literature classroom were not only contingent upon the readiness of the teacher to use it in the classroom, but also, to some extent, mediated by current policies governing the use of technology in the Mauritian classroom, as well as its availability. While in many cases, text selection was not in the hands of the participants, specific text influences suggest how teachers' personal beliefs and interpretations of these texts impacted upon their instructional strategies. Whether on their own or in combination with other forces, these influences are shown to have shaped or coloured the professional selves and practices of the teachers in this study.

7.3.2 The implicit nature of decision-making

There have been shifts in the conceptualisation of decision-making over time, which could help explain the different pedagogical choices of English literature teachers. The literature suggested that conceptions of the teacher had moved away from the rationalist metaphor of teacher as physician (Barrows & Bennett, 1972; Elstein, Shulman & Sprafka, 1978), with appropriate pedagogical strategies being prescribed to 'remedy' problems in class, to a metaphor of the teacher as reflective practitioner, or sense-maker (Mumby & Russel, 1989; Schon, 1987).

Questions may be raised about the difference between pedagogical decisions and other types of decisions an individual might take. The literature suggests that while some choices are often the product of similar reasoning or at times intuitive processes, the context also plays a significant role in the kinds of choices that are made. However, even though teaching decisions are taken in a professional context, the narratives sometimes depict decision-making as not always being a rational or conscious process, even though choices in pedagogy are sometimes also shown to be the result of carefully thought-out strategies. This is highlighted in studies by Borko, Livingston, McCaleb and Mauro (1988), Clark (1986), and Carter (1990), among others, who have described complex classroom situations and the various reactions of teachers when faced with decision-making.

However, the teachers also demonstrated that in-the-moment choices could be made during the lesson itself, as the teacher considered the different options available to her. Vedika's decision to hold sketches, role-plays and debates could have been considered as a "waste" of time by some of the other participants, but for her, choosing these options had intrinsic worth since it provided them with a democratic platform where students could approach the Shakespearean text she was teaching without trepidation. This goes in line with Plous' (1993) claim that people can often opt for options that defy rationality and which might be of lesser value. Jonassen (2012) considers that rational conceptions of decision making are based on unbounded rationality, which is far from the case of how people usually reason, since

they are not perennially rational. Teachers are not necessarily aware of all the choices that they will make in advance or about making those choices consciously or rationally. Rather than being depicted as the cold, rational decision-making figure, as represented in earlier studies around normative theories of rational decision-making (Armstrong, 1982; Janis & Mann, 1977; Jonassen, 2012; Soelberg. 1967), the teachers were also observed to have their moments of uncertainty, discomfort, fear, discouragement, enjoyment, hope and dreams, which are expressed about classroom participation, their own state of teaching readiness and preparation, accountability, students and examination concerns, which also, in turn, impact upon their choice of pedagogy. They also expressed their personal beliefs, which coloured their approaches to teaching literature to young students, thus suggesting cognitive and emotive elements also to the process of decision-making.

Shavelson and Stern (1981) point out that the judgements and decisions that teachers make are based on their psychological model of reality, which is informed by their beliefs on pedagogy, their subject matter and their students, amongst others. The various narratives suggest that the participants' beliefs and conceptions, which are referred to as "teacher characteristics" by Shavelson and Stern (1981), are indeed instrumental in the selection of pedagogical choices. Conceptions of what English literature aims to achieve as a subject are embedded within certain practices, although, in some cases, these conceptions seemed to be absent from some other pedagogical practices. Similarly, all the teachers professed to hold beliefs about the importance of English literature as subject and art and how it should be taught. As I will discuss later on, these beliefs are not the only motivating influences in terms of selecting pedagogical choices.

Shavelson and Stern (1981) are cautious not to engage solely in a causal explanation of decision-making but rather seek to highlight what Bishop (1976) suggests about the centrality of decision-making to the teaching and learning experience. They do so by highlighting the impact that these pedagogical choices have, in turn, upon the selection of activities, the choice of teaching strategies and class management. Similarly, Schon (1987) and Mumby and Russel (1989) suggest that decisions have to be taken in contexts and situations which are often messy, uncertain and complex, where rationally applying learnt techniques and theories to new situations might not be so effective. Part of the literature I surveyed also laid considerable emphasis on the differences between decision making by 'expert' teachers (or teachers with considerable experience) and early career teachers. My study comprised eight teachers who were fairly spread out along a continuum of experience, with the 'newest' teacher with about 5 years of experience, while the most experienced had nearly 30 years of teaching experience. The literature (Berliner, 1986; Greeno, Glaser & Newell, 1983; Leinhardt, Weedman and Hammond, 1987) suggests that expert teachers organise their knowledge differently from early career teachers; they also refer to the wealth of their experiences and prior encounters with similar issues in class, which allows them to come up with heuristics to address these issues.

The literature also suggests that newer teachers in the profession tend to rely more on their subject knowledge; there is also a tendency to conform more to the performativity-culture established in the institution. While, to some extent, the more experienced teachers seemed

indeed to use their experience in addressing issues, and were, on the whole, more prepared at addressing unexpected issues, the study did not find a great variation in terms of pedagogical choices or even in terms of the rationales they provided. Rita, despite her many years as English literature teacher and head of department, still found it challenging to engage her classes with the content, and while Sam used his experience in life to make connections between texts and students' contexts, he still faced issues pertaining to completing texts. On the other hand, despite considerable pressure upon him as the sole English literature teacher in his school to make his students pass, Kishan nevertheless had very few issues in planning or teaching his classes, and often managed to engage his students with his content. While the range of observations and interviews during the data production phase would not allow generalisation, the findings would tend to suggest that experienced teachers did possess strongly professed beliefs and knowledge and organised their knowledge in specific ways. Their choices however seem to reflect individuals conforming to the exigencies of the workplace as they themselves were sensitive to the culture of accountability (Crocco & Costigan, 2006, 2007) and the examination-driven curriculum at school. Given this slight divergence from what the literature generally states about the agency of more experienced teachers, it could be suggested that stronger institutional pressures seem to trump the sense of agency of teachers, who engage themselves in attaining targets, which are not necessarily pedagogical or learner-centred. However, one could question why even experienced teachers, amongst whom feature a few heads of department, could not impose their own vision of teaching in their own classroom. The narratives of some of the teachers seem to suggest that even in the midst of restrictive circumstances, some teachers still manage to subvert the process, while others capitulate more readily in front of such pressures.

Many researchers have addressed the notion of beliefs in relation to pedagogical practice, as outlined in **Chapter Two** (Meirink, Meijer, Verloop & Bergen, 2009; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). The significance of teacher beliefs is highlighted by Pajares (1992), who considers it one of the aims of teacher cognition studies to establish the link between beliefs, pedagogical practices, teacher knowledge and student outcomes. In the case of the eight participants, beliefs certainly could be suggested as one of the prime forces behind their choice of pedagogy. The "messy construct" that are beliefs, as Pajares himself noted, was also challenging to ascertain as the participants did not always directly reveal what motivated them to teach in specific ways. There also exist gaps between "espoused theory of action" and how teachers act in classroom contexts (Hativa et al., 2001; Kane et al., 2002; Zimmerman, 2017). Professional beliefs can impact pedagogy (Tondeur et al., 2017). These beliefs can be considered from two main dimensions: the espoused (or expressed) beliefs and the enacted (practised) beliefs. While teachers may be expected to act upon their deep-seated pedagogical beliefs and values, enactment in class does not always ensue due to a number of factors (Chen, 2008). This may be due to the teacher trying to juggle different tensions, for example, the pedagogy that is internalised from experience and the pedagogy that one is exposed to during teacher training (Flores & Day, 2006; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009). The issue of mismatch between espoused and enacted beliefs is particularly studied in the case of early career teachers, who may have genuine pedagogical beliefs but may find it challenging to enact in real class contexts (Schussler, Stooksberry, & Bercaw, 2010). Other reasons for the lack of enactment may be due to conflicting pedagogical goals (Palmer, 2017), which may result in

dilemmas that sometimes arise while teaching (Windschitl, 2002; Zimmerman, 2017). Dissonance may also happen when teachers try to assimilate new practices into their schema (Enyedy, Goldberg, & Welsh, 2006) but then interpret these practices and pedagogical intentions through the lens of their own beliefs and knowledge (Fusarelli, & Fusarelli, 2015). This implies that pedagogical choices are not linear or always rationally thought out but are sometimes the product of conflicting pedagogical intentions which may result in cognitive overload (Moos & Pitton, 2013).

Eley et al. (2013) suggest that such variance is well understood by psychologists who consider that general statements of intent are rarely predictive of behaviours and practices in specific situations. Mariaye's (2011) study of in-service beginning teachers in Mauritius suggests that teachers do not strictly adhere to a dominant set of beliefs about teaching. She also points out the influence of personal, cultural and professional contexts upon the beliefs of these teachers.

Ertmer (2005) suggests that "understanding teachers' beliefs requires making inferences based on what teachers say, intend, and do" (p. 29). This highlights the importance of an interpretivist paradigm within qualitative research. She also warns that "if individuals are unable, or unwilling, to accurately represent their beliefs, this can lead to misjudging or misrepresenting that which truly motivates their behaviour" (p. 29). This presents one possible limitation as to the identification and interpretation of teacher beliefs, which exist implicitly (Kagan 1992). Certainly, while great care was taken to establish trust and confidentiality between the participants and the researcher, it is certainly possible that broad "face-saving" strategies could have been employed to suggest more pedagogical orientations to the choices that some teachers have made, which would explain the discrepancies noted in some instances. In other cases, discrepancies between stated intentions or beliefs and observed practices was openly acknowledged and attributed to various factors, such as the time factor for the actual instruction to take place, the level and/or attitudes of students, or constraining factors such as accountability. Pajares (1992) and others describe ways to obtain the needed information through "attitudes, perceptions, reflections, cognitions, personal theories, concerns, images, metaphors, Gestalts, practical knowledge, and craft knowledge with many of these terms used interchangeably" (Pajares, 1992). Certainly, through the various sustained interactions and the use of informal talk as well as vignette reactions, it was possible to capture a more authentic response from the participants. Calderhead (1996), argues that there is potential in considering teachers' beliefs as an integral part of teacher cognition. It could be suggested that they form an interesting entry into understanding how pedagogical choices are made. Whether choices made in the classroom were conscious or not, they confirm, to some extent, the literature on the significance of beliefs on pedagogical practice. Perhaps, the discrepancy between teacher beliefs and enacted practices could be further interrogated, by looking more closely at the beliefs and positions taken by some of the teachers in this study. While explaining some of their choices, some of the teachers assumed a posture of defence as they provided justifications for their actions in the classroom, especially when it came to completing the syllabus, and an examination-centred pedagogy.

However, underneath the recriminations about accountability culture and the poor performance of the students, amongst other influences, their utterances seem to indicate a sort of acceptance of the way things operate in their day-to-day teaching of literature. The study seems to suggest that, while a considerable amount is stated about the restrictions that teachers feel they operate under, little seems to have been done to address or work around this. Many of the teachers professed learner-centred stances to literature teaching, and considered literature as a gateway to personal and intellectual transformation. However, when observed in the context of enacting their strategies, many of these teachers reverted to more conventional, text-centric approaches to the subject, with only a few teachers trying to engage their students beyond the scope of the text. How, then, can these professed beliefs and enacted actions be reconciled?

Moreover, could these professed beliefs really reflect teachers' actual appraisal of their situation as decision-makers in the school context, or are they a means of explaining or defending some of their practices, which some of them are satisfied in perpetuating? A closer look at the discourse used by some of the teachers would seem to suggest an acceptance of the status quo, and perhaps even an internalisation of the system they seem to reject. The case of Sharda could arguably be the exception to the "rule", where she worked around time and examination constraints due to her personal endeavours and interest. Why was she able to do so? While Sharda was not particularly more professionally equipped than her other counterparts in the study, she seemed able to effect the changes she wanted to see happen in her class. Could the other teachers therefore also have ventured outside their perceived restrictions? This will be further discussed in Section 7.3.6.

7.3.2.1 "No longer at ease": the importance of feeling secure in one's teaching context.

Studies exploring teacher morale and unease tend to be associated with studies of teacher retention and attrition (Borman & Dowling, 2008). According to Dunn (2020), teacher morale is likely to be negatively impacted by various contextual factors such as restrictive educational policies, issues with identity as teachers grapple with conflicting roles and requirements, and feelings of disempowerment in the face of top-down dictates and accountability measures (Dunn, & Durrance, 2014; Ingersoll, 2001; Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005), which in turn, affect their pedagogy qualitatively. This often becomes a vicious circle, in which some teachers are trapped and where their sense of self-efficacy is continually eroded. Teacher morale is thus closely linked with job satisfaction. Huysman (2008) argues that intrinsic factors such as job security, social services, personal activity, variety and ability utilisation were key to a high morale. On the other hand, external factors such as authority, policies, recognition, compensation and distribution of power tended to negatively impact morale. Lumsden (1998) suggests that teacher morale cannot be separated from school culture, leadership behaviour, and other contextual factors.

The findings of this study suggest that there are strong correlations between teachers' sense of agency and their motivation level. As Leithwood and Beatty (2008) posit, teaching is

an “emotionally intense form of work” (p.4). It is thus not surprising that teachers’ beliefs and emotions play a central role in shaping their professional identity and experiences. The generative aspect of teaching literature is reinformed in those who saw teaching as a vocation, and who expressed their values and beliefs about their pedagogical mission. This led them to take risks and engage in expansive pedagogical choices. Hargreaves (1998), however, points out that emotional labour makes teachers vulnerable, and impacts on their sense of efficacy and values, especially when these clash with external forces. For instance, Fullan (2011) points out that teachers’ intrinsic motivation needs to be taken on board especially when educational reforms are set up. Moreover, many teachers also possess a strong sense of obligation towards their students and feel responsible for their academic, social and emotional well-being. When these obligations and moral purpose clash with educational or institutional policies that are perceived as divergent, this may also result in low sense of morale and a feeling of insecurity.

Self-efficacy refers to the belief in one’s abilities to be effective and the ability to exercise agency in specific situations, influencing how people think, feel and act (Bandura, 1997). Professional anxiety and vulnerability are also exacerbated with changes in the way teachers are meant to operate, and impact teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy (Kelchtermans, 2005). According to Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy (1998), teachers’ beliefs about self-efficacy are usually linked to student engagement and performance, but can also include the school environment, relationships with peers, and other contextual influences. They are also influenced by their self-appraisal of their own pedagogical skills and content knowledge, autonomy, and professional identity. Another aspect pertaining to teacher morale is teacher resilience, which is seen as a essential element protecting teachers from vulnerability and burnout (Dworkin, 2009; Kelchtermans, 1999). Teacher resilience is strengthened by the ability to minimise any dissonance between teachers’ moral purpose and external forces. For many teachers, resilience is linked to their morale and sense of purpose.

The concept of “safety”, “comfort” or “unease” recurred across many of the narratives as the teachers described how they felt as they went about to teach literature. The teachers craved for the feeling of safety within their class and workplace and a considerable influence upon this mental state was the belief in being able to have some degree of agency within their own practice. This need for comfort was expressed at various levels. Teachers seemed uncertain about the number of students opting for English literature, the academic profile and level of the latter, the attitudes of others towards the subject, which they felt would impact upon their performance, timetabling issues, selection of texts, preparation of students for examinations, choosing appropriate strategies, collaborating with peers and so on. Uncertainty was also expressed about the content of some of the texts being taught in class, students’ level of maturity as well as the future of the subject within the curriculum.

While some of those fears could be said to be pertinent to general teaching concerns, a number of those seemed to stem from the very specific position of being an English literature teacher in a Mauritian classroom. Unlike some other subjects, English literature has seen a steady decline in the number of students opting for it at upper secondary level. Some of the participants alluded to the uncertainty of having this subject offered every year if numbers kept

dwindling, since it also held implications for the workload of some of the teachers concerned. On the other hand, the subject had been receiving a lifeline from a stream of students for whom literature was not a first option or who had had little exposure to the subject. Opting for English literature allowed these students to have access to what they perceived to be a "scoring" subject, even without having had prior experience in the domain. However, this also was described as another source of worry for the teachers.

Despite the generally unfavourable responses of the participants towards the nature of this student intake, it was that loophole in the regulations that allowed the subject to have its critical mass to be offered in some of the schools. At the same time, the fact that schools struggle to attract the interest of students for this subject raises questions as to the viability and future of the subject for Mauritius in the 21st century, especially with the opening up of the secondary school curriculum with other subjects such as the advent of newer subjects such as *Travel and Tourism* and *Entrepreneurship Education*. Moreover, the fact that more subjects are now examinable at Grade 11 and Grade 12 level, has opened up new study and career paths for students who formerly had to contend with limited subject combinations at upper secondary level. Working with students with seemingly little interest or personal involvement in the subject, as well as having to deal with the relative decline in the reading culture amongst young Mauritians meant that teachers had to think of strategies that would, if not engage them, then at least provide them with the skills and tools to be able to perform well in the examinations.

Moreover, seemingly personal preferences towards specific genres, lengths of texts, and instructional and assessment strategies could also highlight the adherence of some teachers to "safe" pedagogical practices, or even at times, strategic tactics linked to a search for security within the class and school contexts. Such practices, such as providing notes, or ensuring that students had been provided preparation for the examinations, were pointed out in some of the narratives. The distinction between professed principles concerning literature teaching and enacted practices in the classroom was thus very visible. Professed pedagogical principles, some of which originate from their own experiences as students of literature, pertained to the teaching of literature as a cultural project and as a means of developing empathy and intercultural understanding alongside the aesthetic appreciation of texts. On the other hand, enacted practices were broader and suggest different influences, notably contextual influences such as the accountability culture, curricular influences, notably the importance of examinations, as well as beliefs about their own effectiveness as teachers, their scope of action and the aims of literature teaching.

With summative assessments seemingly driving the pedagogy for a set of two consecutive years (either at Grade 10 or Grade 12 level), discomfort could arise for teachers such as Sam or Kishan, even though the first enjoyed the senior post of head of department, while the latter, a more recent recruit, was the only one teaching literature at upper secondary level in his school. Pedagogical choices informed by such an imperative inevitably influenced some teachers to seek an end-product rather than an educational process seeking the holistic development of the Mauritian youth. Most of the participants seemed aware of this discrepancy and were therefore uncomfortable having to make such compromises, especially since

preparing students for readiness for examinations seemed to be prevalent in the school culture/education system. Discomfort also seemed to arise out of a perceived lack of support from a community of practice, consisting of peers and colleagues. The fact that a few participants were able to set up such a community amongst peers proved to be beneficial to their own elaboration and validation of their pedagogy, especially in situations where the teachers had not had teacher training.

It is significant, therefore, how such communities of practice could potentially affirm, foster or inhibit pedagogical practices and choices. However, in light of the findings of this study, one could possibly question why, when communities of practice seem to present so many practical advantages (Wenger, 2011), notably the possibility of forming an empowering structure that would also be a source of shared practical knowledge, such communities were not set up in most of the schools in this study. Some participants even pointed out their regret at not being part of a community of practice, while it was within their capacity (some were heads of department and could easily have initiated such an action) to do so. This raises possible questions as to the degree of willingness to set such communities up, in the face of competitive, individualistic, or possibly territorial pedagogical practices. While this study does not claim to assume that this was the case in all schools in the country, the fact that most of the participants worked on their own, or did not want to work with others, even while they were part of a department, could inform future research about professional communities in schools.

The recurrence of the concepts of safety and comfort in the different narratives seems to suggest an inherent concern with teachers' roles and status within society. As they described their practices and beliefs, conflicting images of the literature teacher developing empathy, intercultural understanding, aesthetic and literary appreciation and enacting the established curriculum emerged. These suggest uncertainties as to the direction and intent of the literature classroom and the educational purpose of the literature curriculum. As teachers are more and more driven towards a hegemonic paradigm of performativity and results, it can be questioned how much of the "signature" goals of literature teaching still survive within the Mauritian classroom. This perhaps mirrors similar crises in classrooms in developing contexts around the world, where conflicts around the aims of education and the roles of the teacher in the 21st century are still happening. Focus on accountability to management and to a performance culture, which is firmly anchored in the valorisation of results instead of learning, seems to counter attempts at enacting signature pedagogies in the classroom. The individual pedagogic choices of teachers who choose to challenge the dominion of a results-based culture could be seen as acts of resistance to establish a more authentic and learner-centred rationale to teaching English literature.

With those thoughts in mind, I also started to reflect upon teacher morale since some of the participants claimed not being totally free to teach English literature the way they wanted. While some of the teachers were able to teach the way they wanted and managed to share a more holistic interpretation of literature with their students, some were also not always able to teach the strategies they had planned for a number of reasons. While there exists literature on teacher morale (Mendel, 1987; Washington & Watson, 1976), the literature I had consulted in

relation to decision-making and pedagogical choices did not directly point out to the relationship between teacher morale and pedagogical choice, even though strong links exist between beliefs, the affective domain and teacher cognition.

Related concepts, such as teacher *autonomy* and *agency*, were often discussed, with implications on practice but I had not seen teacher morale mentioned directly in relation to decision-making theory. Yet, as this study seemed to suggest, a number of the participants claimed not to be really satisfied with the limited choices they had in their teaching. Washington and Watson (1976) define morale as the feeling a worker has on how she perceives herself in the organisation, and the extent to which she perceives the organisation as meeting her expectations and needs. Bentley and Rempel (1980) posit morale as "the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays towards the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation". The findings to some extent concurred with the argument that boosting teachers' morale in the workplace would eventually lead teachers to feel a sense of accomplishment in the performance of their duties (Hoy & Miskel, 1987).

Miller (1981) suggests that teacher morale "can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning" and that organisations needed to consider raising teachers' morale not to make teaching more comfortable for teachers, but to create a more conducive environment for learners and learning. Current literature also seems to place the onus on the school leader as the one responsible for effecting change. However, while I had not initially considered this aspect of teachers' identity, the findings in this study seem to point at an urgent need to reconsider the well-being and sense of satisfaction of the working staff, not only from a top-down managerial approach.

7.3.3 Between a signature pedagogy or one-size-fits-all approach to teaching

As I engaged with the teacher beliefs and practices of the participants, I tentatively interrogated whether the notion of a signature pedagogy (Shulman, 2005) could be posited for English literature. On one hand, the teachers were inherently aware of the differences that literature study entailed, in comparison with other subjects, and that awareness infused much of the professed beliefs about how literature should be taught, with its own particular set of strategies.

Teachers expressed the challenges to introducing diverse viewpoints and grappling with interpretation with young students. These implicit skills, or literary competence, which are necessary requirements to address the assessment objectives of this subject, were often relegated to the margins as more time was taken in deciphering texts and making sure students had an overall understanding of the text before venturing deeper into analysis. Overall, the teachers also adopted specific approaches to literature teaching aiming at developing the comprehension skills, analytical skills, and personal responses of students. Moreover, the exposure of teachers to specific texts, authors and genres coloured their own selection of texts from the syllabus, and the choice of being able to teach "by affinity" or according to one's

"comfort" while still having to introduce the same skills perhaps presents another distinction with other disciplines where a specific content needs to be taught, irrespective of the teacher's personal preferences. The "affinity" and "comfort" issues, however, could serve as interrogation, however, as to the type of exposure that teachers themselves have had, either during schooling and higher education or during professional training, to texts and their degree of readiness to tackle new texts on the syllabus.

As the teachers explored and implemented their own literature teaching models, focusing on learners' responses, stylistic and textual analysis, and cultural and thematic understanding, and sought to develop literary competence in their students, there seemed to be the intrinsic understanding that these chosen pedagogical moves would help them reach their teaching and learning goals. If English literature had its own way of being known, analysed, discussed, and assessed, it could be argued that this field-specific knowledge would inform and direct a pedagogy that aimed to develop that kind of knowledge in students. However, in light of this tacit knowledge of what is appropriate and effective in the teaching of English literature, questions may be raised as to the rationale and effectiveness of practices that do not adhere to the dimensions of this signature pedagogy, but which are seen as important in the achievement of performance goals.

The diversity of pedagogical choices and strategies in the literature classes (which could be implemented in the place of one another, depending on the teachers' choices) and their given rationales suggest multiple interpretations of how to address the subject. The different teaching strategies were mostly supported with pedagogical rationales, or value statements about their significance, which could challenge the singular notion of a monolithic 'signature pedagogy', and perhaps lead to a formulation of a signature pedagogy that is inherently diverse and protean, or which could be construed as a set of correlated signature pedagogies of literature teaching. From the perspective of professional development, this holds possible theoretical implications as to the forms of knowledges that teachers need to be equipped with, and perhaps also suggests that modules such as literature didactics or teaching methodology be reviewed in the light of these findings.

In this study, there were also definite attempts by some teachers to resist an overarching model of teaching that was being informally proposed by the system, where heads of schools, or the school community, for instance, expect teachers of literature to teach as their peers do in other subjects. While outwardly acknowledging the external differences that distinguishes one subject from another, there was the implicit understanding that everyone would follow the same timeline, would aim to complete the syllabus around the same time, and would prepare their students to be test or examination-ready at designated points in the school calendar, irrespective of the state of readiness of the students, or what had actually been covered in class. This could explain why, despite an apparently progressive plan of work, there were also firm reinforcements of examination preparations, through practice questions and discussion sessions which would constitute situations of compromise in relation to their pedagogy.

Despite the inherent potential for a diversity of pedagogical choices in the teaching of English literature, only a few of the teachers decided to incorporate other modes of learning,

while the majority focused on text-based strategies only, especially on reading the text in class. Reading the text, it would seem, was synonymous with a successful completion of one's duty as an English literature teacher, and raises possible questions about the reasons for such a choice of pedagogy, especially since many of the teachers initially expressed the thought that they had relative freedom in the way they carried out their classes. What, in such cases, would constitute barriers to teachers' innovation and creativity?

One possible attempt at understanding this situation could lie in the diverse nature of the literature teaching signature pedagogy itself and provide a tentative explanation as to why the subject is undervalued by learners. In some of the narratives, we find students who are anxious about who would teach them and how they would be taught or who have limited responses to interactive strategies as they wait for notes that will eventually come to them. The findings from this study seem to suggest a situation where students require a higher degree of certainty in the subject, their teacher and their learning environment. There seems to be a desire on their part to value certainty and unambiguity which somewhat goes against the spirit of openness and tentativeness conveyed by the subject itself.

What could be a possible explanation for such expectations of certainty would be largely due to the compartmentalisation of subjects and the examination-centric system, which tends to imply a fixed, and finite (predicable yet progressive) curriculum that teachers and students need to "complete" over generally two years of study at Grades 11 and 12. Most other subjects within the school curriculum also seemingly adhere to this "bound" curriculum. However, literature as a subject, as pointed out in the earlier section, seems to call for a pedagogy of expansion, of cross-connections, of intertextuality and multimodality, even with a limited curriculum.

There were instances where teachers, whether they had decades of experience or were fairly new in that profession, showed signs of compromising on potential literature strategies in the face of pressure. For instance, most participants expressed a strong reaction when exposed to the vignette based on a scene from *The Dead Poets Society*, claiming that the communicative, arts-oriented, yet noise-inducing methods adopted by the protagonist would surely never be accepted in their school contexts. To add to this pedagogical capitulation in the face of growing bureaucratic demands, which will be further discussed in the next section, the seemingly diverse nature of English literature signature pedagogy thus seems to be a one-dimensional version of itself, showing only the side that would satisfy the system. With a subject that aims to generate complexity and paradox and aims to open up discussions on the human condition, teachers' responses have been, paradoxically, to institute a semblance of certainty in their pedagogy, namely through the giving of notes or lectures on specific aspects of texts. Various degrees of certainty were feigned by some of the teachers, depending on the class or context. Those students whom some teachers had been able to acclimatise to the open field of interpretation, as in the case of Smita, Vedika and Sharda, were able to venture more openly into deeper discussions of the text. On the other hand, the stance taken by some teachers to provide the notes could have been perceived as constraining students' freedom to respond,

yet it also seemed to satisfy the expectations of their learners and confirmed the role of the teacher as a source of authority.

While some participants mentioned 'spoon-feeding' as an action they had to resort to in class, their deliberate narrowing down of the gamut of interpretive stances on literature texts suggests that this practice is likely to be perpetuated, in the attempt to meet the stratification requirements of an assessment-driven regime that has established an examination-driven model of education. In such a situation where econometric performativity structures have been set up (and been incorporated in the institution's routine) to monitor teachers' sanctioned actions and gauge their output, it is possible that the very nature of a subject which, by its own inner workings, celebrates multiplicity, becomes the cause of its own eventual downfall. Reinforcing familiar practices that convey certainty, routine and familiar (if not traditional) teaching and learning pathways then could easily become the norm in order to generate good assessment scores and be "effective" as per normative standards.

While there is substantial literature on the matter of student responses, including resistance, in a variety of subjects (Burroughs, 2007; Felder & Brent, 1996; Herreid & Schiller, 2013; Higginbotham, 1996; Keeley, Shemberg, Cowell & Zinnbauer, 1995; McFarland, 2001), it is felt that this study adds to a more precise understanding of student stances in the face of 'innovative' or unconventional pedagogical practices in a domain that itself resists easy categorisation. It also leads to the suggestion that students are perhaps active agents in the classroom ecology, with enough influence to modify, in many cases, the established "orbit" of disciplinary field. They are perhaps able to do so due to the uniformisation of many other academic subjects, which are packaged and delivered in very similar modalities.

7.3.4 The dynamic nature of teacher development and teacher knowledge

7.3.4.1 The limited role of teacher education in the development of the professional self

The storied lives of the participants suggest that, while professional development might be an influence upon conceptualising and enacting pedagogy in the English literature classroom, it is however not indispensable, with teachers coming up with their own resourcefulness to address the various challenges within their classroom and general school context. Such observation reinforces the position taken by Bishop and Whitfield (1972) about the "irrelevance" of professional training in terms of teacher preparation and the practice of teaching. Their argument, formulated around four decades before, that professional training programmes did not equip teachers in training enough to face problematic or complex decision-making in real classroom situations seems to resonate with the current experiences of some of the participants.

The diverse learning and teaching experiences of the participants suggest the multiplicity of influences impacting upon teacher development and identity. The teacher

derives her understanding of her own identity not only from her experiences but also from her context, from her students and from her relationship with the subject area. More importantly, the narratives suggest that teacher development encapsulates elements from personal, academic and professional domains, and is a dynamic process that cannot be attributed to one single influence, not located within a specific, localised space, such as a teacher training institution, for instance. On the other hand, teacher development is also shown to be a process of self-determination by teachers who are able to decide what kind of teacher they want to be and how they should prepare themselves to do so. Teachers therefore enact a range of strategies that will assist them in the development of their professional selves and prepare them to face challenges pertinent to their respective teaching contexts. The development of those individual routes towards developing their professional selves suggests how challenging it could be to explain why teachers teach the way they do and suggests that teachers are actively involved in their self-development and deeply engage with their own experiences within the workplace to derive pedagogical knowledge.

One of the salient points arising from the data and the storied narratives of the eight participants was the notion of teacher knowledge, which embodies different knowledges such as knowledge of pedagogical concepts, content knowledge, curriculum, contexts, learners and learning styles, amongst others. Teacher knowledge is thus seemingly produced from one's life experiences as a learner, one's beliefs about teaching and learning, one's understanding of the subject area, one's experiences of having taught the subject, the pedagogic modelling set by peers and mentors as well as the input from professional training. The findings point out to the fact that such knowledge is not formed in one site or at one instance in the teacher's life but rather is built upon, and sometimes even revised, as the teacher acquires different teaching and learning experiences in life in different contexts. Some of these experiences might serve to build upon the knowledges, skills and attitudes developed over time, while others push the teachers to revisit their older conceptions and ways of teaching, as was the case for some of the participants who moved from a "star" school to one with lower academic performance levels and found themselves having to get out of their comfort zone and think of a different mode of working with these new students. That knowledge is not static in itself, as it is constantly being validated and reworked in relation to one's teaching context and experiences, with peers or while engaging with students, suggesting that such knowledge is co-constructed.

Most of the participants described their devised, personalised pedagogical choices in terms of what they wanted to achieve for their learners and as subject teachers within specific schooling contexts. The teachers demonstrated some degree of agency in what they set out to achieve in their classrooms by assembling together an amorphous set of skills, experiences, knowledges and assumptions about their learners, learning, subject knowledge, context, curriculum and assessment, which suggests that teachers were not simply acting out pre-designed and perhaps restrictive theories and models of literature teaching stemming from teacher training or research. Their pedagogy, therefore could be described as being dynamic, reactive and ever-evolving, as the teacher manages different permutations depending on the genre, the class size, the pedagogical moves they are familiar with, the language proficiency and prior literary competence of students, and the examination requirements, amongst other

factors. This findings could be related to Schon's (1992) notion of an epistemology of practice. The idea of the teacher developing "knowledge-in-action" or "reflection-in-action" to effect pedagogical choices is supported by some of the evidence from the study and suggests that teachers also rely on their practical knowledge to make specific pedagogical choices.

The notion of a home-grown, or in this case, to more accurate, "work-grown" pedagogy that is inspired from the field itself and that emerges out of the teacher's personal experiences is strongly suggested in the narratives, even in the cases of those who actually underwent professional training. Thus, whether professional training actually responds to the needs of teachers who are entering, or already in the field, becomes questionable. If the teacher education syllabus is ineffective in assisting teachers in addressing their everyday pedagogical challenges, this perhaps signals the need for reviewing the purpose of teacher training as the contents of the professional development syllabus.

7.3.5 Teacher agency and decision-making

While mention was made earlier about the impact of life experiences upon teachers' decision-making, teachers also were very much responsive to their professional contexts. In line with Greeno's (1989) views, teachers developed their understanding of their roles, duties and professional behaviour from the structural, cultural and organisational context in which they operate. Each teacher evolved in their own specific context, in different schools with different management styles, and different conditions of work, which also confirms Roehler, Duffy, Hermann, Conley & Johnson's (1988) view that professional (and hence knowledge) structures vary from one place to another. Kelchtermans' (1993) view about the accountability of the teacher to the head of school and external bodies is particularly relevant as it was often used as a justification, by teachers in this study, for their choice of pedagogy.

Teacher agency as concept allows us to understand how teachers engage with their practice as well as policy (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015). With increasing emphasis being placed in policy narratives on teachers as agents of change (Priestley, 2011), it becomes important to understand how the concept of agency has been constructed in the extant literature, especially in the light of existing accountability structures. Paradoxically, narratives of professionalisation and agency in policy tend to be reflected by deprofessionalisation when it comes to the implementation of a prescriptive curriculum (Tarpey, 2017). Moreover, emphasis on professional development programmes to improve quality of teaching, while seemingly being progressive, actually results in many teachers being at the receiving end of training, potentially ignoring their own professional expertise in the field and eroding their sense of autonomy. Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) even suggest that agency is often performative; a requirement, which they are enjoined to adopt, but which they are prevented from exercising. Agency, according to Biesta and Tedder (2006), agency is situated within "temporal-relational contexts-for-action" rather than located within the teachers themselves. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) theorise agency as being at the nexus of routine, purpose, and judgement, where the agent is under the influence of the past, engaged with the present, and oriented towards the future. It is iterational since it builds upon past actions and experiences, and is informed by one's beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills. Sen's (1999) concept of 'unfreedom' could be used here to address the lack of freedom and agency that

an individual teacher could enjoy in their professional environment. While Sen was referring mostly to the political and material poverty that robbed the individual of his or her freedom, the term 'unfreedom' could well be applied here to the ways teachers are seemingly stripped of their agency, kept away from decision-making processes and are made vulnerable to external coercive forces.

One of the salient aspects pertaining to teachers' pedagogic choice was the issue of autonomy and efficacy. Indeed, the participants demonstrated some degree of agency in determining their pedagogical choices while teaching English literature. They made conscious decisions to further specific learning agendas in their classroom and took into consideration the consequences of their decisions. Where circumstances restricted them, some of the teachers devised strategies to overcome those barriers and even emancipated themselves from those practices which prevailed as hidden curriculum but which they found to be detrimental to their students' intellectual and academic growth. This suggests the possibility of a *pedagogy of resistance*, or perhaps *pedagogy as resistance*, to established norms of teaching. The fact that those teachers brought about changes to their pedagogy to facilitate learning demonstrates that teachers also have some degree of control over what and how they teach in class. In some cases, making those pedagogic choices, or more significantly, becoming aware that they *could* make those decisions, proved to be liberating for themselves and their teaching. Therefore, teachers not only demonstrated that they were knowers of their context, learners, and subject matter but that they were also doers or enactors, acting out a script based on pedagogic principles as teachers, improvising or going against the script when it became constraining for all actors concerned, whether it be learners and teachers.

7.3.6 The significance of class size

As pointed out in Chapter Six, most of the teachers had relatively small class sizes at upper secondary level. This was mostly due to the relative low uptake of English literature as subject at that level, resulting in classes ranging from a few students to perhaps not more than twenty-five students in some cases. While there are various studies looking into the link between class sizes and academic performance (Kraft, 1994; Pedder, 2006; Pollard et al., 2000; Chingos, 2013), there are a few studies that have looked into the relationship between class size and pedagogy. Some of these studies have focused on the need to maximise students' class time and teachers' instructional time (Creemers, 1994; Galton, Hargreaves, & Pell, 1996; Molnar et al., 1999; Wood, 1998).

Studies looking into the relationships between class size and teaching (Blatchford, 2003; Blatchford et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2019) suggest that class size impacts upon teachers' responsiveness and attention to students' needs, as well as the nature and quality of the interaction between teachers and students. The way learning is organised is also impacted by class size. Teachers in small classes tend to have a deeper knowledge of their students and their specific needs and have the possibility of providing more learner support, and the opportunities to generate more interest through differentiated learning activities. Studies indicate that there is more interaction amongst all members of a group when that group is small (Bossert et al.,

1982; Gleason, 2012; Watson et al., 2017), which allows for differentiated tasks that suit students' profiles and needs (Dean, 1992) but also suggest increased dependence on the teacher in such situations (Bennett et al., 1984). Other studies also suggest that there are positive outcomes to dyadic (or paired) groupings (Hartl et al., 2015) which could facilitate brainstorming and problem-solving. Anderson (2000) argues that smaller class sizes could lead to the possibility of more 'adventurous' teaching that goes beyond the usual teaching repertoire and a more active role for students. This is evidenced in the narratives where teachers actively engage with smaller class sizes or implement smaller groups within their larger classes. The teachers who operated with smaller class sizes thus were able to implement other strategies, such as role play, or use multimedia, since their small class sizes provided them with more pedagogical leeway.

On the other hand, larger classes tend to be characterised by more formality, and an increased attention to class management. There was also the suggestion that increasing pressure to cover prescribed curriculum and prepare students for end-of-year examinations might imply relegating students to a more passive role in class. Whole class teaching, largely featuring the teacher talking to the class, while the class is mostly at the receiving end, is more likely to take place in larger classes, even though there is also evidence that a variety of teaching strategies as well as different levels of student engagement are possible in both large and small classes. The size of the class does not necessarily correlate to a shift in teaching strategies as Shapson, Wright, Eason and Fitzgerald (1980) found in their study where they did not note any significant change in teachers' pedagogical choices across different-sized classes. Blatchford et al. (2007), however, note few differences between large and small classes when coming to teachers' choice of implementing individual and collaborative work. Teachers consider the time involved in setting out groups and weigh in the relative consequences of implementing group work with respect to the anticipated student progress. Kraft (1994) investigated different class sizes across a number of schools and their effects upon teaching and learning in Ghana. His research suggests that large class sizes (that is, above 40 students) tend to negatively impact students' motivation and achievement. While the teachers in this study did not have such a high number of students, some of them still felt that having more than twenty students to teach literature presented various challenges, especially if some neither read their textbooks nor prepared for their literature classes.

While literature suggests that varying class sizes influenced teachers' organisation and delivery of content and tasks set, there is the suggestion that these differences would not affect the curriculum coverage itself. Other aspects, such as the physical layout, space and equipment, are also impacted by class size and in turn, affect the teaching and learning that is expected to take place. Teachers are thus more likely to compromise on their 'ideal' way of approaching their lessons when numbers increase. This is predicated upon the common belief that learning is optimised when individual attention is bestowed upon students (Blatchford et al., 2007) and often results in teachers' dissatisfaction upon realising that they might have to engage with larger numbers. Teachers generally seemed to be of the view that larger classes negatively affected the quality of the teaching and learning process, as well as the relationships they had with their students (Blatchford et al., 2007).

However, Baines (2005) cautions against overlooking the benefits of other types of teaching and learning contexts. Groupings in class, for instance, may be chosen more as a means of organising classroom space or come as an institutional requirement rather than for pedagogical reasons. In other cases, some teachers may not be familiar or confident about the use of group work (Sharan, 2010), while group settings may not necessarily invite students to interact with others if they have not been prepared to do so (Tizard et al., 1988). There was also the risk, in smaller classes, for teachers to not make the most of the advantages a small-sized class could bring, as evidence seems to suggest that individualised instruction is less frequent than whole-class instruction, which could affect the pace of learning in the classroom. Some teachers in this study thus proceeded with more teacher-centric delivery despite having the opportunity to put in place more learner-friendly delivery.

However, while some of these findings are indeed pertinent, it is important to highlight that there are other forces at play that make classes different from one another in a number of subtle ways. There is, hence, no typical large or small class of literature, but rather a multitude of complex contexts which this study has attempted to explore. Kutnick, Blatchford and Baines (2002) suggest that, beyond considerations of classroom size, the complex ecology of the classroom needs to be given due attention. Social contexts and the diverse relationships amongst students and between students and teachers also affect teaching and learning experiences. A contextual, ecological approach, as outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) can yield insights into the microsystems, or smaller contexts which consist of qualitatively diverse relationships, rules and dynamics, which affect both teachers and pupils. Classroom dynamics are inevitably changed when the number of students change, impacting on classroom events and interactions (Blatchford & Pellegrini, 2015). Using such a lens highlights the potential tensions between classroom conditions, curiculum and assessment arrangements and teachers' pedagogy and suggests that classroom ecologies are inherently multidimensional in authentic contexts.

7.3.7 Overlapping sets of accountability

High-stakes accountability policies in education are the subject of several studies (Ball, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 1990; Fullan & Miles, 1992; Palmer & Rangel, 2011; Parkison, 2013; Yandell, Doecke & Abdi, 2020). Hall and McGinity (2015) argue that the neoliberal influence on schools has resulted in restricted occupational professionalism as they find themselves controlled by "metricized, marketized and managerialist processes" (p. 4). Teachers are treated as technicians (Coffield, 2012) who have to implement an agenda from the political elite, thus engaging in what Barber et al. (2010) call "deliverology" in the face of heightened accountability measures. They are moreover implicated in discourses of accountability, and made to feel that failure to produce results would inevitably lead to the downfall of the system. Palmer and Rangel (2011) argue about the importance of filling up the gap about how policies get translated into practice through the pedagogical choices teachers make. Although they point out at mixed results following a number of other studies, they

suggest that a number of implemented policies have had a negative impact upon classroom practices. They highlight the phenomenon of teaching by narrowing down the curriculum under the pressure to make their students pass. The findings from this study seem to indicate that some teachers also engaged in this "narrowing down" of the curriculum in order to meet deadlines. What was the cost of this narrowing down, and were the teachers comfortable with the compromises they were making? The findings seem to suggest that some teachers knew they were not working according to their initially stated professed views about teacher education. Yet, they seemed to compromise with such a situation and to carry on teaching within the limits they perceived were being placed upon them.

While accountability as concept suggests a means of ensuring quality and service to the client or stakeholder, the literature on the nature of accountability and the processes set up to uphold it is divided on the matter. A number of studies have warned about the potential of de-humanising or commodifying the field of education. Doecke, Kostogriz and Illesca (2010) argue that performance indicators set by "measurement experts" do not take into account the complexity of social settings such as the school and classroom and fail to take into account the diverse activities that teachers and students engage in. For them, the professional practice of teachers is compromised by such structures since the teachers can neither divest themselves of such rules nor can they avoid the type of language that they are expected to speak when reporting on student performance. Even then, they recognise that despite their restrictions, teachers are still able to commit to their students and ensure that they are cared for, thus acting as dissident 'human' voices against the bureaucratic machine.

Yandell, Doecke and Abdi (2020) argue that standardised testing is implemented to regulate schools, thus impacting on curriculum and pedagogy. Under such a regime, the literature class becomes a transmissive space where those deprived of culture come to learn and acquire it. They thus consider the teacher as a "purveyor of goods whose value has already been established elsewhere, by higher authorities" (p. 12). Reading the text thus implies accepting its status as a work of literature, and therefore implying that the reader should approach it with a set procedure. The regulation of how literature texts should be approached - resulting in a "shared, stable system of beliefs and values" (p.14) - and tested thus also show an attempt at limiting pedagogical freedom. On the other hand, privileging activities such as close reading arguably leads readers to think highly of their own refined sensibilities, while in effect, preventing them from engaging with the cultural, and political issues those texts might raise. They point out that neoliberal ideology is enacted through the implementation of standardised testing, resulting in legitimising certain practices and transforming the functioning of the school. In their view, schools are now businesses while parents can be considered as consumers. The choices parents make for their children are measured by standardised testing, while the students, instead of developing their individuality, have to get used to their index numbers by which they will be identified on the system. Yandell, Doecke and Abdi (2020) suggest that the neoliberal school model prepares students continuously to be tested, reifying learners and learning, while test scores become "indices of professional efficacy, or lack thereof". Even then, they remain convinced that the classroom is the site of resistance, where

the complexity of interactions between learners and teachers allows them to retain some kind of individuality.

To relegate students to a mere number on a results statement sheet and to engage teachers in monitoring students and ensuring that emphasis be laid on education that would lead to a dilemmatic situation for those who are anxious to be an effective teacher, while at the same time, wishing to "perform" well in the eyes of the management.

Accountability processes, carried out by heads of department, rectors, and school inspectors, are meant to ensure that teachers are "on track", and that they are abiding by acceptable norms in teaching, which will be sanctioned during teaching observation visits by any of the above stakeholders and through reporting. How such expectations of accountability get translated, whether it be in the form of lesson plans and record of lessons carried out, expectations of "tangible" evidence of work, suggest a sort of mismatch between pedagogically-sound teaching and directives ensuring that the work is done. Darling-Hammond (1990) thus notes how these accountability processes lend to the development of "good soldiership" through blind obedience to "educationally counterproductive procedures and policies". Her questioning of the concept of "professional" is also highly relevant to the study of these teachers, as she points out how being a professional initially meant someone with a high level of training and knowledge applied to practice, and which suggested someone who was intellectually honest. She argues that the term now refers to "compliance" with the requirements of the institution, and who becomes, in their absolute dedication to the organisation, one "who does things right" rather than one who "does right things" (Darling-Hammond, 1990: 31). This point becomes salient in the light of the findings of this study, where the participants have constantly pointed out the different influences pushing them to act in certain ways, which they felt countered their intuition and knowledge about teaching literature.

Initial findings from the narratives suggest that the teachers in the narratives do not operate in a vacuum; nor is the classroom a neutral, impenetrable space where outside influences or forces within cannot impact upon the teacher's choice of pedagogy. The teaching and learning context, more specifically, the school and the classroom, represents a complex ecology where diverse influences meet and interact to actualise and situate pedagogical choice. The narratives suggest that the type of school, its institutional climate, which influences the relationship between the teacher and other stakeholders, and the learner profiles impact upon the development of teacher knowledge and pedagogical decision-making. In the different narratives, teachers had to respond to overlapping sets of accountabilities. On one hand, they were accountable to the school management and leadership for doing their job. On another level, they are accountable to their discipline where they should be using appropriate and relevant strategies in order to deliver their subject content. At the same time, they are also accountable to parents and students for ensuring that their child receives quality education and leaves school with a good educational baggage, and – just as important, if not more – good grades.

Within the classroom space itself, the teacher needs to negotiate with varying expectations on the part of students pertaining to English literature as a subject and how these students think they will be taught. Meanwhile, teachers themselves enact their own pedagogical decisions based on their personal experiences, their expectations of learners, and their pedagogical content knowledge derived from training, research or experience. Relationships within this space and notions about how learners should be taught also define the instructional strategies used by the teacher. Classroom events also shift the action forward in ways that are often unplanned, implying that the teacher is often responsive to events operating at personal and intrapersonal level.

While teaching, many of the teachers displayed an awareness of the significance of their performance beyond their pedagogical intent. A network of roles, responsibilities and expectations seemed to bind them to different stakeholders such as students, school administration and parents, thus linking their actions in class to accountability under a techno-bureaucratic, managerial framework. Under such a framework, teachers need to account for, and are responsible for, their actions in class, which they record, using established codes and practices, through lesson planning, with visible traces such as notes, essays, classwork and standardised tests as evidence, not only of student learning, but also of teaching. Lesson planning not only is a pedagogical practice but, in its actual concrete form as lesson plan, becomes more of a bureaucratic means of accounting for one's actions while at the same time being symptomatic of the "spectacularisation" of the profession, as part of the logic of "visualisation" (Lefebvre, 1991) which requires professionals to be "transparent" with their planning of work. This inventory of practices becomes meaningful to the teacher when accounted against the performance of the students. The link between teaching performance and student results suggests the predominance of an output-driven orientation to teacher effectiveness. Engaging with learning and developing a better understanding of literature seem secondary to passing examinations, while teachers deploy a set of pedagogical moves to ensure that the latter becomes achievable.

Accountability, therefore, while being an expected part of the process of ensuring quality teaching and learning, seems, with its focus on output and performance, by various stakeholders, to be placing the teacher in a position she can only extricate herself with difficulty. The reactions of teachers in the face of such expectations describe the challenges of being in the teaching profession in an era characterised by a global trend of "flattening" or commodifying professions so that the same principles are applicable to all. This seemingly leaves out the specificities of teaching these specific disciplines and their corresponding signature pedagogies, which also consist of qualitative dimensions and processes of learning which cannot always be measured in terms of passes and fails. Such implicit and intangible teaching, which might be at the core of literary study, also raises questions as to who takes decisions as to how students should be taught, at what level, and what drives such decisions.

Increasing bureaucratisation and centralisation of information leads to a state of "dehumanising education" (Sizer, 1984) that focuses on the specific and the measurable. If such is the case, where could a subject like English literature, with its own multiple pedagogies,

and its insistence on being "bigger on the inside[101]" stand, in relation to the requirements of the system? Moreover, would surrendering to these requirements inevitably lead to endangering "responsible practice" (Darling-Hammond, 1990) on the part of the teachers? With teachers being more and more held accountable for ensuring that curricular and testing policies are implemented, that grades are input on the system, it could be argued that teachers could be gradually be distanced from their initial aim and purpose. How then could teachers be held accountable for not meeting the needs of their students if, officially they are only accountable to "enacting" the standard procedures? Moreover, could the adherence to accountability processes dispense, to some extent, the teacher from having to make certain pedagogical choices? The findings seem to suggest that some teachers have relinquished this, letting the system instead drive the pedagogy in the literature classroom through a set of targets.

7.3.8 English literature: shifting subject, shifting pedagogies?

In the context of a post-colonial small island developing state, the place of English literature as an educational component within the national curriculum seems quite diminished. Indeed, under the 2008 National Curriculum Framework, information about English literature as a domain could be summarised in one paragraph; one small component within the larger English language subject[102] at lower secondary level. While no local syllabus for English literature exists at upper secondary, the Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate has a wide range of texts which would appeal to a number of audiences. Teachers also have to contend with newer generations that are now more and more technology-savvy, and who have distanced themselves from reading as a cultural practice. The various narratives in **Chapters Four** and **Five** depict a situation where English literature is not a commonly offered subject and where to have a class of literature students at upper secondary level is not always easy to achieve. How does a teacher who has specialised in a particular domain deal with the thought that her subject area is a dying one? Most participants acknowledged this quite fatalistically, commenting on the dwindling numbers as suggestive of dwindling interest in the subject. One teacher commented how she had gone around to "scout" for prospective students because she knew that these students might be more interested in other more "attractive" subjects.

Inherent in this discourse was the knowledge that not all students, especially at lower secondary, had a say in the subjects they would end up "choosing". Competing for a state scholarship, as many students would wish to do, would entail limited subject combinations. Subject combinations at upper secondary level are also a sensitive manner as they direct the student to a narrowed down selection of subjects that already gears the student towards the

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Third Doctor: Well, Sergeant? Aren't *you* going to say, "It's bigger on the inside than it is on the outside"? Everybody else does.
Sgt. Benton: Well, it's... pretty obvious, isn't it?
— *Doctor Who*, "The Three Doctors"

[102] This has recently been updated with the 2016 Educational Reform, with more visibility being given to English literature at lower secondary level.

world of work or further studies later on. English literature is often perceived as a stepping-stone for many students, who often have a number of options at university level to engage in different fields. It is in this context that English literature teachers have to enact their pedagogical choices. While many students are arguably interested in the subject itself, the participants described passive or even hostile students who would attend their classes just for the sake of attendance requirements and who would not do the minimum to try and engage with the subject. It would thus seem that literature teachers have to contend with a subject that is not only dwindling in numbers but also in interest.

Chase (2009) attributes an observed decline in interest in English literature to a failure of English departments to "champion" English literature. It could however be argued that English literature, or literatures in English are now one of the most prolific domains of literature being produced around the world. If there are signs of decline, these might refer to the academic study of literature, or the discipline of literature study. Some might even argue that this phasing out is a sign of 'progress' for a country that has framed its economic development as one of its main priorities. In a context where English, despite enjoying a quasi-official status and being present throughout the education system, is still largely considered as a foreign language by many; with relatively limited exposure to it in popular culture and the media, it might not be surprising that few young people engage in active reading for pleasure or otherwise. 'Championing' both a language, and a literature based on that language, is often devolved to the teacher, who, due to pressing demands to focus on examinable components, might be forced to provide minimal input for oral English and English literature, two relatively minor, non-examinable[103] components in the lower secondary syllabus. The fact that most schools already allocate timetables for different subject areas and that English literature is often attributed only one weekly period of about 35-40 minutes could be suggestive of the relative lack of importance enjoyed by English literature. Through this study, the various narratives depict a picture of a subject area that is under constant threat, from other more promising subject areas (career-wise), from reduced numbers, and from an open-door policy to student intake for this subject. It has been argued earlier that such an intake is what arguably allows the subject to survive, yet on another note, the intake of students who have to be reintroduced to the basics of literature study at Grade 11 or 13 level, when they should be using their prior knowledge of literature to study texts, puts these students at a disadvantage, much to the participants' dismay.

How does that context impact upon the pedagogical choices of the teachers? In the face of such diminishing interest, which sometimes could tax the workload of a department, teachers end up finding ways of making sure that students engage with the subject. This, as pointed out earlier, has resulted in a pedagogy of accountability, where notes, handouts and other resources are provided to ensure that every student has a standing chance to pass these examinations. Some of the participants involved their students in examination preparation, providing them with model examination questions; others went back to basic moves such as choosing short, "easy" texts and ensuring that everyone was actually reading the text in class. All these pedagogical moves, which could be called a pedagogy of "rescue" or recovery, might be

[103] At the time of data production.

centred around the needs of the students they have; they might not necessarily be of pedagogical significance, but they become the means by which the teachers try to ensure the survival of their subject. On the other hand, there is also the pedagogy of engagement that is inspired by learner-centred paradigms and reader-response theories. In such cases, some of the teachers in this study made use of a variety of strategies to engage their students, and encourage them to participate in meaning-making in the literature class. Some of these strategies included discussion, role play, debates, use of films and songs, and references to other cultures via the internet. Most teachers resorted to lecturing and discussion as means to further understanding of texts.

The significance of literature as a means to activate discussion around social issues and political awareness was understood by most of the participants even if only a few deeply engaged in such discussions. Interestingly, while such discussions were common in some teachers' classes, the discussions rarely went outside the realm of the students' experiences. As such, most of the teachers engaged with the texts on a case-to-case basis, and not much intertextuality was noted in the discussions, even if some referred to students' own experiences as a means of activating deeper engagement with themes and issues. There was hence the possibility, through this subject, to transcend disciplinary boundaries and encourage learners to develop empathy and "transcultural competence" through some of the more learner-friendly and reader-centred approaches. However, the one object lesson from the experiences encountered in these narratives is that there is a risk of losing out on the unique opportunities English literature could offer with its diverse pedagogies, if the subject is made to lose its attributes as it gets "flattened" by the various constraining forces impacting on teachers in the system.

With a marginalised discipline contending with dwindling interest, teachers are often exposed to calls to actualize or rejuvenate the subject by using technology, for instance. While some of the participants readily engaged in this process, using multimedia and technology to facilitate understanding, it was significant that most did not do so, preferring to concentrate on text-based study and close reading, which they perhaps perceived as more urgent to address.

7.4 Synthesis

In this chapter, overarching themes were considered in the light of existing literature to discuss to what extent the Mauritian cases of pedagogical choice in the literature classroom are supported by findings from existing studies and theory. While the existing literature provides insight into many contextual influences or engage in the analysis of teacher knowledge or teacher agency, this study aims to posit choice as the crucial element that connects those various elements across the classroom, school and policy and professional development contexts. External forces as well as teacher beliefs also collide and sometimes merge to impact upon pedagogical choices and teachers find themselves, when faced with the different layers of accountability, to revisit their understanding of how to teach their subject, or in some cases, to reject any attempt at a prescriptive pedagogical stance. The next chapter will bring forth these different concepts in relation to the critical questions and will propose deeper insights into pedagogical choice.

Chapter Eight: Insights into pedagogical choice

8.0 Introduction

Teachers make decisions at various levels, reflecting their paradigmatic and epistemological orientations to the curriculum. In turn, these orientations influence the text choices they make, the instructional and assessment strategies they adopt and their choice of materials and resources, amongst other things. The use of narrative inquiry enabled me to engage with teachers' own constructions of their experiences in the classroom, providing a much-needed vista into the seemingly hermetic space of the classroom. In the previous chapter, the themes constructed from the cross-case analysis of narratives were further analysed to identify parallels or contrasts in relation to the existing literature and the temporary theoretical lens established in **Chapter Two**. Alternative explanations were also considered to further explore the significance and relevance of the findings. In this chapter, I move beyond individual enactments of pedagogical choice to engage with the broader insights stemming from those discussions in relation to pedagogical choice in the English literature classroom. This enables reflection on how pedagogical choice could be reconceptualised.

8.1 Orientation to this chapter

This chapter consists of four sections, which address insights into pedagogical choice at different levels, including the teacher, the classroom, the system and the disciplinary field. The first section considers the relationship between the teacher and pedagogical choice and examines teaching experience, teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge and teachers' text choices. The second section addresses pedagogical choice in relation to the classroom while the third focuses on pedagogical choice in relation to the educational system. The final section of this chapter considers pedagogical choice in relation to the disciplinary field.

8.2 Section One: Pedagogical choice and the teacher

8.2.1 Pedagogical choice and teaching experience

Amongst the different elements constituting the biographical influences which could have impacted on pedagogical choices was the participants' level of teaching experience. While it could be argued that all teachers have some form of experience that they may tap into for their planning and teaching, the literature I consulted prepared me to anticipate a wider disparity in pedagogical preparation and choice between those who were early career teachers

and those with extensive experience in teaching. What became apparent to me was that there were no significant differences in terms of pedagogical choices among teachers with different profiles and levels of experience. It suggested that teachers with relatively few years in the field would be likely to "play by the book" and enact practices that would be more in line with shared practices in the school community, creating a sense of belonging for a new staff member seeking to fit in (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Darragh and Boyd, 2019). On the other hand, teachers with more experience were expected to rely much more on their experience, with limited input from peers, having developed their own *heuristics* in their teaching. As shown in the previous chapter, this was not the case for all the participants, as both teachers with little teaching experience as well as those with extensive experience enacted similar types of pedagogies of "safety". Therefore, the argument that more experienced teachers would display more expansive, balanced, and crafted lessons, and that they might rely more on their instinctive understanding of how to conduct their classes based on their experience, does not necessarily hold in many of the situations analysed for this study. This perhaps suggests that experience, quantified in terms of years of employment, might not be a measure of effectiveness in teaching, and that there are stronger influences at work that impact on the choices that could be made by teachers with different profiles. A newly recruited teacher could thus display expansive pedagogies in class and perhaps a better understanding of the subject and their students than perhaps someone who may have been in service for years but chooses a limited palette of pedagogical moves.

8.2.2 Pedagogical choice and teacher beliefs

While age and experience did not seem to significantly affect the nature and choice of pedagogy implemented in class, personal beliefs, conceptions of literature, and teachers' intuition about how to approach selected texts were observed to have a marked effect on the way they engaged their class in the teaching and learning of literature. Personal beliefs influenced their instructional delivery and the nature of the learning tasks set (for instance, presentations, role plays and poster presentations besides only setting essay questions, as a few of the participants chose to do). Biographical influences, notably personal experiences and encounters with literature were also found to have some impact on pedagogy, with some of the teachers seemingly reproducing or re-appropriating strategies that they found useful or admirable in their own teachers or lecturers.

It can thus be posited that, *past learning experiences* influence many teachers' pedagogical choices, although some of the participants revisited or went against some of these internalised beliefs and practices. These re-appropriations marked the teachers' own stance on the way literature should be taught. Those that predominantly taught with a sense of extended purpose had their own conceptions of what literature was meant to achieve which often went beyond purposes such as academic performance and learning concepts. Belief in the link between literary competence and empathy, enhanced social and critical awareness, or increased comprehension of the world, were recurrent in the narratives of those who sought to engage

their students in deeper engagements with texts, allowing the literature class to blend the teaching and learning process even more closely by "going meta" (Shulman and Hutchins, 2004). Thus, literature classrooms are not only characterised by rational decision-making that is solely informed by curricular concerns, or where every step within the lesson procedure takes place as planned. Strong convictions as to how a class should run, as well as *in-the-moment decisions* to address specific events that occurred in the classroom characterised many of the literature classes observed.

8.2.3 Pedagogical choice and teacher knowledge

The different narratives provided a platform to understand how the teacher participants selected and implemented their pedagogical decisions in relation to the knowledges they activated in planning, teaching and assessing literature. Some believed that their classroom teaching and learning practices had been improved by their sound pedagogical content knowledge which could, in turn, facilitate management of the literature class and ensure smoother delivery of *content knowledge*. However, they did not demarcate the different kinds of knowledges they were utilising and developing, even though specific references were made to content knowledge as well as to approaches to texts, which suggests that they were implicitly aware of some difference in approaching these knowledges. As practitioners, there did not seem to be much need for them to parcel knowledges in their teaching of English literature, where teacher beliefs, experiences and pedagogical as well as content knowledge commingled to influence and be influenced by their pedagogical content knowledge. In many cases, pedagogical content knowledge seemed to have been constructed outside of formal teacher education and emerged organically from their experiences and beliefs about how literature should be taught and assessed. The teachers had an implicit understanding of the pedagogical content knowledge they were deploying through their choices, even if they were not always articulate about the rationale for such choices.

What stood out, however, was the firm identification of content knowledge that teachers felt they needed to develop in themselves, and which they also identified as essential for students' understanding of the subject. In the overall setting of the classrooms under review, emphasis was thus placed on the development of content knowledge and many of the pedagogical choices that were noted catered to delivery of such knowledge. Overall, in the different schools, texts were approached as *receptacles of information* which could be uncovered through close reading and analysis, using set patterns of engagement with the text (for instance, personal reading aloud or silent reading – whether in class or at home – then discussing and/or providing notes, and checking understanding through a range of formative and summative assessment tasks). For many of the participants along the continuum, approaching texts in such a way represented a *reiteration, re-appropriation, rejection* or *reinvention of practices* that they themselves were exposed to as students. Biographical influences, teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge thus intersected within the selected choices.

Most of the teachers engaged in reading and discussion of texts, with emphasis on certain commonly identified structuring and functional elements such as plot, setting, theme, atmosphere and stylistic devices. Some also provided background contextual information about authors, texts and literary periods (thus building students' cultural capital of literature as a source of discursive contextual engagement between authors and their contexts). Other strategies included elaborating on characters and themes by linking with personal events and students' prior knowledge, connecting literature teaching and learning to not just *textual study*, but also to a *personal growth and developmental agenda*. In these situations, teachers not only sought to develop knowledge of the content of texts, be it thematic or stylistic, but were also deeply engaged in the *approach* to teaching the text.

Teachers who chose to engage with texts in a more routine or formal manner are described in the narratives presented in **Chapter Four,** while those that chose more interactive methods or spent more time exploring the text and developing literary appreciation are described in **Chapter Five**. It is noted that teachers negotiated these multiple purposes, functions and strategies of literature teaching and learning, emphasising and de-emphasising divergent elements in an ongoing decision-making process. It could be argued that the discrepancies in pedagogical objectives across the continuum of pedagogical choices are linked to the *purpose* or *pedagogical intent* with which the teachers approach their texts.

Those who provided mainly substantive content knowledge tended to use more teacher-centred modes of delivery, with few attempts to establish dialogue with the class, or with the text. Little interest was shown in extending discussions beyond the scope of identifying and retrieving set learning items from the texts under study. The intended result was transmission of essential knowledge from the teacher to the students, and ensuring that, in turn, they would successfully transfer this knowledge in usable or "testable" form during the examinations. Wholesale transmission of information, usually supported by notes and handouts, could be seen as a way of demonstrating that the text was indeed "covered", even though it could be argued that students would be left with "bits-and-pieces of knowledge" (Shemilt, 2009, p. 142). This is especially true in light of the fact that many of the students encountered in the participants' classes did not have prior exposure to English literature and could be unprepared to absorb the subject content knowledge presented to them. It could thus be argued that the choice to provide as much information as possible was as much a safety measure for the supposedly academically poor student as it was a means for the teacher to show that the work had been done.

Learner-centred pedagogy, which ensures that students' learning needs are taken care of, and that they have an input in the way they learn and can revert to the teacher, only took place in a few cases, and not necessarily in the classrooms of those who had benefited from training in this approach. The issue was made more complex by observations of teachers making more restrictive pedagogical choices in relation to their students' academic profiles and experience based on their prior experience of working with similar students. Was providing notes an easy way for students to access a text that would potentially be linguistically, stylistically and culturally inaccessible, or a pedagogical 'short-cut' to circumvent the difficult task of introducing something new and alien to inexperienced students?

A variety of reactions were noted regarding participants' planning of work. While there was evidence of deliberate planning to teach literature in a specific way, , teachers admitted that they felt apprehensive about planning, teaching and assessing literature with their students, and felt they lacked preparation or guidance in relation to teaching in specific situations. Such thoughts were often complemented by notions of "external guidance" in the form of workshops or resources which would "guide" them or facilitate their work as teachers in this discipline. This sheds some light on teachers' conceptions of knowledge and how they are linked to their understanding of their own efficacy and readiness to teach. It also raises questions about the construction and sources of such knowledges, since teachers seemingly look outward for assistance in developing the required knowledge, skills and expertise, which, in many cases, they were developing implicitly, but in parallel, in the school context. This raises the question of teachers' expectations vis-à-vis teacher education. It suggests that, rather than being taught prescribed, "set" methodologies, prospective teachers could be introduced to a variety of pedagogical possibilities and responses. Situated pedagogical choice-making, drawing on a repertoire of possibilities could assist teachers to address the specific learning needs of students in the literature classroom. It also infers that training institutions should empower teachers, not necessarily to compartmentalise knowledges, which they seemingly obtain from various sources and at different points in time, but to be self-aware in terms of what feeds into the pedagogical choices they make.

8.2.4 Pedagogical choice and teachers' text choices

Beyond the approaches to texts discussed in the previous section, pedagogical choices pertaining to text choices provide insight into the ways in which the teaching of literature was subject to *pressures beyond the classroom*. While personal choices and beliefs were to some extent pertinent to the selection of specific texts and genres, which in turn impacted on their chosen strategies in class, pressure or imposition of texts by the *department* was also fairly common. Text choice was also pertinent when it came to identifying texts from the syllabus that would be accessible to students. The type of text, or genre, also had an impact on some of the choices made, with one teacher insisting on teaching only drama, for instance, and another facing resistance from other members of her department for having introduced poetry texts. This suggests that many teachers feel that, in their enactment of English literature as a *disciplinary project*, they should expose students to different genres and styles of writing.

Such choices, especially if made by a head of department, have an impact far beyond the confines of one class if other classes study the same texts. Specific genres call for specific subject content knowledge and approaches that not all teachers can easily access, or feel confident in implementing. In this case, the classroom contexts revealed that the type of texts that the teachers were going to teach also had an impact upon their chosen strategies in class. Other explanations for some of the text choices were *personal preferences,* texts that they were taught at school or at university, and more importantly, texts that did not present any difficulty for readers or for which notes were readily available.

It is also important to note that, beyond classroom and school influences, the latitude to choose specific genres or texts is enabled (and thus also limited) by the overarching *curriculum design packages* available to teachers. The lists of prescribed texts proposed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) for both O- and A-level now include more diverse writers in English from around the world. However, the text choices made locally, especially by the participants, seemed to be centred on more canonical texts, with a few well-known non-British texts from other parts of the world (Miller, Achebe, Desai, and Dangarembga, to cite a few). The "narrowing down", at local level, of this internationally expanding text list is intriguing. Teachers preferred *canonical texts*, while some of the more contemporary and diverse texts did not feature in school lists at upper secondary level, even if they were included in the larger list of prescribed texts by the UCLES.

Some teachers preferred texts with "mileage", that is, those that had been around for a long time and had an established body of literature and references. Such choice reveals that some teachers were not very familiar with the broad spectrum of literature in English. Many of the choices veered towards canonical literature in English, which also tends to garner more scholarly work and research, and thus offers an abundance of material to the teacher. Some of the more "traditional" text choices were justified on the basis of affinity or "love" for specific authors or genres. In other cases, teachers engaged in nostalgic revisiting of texts that had made an impression on them as students. In contrast, challenging, or lesser-known texts elicited discomfort, or spurred some teachers to put in extra effort or venture out of their comfort zone to be able to discuss them. These stated choices suggest that the *teachers' own expertise* in reading literature and engaging in literary criticism was not as well-developed as they would wish, which may or may not have impacted on their ability to choose texts as well as how to teach them.

Many of the participants may not have been exposed to certain approaches to literary reading and analysis during their *academic studies* or *professional teacher training* and this could limit their interpretation of the discipline's objectives. Awareness of limited subject content expertise in specific texts or genres could thus explain the anxiety expressed by some of the participants. Without scholarly works or reference material, some lacked confidence to analyse texts on their own, or to compile authoritative notes. Thus, it could be argued that the selection of texts was not based solely on assessments of students' needs, but also on the desire for a *lighter load in terms of preparation time*. In such cases, teachers resorted to the *safety zone of what they know*, or what they have *grown accustomed* to teaching, and turned to established or available resources which would support their teaching.

8.3 Section Two: Pedagogical choice and the classroom

8.3.1 Pedagogical choice and students

Decision-making in the literature classroom was not only a matter of determining how to approach a text or genre, but also how to teach specific content to a specific audience. It

could be argued that dealing with live, dynamic subjects in the form of students was the primary preoccupation for most teachers when it came to their selection of teaching strategies. This suggests that their social and cognitive knowledge of their *learners* impacts on their planning and teaching. As highlighted in **Chapter Six**, all the participants showed some degree of concern with their students' performance, attitude and degree of proficiency and ability. Such concern is well-documented in the literature but what is striking in this study is that, overall, the teachers felt that they were not doing their best in the literature class. As a result, their pedagogical choices in class were more of a *compromise* between what they thought *should be covered* and the *best means to achieve their teaching objectives* due to their students' profiles.

Teachers displayed uncertainty as to the appropriateness of their selected strategies in relation to their students. Some wondered whether their students would react positively to abstract discussions and references to personal or cultural elements that they would not be familiar with, or interested in. They were uncertain whether their students' relatively *limited exposure to literary appreciation* and analysis of texts would allow them to fully participate in classes mainly devoted to such interactive and complex strategies. Since some of the teachers were not always sure of the effectiveness of their selected strategies, or perhaps anticipated drop-outs or low levels of performance, they tended to be tentative in their approach. For example, they opted for extensive coverage of the text during class time at the expense of discussion. It could also be argued that, some teachers deliberately opted for a more restrained and restricted pedagogy and "coverage" of content to address any possible cognitive strain resulting from contact with the higher levels of abstraction that the study of literature at upper secondary level seems to require.

The *classroom ecology*, with its interactions, social networks, power relationships and classroom events, is inhabited by dynamic beings, *the teacher and the students, who are constantly negotiating their roles within that space*. The relationship that is built between the teacher and students could thus strongly impact on the nature and mode of delivery of instructional content. While one teacher might use humour and banter to facilitate discussion of more serious issues, another could use the bond that he/she has created with his/her very small circle of students. The classroom space is also shaped by both the *teachers' and the learners' expectations*, which can be based on the *satisfaction of academic, social or even emotional needs*.

The participants acknowledged that their class was not only academically diverse but also consisted of students with *different dispositions towards learning, or towards literature*, which impacted on the way they carried out their classes. They shared, through their narratives, how challenging it was to retain students' attention, or to make the subject meaningful to those that had perhaps not intended to take up the study of literature. They also commented that, on realising that the subject was not as easy to score high marks in or as easy to complete as they initially thought, students would put in minimum effort in terms of engagement or study. In response, some teachers adopted *strategies to capture students' interest* through the use of multimedia, the Internet and social media, and by making reference to experiences that they

would be familiar with. Thus students' attitudes towards the subject can, to a great extent, determine the nature and quality of teachers' input in the literature classroom.

Selection criteria for admission to the subject did not seem to prioritise *pre-requisite knowledge* of literature. Teachers were mainly preoccupied about the student intake in their literature class, since even those that had not taken literature at lower grades could opt for it as a principal subject at upper secondary level in many of the schools. This is the result of curriculum decisions at ministry level to ensure that the subject has adequate numbers to be a viable option. While it might seem like there is an agenda to *protect English literature teachers*, it is also important to point out how the *subject is placed* in relation to other subjects offered at the same level. Most colleges allow only limited subject combinations at upper secondary level; thus, students might find themselves enrolling for a literature class only because they wish to take other subjects that they like on the "Arts side". In other cases, only specific subject combinations enable candidates for the HSC examinations to *compete* for a state scholarship. These factors could explain the continued existence of English literature as a subject, despite dwindling numbers. However, the different profiles of students attending their classes create uncertainty among many teachers as to the most appropriate pedagogical moves.

The participants were aware of the need for differentiation in the class, yet the prospect of preparing students from the start with the basics of literary study, seemed very daunting. A few participants spoke of the *limited* or lack of "*maturity*" of their students, suggesting that there were expectations that a certain profile of student should be taking the subject. This raises questions about the state of preparedness of some teachers to address students with these kinds of profiles. The extent of the support that the teachers provided to those without exposure to literature is indicative of the importance of subject coverage and completion as a *pedagogy of performance*. Some participants thus responded with strategies such as follow-up, constructive feedback, additional material and learner-friendly content.

Some teachers tended to highlight their students' lack of prior exposure, limited literary competence and limited engagement. This points to deep uncertainty as to how to introduce literature to such students or how to engage them in the broader holistic aspects of literary study. The fact that some teachers resorted to comparing their actual students to former students (some of whom attended generally high-achieving or "star" schools) and expected them to understand or perform almost as well as the latter, highlights their limited flexibility and versatility to engage with different audiences in different contexts. In some cases, emphasising poor performance could also be an anticipatory measure in a context where students' knowledge gaps and performance could be construed as being indicative of gaps in teachers' own knowledge and performance, especially in a subject where many students do not achieve high grades in their final examinations.

One could also posit that students' perceived deficiencies might not necessarily be the primary cause of distress for some teachers. Rather, teachers could feel trapped in a system which allows *unprepared students* with *little background in, or exposure to, literature*, to take up the subject at such an advanced stage. Some of the tentativeness, resulting in "safe" classroom decisions, could thus stem from being held accountable for a situation where they

seemingly start at a disadvantage, and over which they have little control. Furthermore, many are not adequately equipped to address the situation. It would appear that the curriculum implicitly suggests and sustains an environmental ethos in which English literature teaching and learning is expected to operate, which differs from the lived reality of teachers in their contexts.

For instance, selection of English literature as a principal subject at HSC level presupposes a degree of familiarity, or affinity, or the possession of *cultural capital* and *literary competence* that has been developed from earlier exposure to literature within and outside the classroom context. Teachers and students thus navigate in a state of uncertainty and anxiety between their actual context and an undeclared preferred context that is determined by current curriculum decisions. Such an ideal context tends to prefigure certain cultural values, class values and expectations pertaining to academic literacy. Teachers' choices of texts and their approaches to teaching might reveal their own inherent biases in relation to cultural capital that they might or might not share with their students, compounding the difficulty experienced by the latter.

In light of this situation, it could be argued that teachers make their pedagogical choices *strategically*, essentially to *support their students* but also simultaneously to *support themselves* by engaging with what is feasible and ethical in the specific contextual landscape they operate in. There is continued *dialogue* between *learner and teacher-driven agendas* and teachers make and change their pedagogical decisions according to the more pressing of these agendas. This study raises a number of questions about the role of education within the schooling context. Are schools sites for learners' learning or for teachers' teaching? Are they spaces for teachers' employment (earning) or for learners' education (learning and development)? Is the curriculum implemented for the development of literature as a discipline or for the learners' growth? This suggests that the paradigms and contexts in which teachers and their learners operate are not clearly delineated.

8.3.2 Pedagogical choices and "in-the-moment" classroom decisions

Discussions on pedagogical choice often refer to planning as a crucial element of the teaching process. However, teaching also implies addressing learning moments and elements that were not initially planned for. Most of the participants were very aware that a discussion in the literature class could engage other discussions which might not have been initially planned but which could enrich the overall knowledge generated during that session. Based on the interaction with the class and on the perceived usefulness of the new step he/she is about to take; in some cases, the teacher would hold back on the potentially interesting discussion to wrap up what was planned or in order to "complete" the text.

This would entail understanding the teacher's relationship with his/her context, the students and the other external forces impacting on the choices made in the classroom, as well as whether he/she is acting consciously and reflexively, or responding subconsciously to the various influences surrounding his/her practice. It resonates with Ball and Cohen's (1999)

proposal for reflection "in" practice, "on" practice and "for" practice, which, in the case of the study participants, often seem to take place simultaneously in the same site, that is, the literature classroom. The following scenario arises from the study: that of the teacher within the classroom space, who not only marshals his/her subject content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge to plan, deliver and assess, but is also capable of taking in-the-moment decisions to rectify a course of action that is out of hand or to address or introduce new information to the students. Quick reflection on the perceived usefulness of specific implemented choices as well as in relation to long-term planning accompany and inform the more spontaneous classroom choices, suggesting a more porous and fluid relationship between these types of choices.

The different pedagogical choices and stances adopted by the teacher could thus be represented as a continuum of choices, not only pertaining to the *different profiles and situations of educators across a number of contexts*, but also representing the continuum of choices co-existing within the practitioner him/herself. Decisions taken could reflect the different choices made at different points in time, subject to the different agendas and influences at play, but also subject to how the teacher understands, processes and reacts to these situations. It could be argued that pedagogical choices are not singularistic alternatives from which the teacher could choose, but rather a palimpsest of opportunities and possibilities potentially in dialogue with one another as the teacher works through these options and considers which to adopt.

8.4 Section Three: Pedagogical choice and the system

As I engaged in my first forays into researching the phenomenon of pedagogical choice, it quickly became apparent that there were forces and influences beyond the scope of the classroom that impacted on the teachers' pedagogical choices. To what extent does policy drive pedagogical choice at classroom level? This factor could also explain why teachers feel empowered or disempowered in the pedagogical decisions and practices they adopt. What systemic influences mould or impact on the teacher's pedagogical decisions? Furthermore, what is the impact of initial teacher training and continuous professional teacher development on teachers' decision-making? Professional development could be the external systemic element that empowers and enables teachers with the necessary content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge required to effectively teach in their school contexts.

8.4.1 Pedagogical choice and policy

Do national policy systems support the development of conscious systematic engagement with *reflection* on pedagogical choices? While we have seen that some teachers

derive agency and autonomy from their school contexts, others find themselves responding to structures designed to ensure conformity in terms of pedagogy or assessment.

Ball (1994) wonders "where are teachers in all this…?" and my study joins others in highlighting the *ambiguous representation and role(s) of teachers within policy documents*. With a strong emphasis on nine official years of schooling (from Primary schooling until lower secondary), and now officially revisited under the 2015 curriculum framework as "Nine-Year Schooling Reform", from the vantage point of policy, curricular expectations, especially within the Mauritian context, could be construed as *distant at best, and mostly top-down* in approach (as is often the case with official curriculum documents). The 2008 curriculum framework, which is described as not being a "prescriptive" document, expects teachers at lower secondary level to ensure that certain conditions are met. They "*must* cultivate a culture of respect", "*must* be responsive to their clients" and abandon the "Bell Curve mentality" and are told "*how* to get there" (section headings in Section 13: "Teaching and Learning: Our Beliefs and How to Get There" in the NCF-S 2008 document, p. 206-207; my *emphases*). Similar policy dictates on how teachers are expected to engage, perform or think abound in other countries. Whilst this might aim to set national targets and standards, it could be regarded as promoting a relatively *passive framing* of teacher engagement with curriculum which could undermine their sense of agency and professionalism.

In the 2008 Mauritian lower secondary curriculum document, English literature features as a subset of English language as a subject. Moreover, it is mainly *positioned in the curriculum* as a means of assisting the language learner to improve his/her language through the appreciation and study of literary texts. The 2016 curriculum framework document also places literature under the larger domain of English but recommends its teaching and assessment as a separate subject at lower secondary level. The framing of academic subjects at upper secondary is mostly a matter of documentation; for instance, the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) provides details pertaining to the running of examinations for the different subjects offered, procedures surrounding the process, and the results. Beyond these operational concerns, the MES directs teachers to consult curriculum documents from the service-provider, namely the UCLES. This raises questions as to the usefulness of a national curriculum document aimed at upper secondary level, if such a document were to exist. In the absence (in this particular local context of Mauritius) of a government policy or curriculum framework for upper secondary education (beyond provision for examinations and upgrading from one level to another), *what guides practice* at school and class level?

Given that there is a common examination at the end of both Grades 11 and 12, the relevance of such a document might be pertinent. At upper secondary level, teachers have been expected to devise their own syllabus from curriculum documents provided by the examining body. How do they do so, and what assistance do they receive in planning such a syllabus? The assumption seems to be that if teachers have implemented a literature syllabus at lower secondary level, they should be able to interpret the curriculum documents provided by the UCLES to create their own syllabus based on paper and text choices. It also seems to be assumed that professional training (whether ITE or CPD) could be instrumental in equipping

teachers with the required knowledge and competencies to elaborate their own syllabus. Since not all teachers have undergone professional training, this study offers insight into the teaching and learning approaches that are dominant in teachers' practice and those which are marginalised or silenced. It also provides information on the sources of the different knowledges that teachers are expected to utilise in their teaching.

On another note, the passive representation of the educator as a compliant instrument in policy documents displaces the teaching force from larger, state-wide decision-making processes. While it is usual practice for representatives of teachers' unions to be involved in consultative meetings, it would seem, at least from the vantage point of the policy document, that the teacher is placed very firmly at the *level of implementation* at grassroots level. As the next section will outline, provisions relating to English literature in educational policy do not frame it as a priority subject. This results in a number of compromises, such as students with little exposure to literature being part of the English literature class.

8.4.2 Pedagogical choice as performance

The various dynamics at play that were noted in the previous section mean that the school context is by no means static. From a temporal perspective, it could be argued that the choices made in class are mainly motivated by the need to complete a set of literary texts within a limited period of time. This could be attributed to the broader constraints set by *the school and the curriculum* or programme of study. For a Grade 11 or a Grade 13 class, two years of dedicated study of set texts, including test papers set as end-of-term assessments, assignments, mock examinations and the actual examinations entails a very tight programme of learning activities that needs to be closely monitored by teachers, the department and the school administration. This "coverage" needs to take place according to curriculum policy expectations within months (depending on how schools organise the coverage of specific papers in that subject) of formal teaching and learning engagement. The teacher would thus feel pressure from the school context itself to complete a programme of study within the allotted time and to ensure that sufficient material has been covered so that all classes could sit for *common end-of-term assessments* or the mock examination. In some cases, this has resulted in evasive techniques such as wrapping up the text quickly by providing notes, especially as the examinations draw near.

Teachers offered different interpretations of what *"completing" a text* might mean. For some, it would entail full discussion of the plot, characters, theme, and literary devices, while for a few, it would involve a full reading of the set texts during class time, sometimes accompanied by notes from the teacher. Teachers were convinced they were choosing the best strategy to attain their pedagogical aims. This inevitably leads to a discussion on *breadth* and *depth* in text coverage, which was raised in **Chapter Two**. On the one hand, reading a full text in class was perceived by some as a time-consuming activity, while on the other, some felt it was worthwhile as it supported students who might not have the opportunity to read and prepare at home. For others, this meant compromising on some of the deeper discussions based on the

text while having to assist students who were not fully proficient in English. Most of the teachers were aware of the consequences of their pedagogical choices, and would try to address these by *offering notes and other kinds of support material*.

The pedagogical rationale provided by some of the participants for their use of notes in the classroom could also be questioned. There was a sense, in some cases, of teachers providing notes because this was the mode of additional transmission of information or pedagogical support that they were most comfortable with. The fact that there seemed to be little or no pedagogical rationale for such support besides the practical aspect of having accessible information, highlights teaching moves in the classroom that might be informed by their own experience of using notes as heuristic tools but not necessarily by pedagogical principles to ensure deeper understanding of texts and concepts.

Some teachers however chose to engage their students in deep discussions on the texts and involved them personally, intellectually and, at times, emotionally, with the texts did so mainly because of their personal beliefs and constructs about literature and what it entails as a domain of study. For such teachers, the literature class is not simply one in which a list of items has to be learnt but it could be construed as a space of continued engagement and discourse on texts and contexts. Through this process, teachers would lead learners to appreciate and critically think about these texts, resulting in what Young and Muller (2010) call "powerful knowledge" that would enable them to begin questioning and critiquing information that is presented to them. Some participants chose to engage in such kinds of knowledge generation, even though they were aware of the "costs" in terms of the time and effort involved and the inherent limitations in developing higher order skills such as critical thinking among students who sometimes struggled with the language itself.

It is important to stress that aiming to develop *higher order skills in literature* students did not only stem from teachers' intrinsic beliefs or their own relationship with the subject, but is also one of the *assessment outcomes* set out by the UCLES. However, the participants proceeded very differently from one another in their interpretation of these criteria, and it could be argued that their intimate knowledge of their students and their degree of proficiency and preparedness explain why some chose to consolidate foundational aspects in the texts under study, while others went out of their way to develop those higher order skills. Overall, higher order skills were only tentatively addressed while there was a tendency amongst the participants to affirm close narrative and thematic readings of texts. This seemed to stem from the need to ensure that text comprehension was achieved by the majority of students before engaging, where possible, in higher-end discussions.

Within the teaching context, the participants implied that they had to *account* in one way or another for their actions and decisions in class. This would involve note-taking, detailed lesson planning and reporting, amongst other processes. Generally, such documents would need to be scrutinised by heads of department, rectors or quality assurance officers. The fact that many teachers did not require someone to be actively telling them to be mindful of their pedagogical choices is an example of a performative accountability mindset which would be an effective way for teachers to be "steered at a distance" (Ball, 1994). Accountability

expectations could be framed in terms of process or output. One teacher, for instance, worried about losing his job as he could have easily been replaced if his upper secondary students did not pass their examinations. In such cases, teachers have to grapple with output accountability, which also entails considerable performance anxiety about the pedagogical soundness of their choices. It could be argued that they find themselves in a state where some of their freedoms, especially the freedom to interpret the curriculum and devise their own syllabus, might be denied. This *lack of freedom*, or, in Amartya Sen's (1999) framing, "unfreedom", could be sustained by systemic mechanisms and the culture of accountability which might eventually *strip teachers of their autonomy* to choose and potential for empowerment and "self-creation" (May, 2008). As demonstrated in the different narratives, the concept of *unfreedom* can be a powerful construct to situate those choices or inability to choose. This would negatively impact on teachers' *development* and *agency* as they would be deprived of the right to use their knowledge, competencies and dispositions to make choices within their working environment.

Accountability within the teaching profession has a strong impact on teaching performance and pedagogical decisions. This leads to a *culture of performativity* (that is, engaging in mandated or acceptable practices) and *answerability* (being able to assume responsibility for one's choices). Teachers are answerable to learners, parents, their heads of department and their rectors/managers, who might impose different expectations and standards. While answerability might not seem to be an unreasonable professional trait, the degree of answerability, as well as high expectations, irrespective of the amount of effort or good will a teacher might have put in, could lead to grudging *compliance* in an atmosphere often characterised by fear, frustration and resistance.

Another possible corollary of accountability processes is what Howard Gardner terms "compromised work", referring to forms of professional practice where certain *essential principles may have been set aside* in the execution of the task. Shulman (2005) suggested that pedagogy would no longer be "sound" if any of the intellectual, technical or moral dimensions of practice was neglected. Examples include teachers claiming to have completed coverage of texts when this is not the case, due to fear of being in bad standing with management. This cascades into alternative choices, such as giving notes instead of continuing with the reading of texts. In such situations, teachers consciously engaged in a response that would principally address the requirements of management, but tried to palliate by providing an alternative solution. While it was implicitly suggested that the teachers were confident about the effectiveness of some of their practices and the costs incurred, they could not openly stand by these choices in the face of administrative requirements.

This study thus highlights that teachers tend to be mindful of accountability culture and policy when planning to teach, and even those who might be relatively free in their own practices and pedagogical choices pay close attention to the way their behaviour and actions might be construed by those in authority. Moreover, accountability policies and processes might exist, but teachers seemingly have an ambiguous relationship with them, with some going to the extent of claiming to be victimised by the system. It was hard to ascertain whether such denunciations of the system and its accountability policies were genuine attempts to fight

back, or attempts by some to obfuscate the fact that some teachers might benefit from some aspects of the system, which seemingly did not require much deeper engagement with their subject. Pedagogical decision-making could thus embed *complementary* or *contradictory argumentations* which may *not necessarily be linked* to *rationality*.

While much of the current research tends to portray accountability practices and their impact on the quality of teaching in a negative light, the reason why such practices are still upheld and the purpose and *usefulness* of such mechanisms could be questioned. Figure 8.1 below presents an initial mapping out of pedagogical choices encountered in the course of this study.

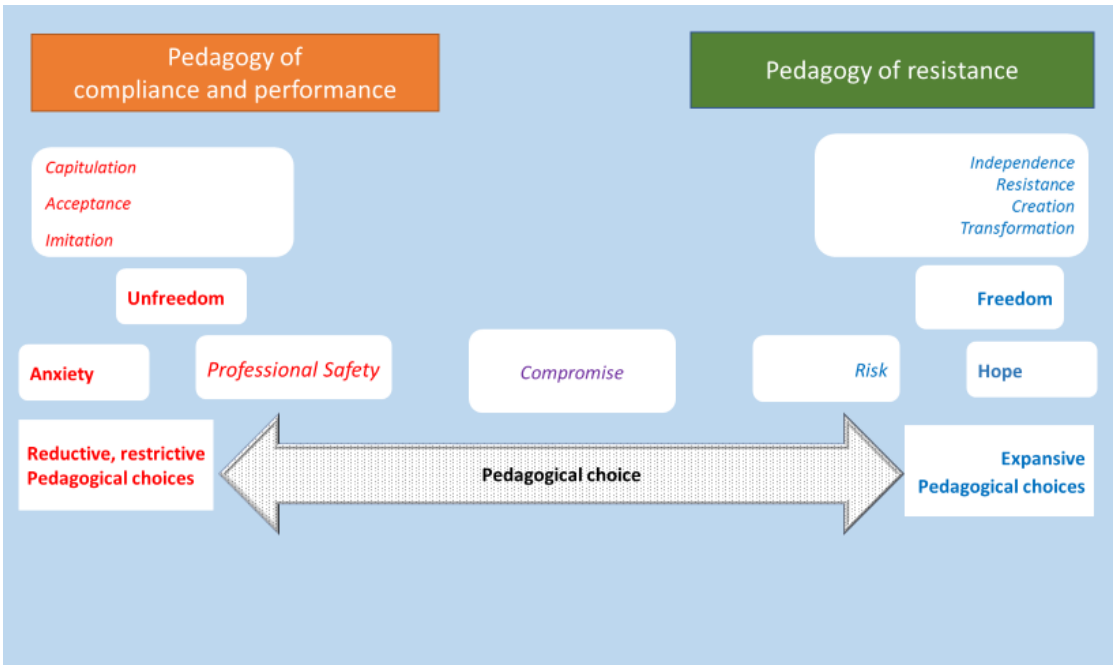


Figure 8.1: Continuum of teacher stances in relation to pedagogical choices

While some teachers might be moving towards expansive, yet professionally risky pedagogical choices, others might move towards full capitulation to the system, albeit covertly, as *disguised unfreedoms*. One could also posit that tales of accountability could be used by some teachers to validate certain practices (or lack thereof) or to explain results. "Surrendering" to a choice that has already been made for them by the system could be an enactment of "good faith" and professionalism which could be tied to *compliance*, in the eyes of some teachers.

The fact that some teachers *deliberately choose unfreedoms* could explain the way they negotiate their own positionality with the context, system and discipline, since such arrangements provide them with some degree of autonomy and agency within their albeit restrictive environment. Such *professional "safety"* might be more *desirable* than the "*risks"* involved in seeking more freedom in decision-making. Furthermore, within the continuum, it could be argued that in some cases, such systems might lead to the formation of a *pedagogy of compromise* amidst these protests, where the teacher still engages with his/her class, despite

trying circumstances, and exerts the *freedom* to enact a personal, holistic educational project via literature. Most of the teachers in this study found themselves in between the two ends of the continuum, *negotiating movements between the different dimensions.* These constructs are elaborated in more detail in **Chapter Nine**.

Furthermore, the teachers generally experienced anxiety related to their performance, which became both a symptom and a cause of some of their choices. The participants exercised their autonomy in their classrooms and pedagogical practices by teaching literature as they personally believed it should be taught, though the choices they made differed. They made use of their professional knowledge, subject content knowledge and understanding of context and students to inform their practices (see Figure 8.1). Thus, some participants express freedom of choice as anxiety-generating, and others choose to see agency and freedom as possibility-generating, and are thus not as anxious about the risks they take in their instructional choices. On the other hand, those that comply with "safe" practices, choose to remain safely boxed within specific instructional styles and habits, which they often become comfortable with, and even seek to justify as competent practices.

8.4.3 Pedagogical choice and teacher education

Fairly consistent with the literature consulted, the impact of formal professional educational programmes proved to be minimal in teachers' pedagogical choices (Grossman & McDonald, 2008; Korthagen, 2017). A few participants suggested that the teaching of literature in English in the upper secondary classroom could have been improved with input from an initial teacher education programme at the start of their careers or even some form of continuing professional development. It is possible that teachers could enjoy greater freedom and diversity in terms of pedagogical choice as a result of following a professional programme. Participants had different views on the possibility of empowerment through essential subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge via a professional development programme. There were teachers who firmly believed that *neither initial nor continuing professional development courses* would be of great help in addressing their daily teaching and learning decisions.

8.4.3.1 Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

In some cases, the participants discounted initial teacher education (ITE) as having had little, if any, influence on their actual teaching. A sharp disconnect with initial teacher education was noted, which was accentuated by the development of personalised know-how, and work-based professional development mainly based on experience. The fact that some of the participants who went through professional training still made limited pedagogical choices in the classroom or were tentative in their choice of strategies suggests, as some studies have indicated, that professional training could have *minimal impact on teachers' practice and decision-making* in the classroom. ITE seemed to have had little impact on teachers' current

pedagogical decision-making; moreover, the teachers seemed disconnected from training that had taken place at a specific point in the (near or distant) past from which there seemed to be no point of continuity, contact or feedback.

The knowledge acquired during ITE is not necessarily utilised by teachers, some of whom claimed such knowledge was either obsolete or ineffective in assisting them to cope with their reality at work. This raises questions about the raison-d'être of teacher training institutions such as the Mauritius Institute of Education and the relevance of their professional development courses in preparing pre-service and in-service teachers to teach more effectively. It perhaps also, highlights the need for a different kind of teacher preparation or development model that moves away from traditional university/academic courses, and which, as pointed out earlier, does not claim to present ready-made solutions to teachers. However, the study also revealed particular conceptions of teacher training that need to be addressed.

8.4.3.2 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and situated teacher learning

Many of the participants seemed to be looking forward to some kind of technical or academic assistance while being tentative, if not negative about the role and effectiveness of the dispenser of such assistance. Some seemed to opt for CPD even when they did not necessarily feel empowered by it. In the minds of many teachers, like ITE, CPD represents a body of knowledge and experience that is acquired at a specific point in time for pedagogical, administrative or instrumental purposes. Given that some form of professional qualification is now required to enter teaching, it could be argued that enrolment in professional development courses could be for *instrumental purposes* rather than due to *genuine desire for self-improvement* or an upgrade of professional know-how. This would explain why there is little uptake or adoption of the strategies and theories covered during professional development in actual practice.

Some participants seemed to think of teacher education programmes as providers of *ready-made solutions* to every problem, which perhaps explains their disillusionment with the institution responsible for teacher training and professional development. Their view that initial teacher education or continuing teacher professional development are ineffective because they do not lead to immediate outcomes, suggests the need for such institutions to forge closer partnerships with educators and educationists. This would enable a clearer picture of what such professional development can achieve to be communicated to stakeholders. A more realistic expectation would be that initial teacher education or continuing professional teacher development could enable teachers to engage with a *menu of possible choices* they may enact, rather than prescriptively advocating for preferred strategies for teaching and learning for all contexts. More immediately, though, it reveals why some teachers might hesitate to engage in professional development courses, or refuse to be guided by the pedagogical principles set down by such institutions.

At another level, there is the possibility of home-grown models of professional development, activated by peer networking or through informal and formal communities of

practice. While some of the teachers approved the philosophy behind the sharing of best practices and mutual assistance, most seemed overwhelmingly isolated in the elaboration and selection of their pedagogical choices, often eschewing peer feedback or responding minimally, or passively at times, to suggestions from their community. Thus, while most educators seem to have developed their own pedagogical decision-making skills and choices largely within their school and classroom ecologies, they seem hesitant to acknowledge the resources they are developing for their own professional development within the workplace itself.

As teachers engage in deeper introspection on their own development, the relational, temporal and situational aspects of teacher learning have to be taken into consideration (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Knight et al., 2015). This embeddedness of teacher learning experiences moves away from professional development discourses which traditionally have engaged teachers in theoretical discussions and application of set 'good' practices, and engages teachers in reflective and reflexive consideration of their own practice, not in isolation, but in relation to all the different partners in the educational project. The entanglement of teacher actions with others, is considered to be essential for learning and "generative social practice in the lived-in world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35) and leads to the deconstruction of the concept of knowledge as a commodity or set of knowledge items and skills to be acquired or a theory to be explicitly taught in isolation. Yandell (2017) suggests that "fields or bodies of knowledge" are not produced by those who wield it as "property of academics and teachers" (2017, p. 596) but rather occur in the process of learning and interaction. Such a rethinking could thus lead to a growing understanding of how theory and teaching models are in fact embedded within the practices of teachers, and implies a necessary rethinking of some deficit, vertical teacher education models that could imply that teachers (whether pre-service or in-service) require inculcation in order to be functional.

8.5 Section Four: Pedagogic choice and the discipline of English literature

Inherent aspects of the history and role of English literature and its relationship with the English language in the Mauritian context could enable better understanding of how the nature and status of the subject drives pedagogy in the literature classroom. With its former colonial agenda of representing the best of what Britain could produce in terms of art and writing, English literature was implanted and taught in the British colonies, including Mauritius. This ensured that the *hegemonic rule of the colonial power* would endure not just in the material world but also in the realm of arts and culture. Mauritians who studied the subject have thus been exposed to classical writers from the English canon. This partly explains the predominance of, and preference for, canonical texts in the Mauritian upper secondary syllabus (see Section 8.2.5).

Over the years, the already small number of students opting for this subject dwindled further and its status also diminished. English literature is not exactly pertinent in policy documents with regard to the forward looking, 21st century small island state of Mauritius and does not feature prominently in the nation-building vision in policy documents. This mirrors

the decline of this field of study at international level, which could be due to its lack of association with econometric agendas and perceived weak links with national developmental goals. While students are exposed to a variety of career prospects stemming from the study of literature, they are often guided towards subjects which seem more rewarding in terms of immediate employment after post-secondary education. Literature, with its potentially charged cultural capital requirements and potentially deep cognitive engagement, tends to be avoided when it comes to subject selection, even at postgraduate level. While there is no explicit postcolonial agenda in the framing of English literature within the curriculum, it would seem that it does not feature prominently within the new "script" being written by a small postcolonial, independent developing state that seeks to leave its colonial roots behind and look towards the future.

This orientation towards literature seems to contrast with recent policy decisions to provide learners with access to the arts for their holistic development at primary level. However, it seems that if policy does not dictate the presence and importance of a subject, it is likely to be marginalised. It is not surprising that the teachers spoke of a *lack of interest in literature* at upper secondary level as students had little exposure to literary texts during their first years in secondary school. Moreover, the texts and approaches used at lower secondary level are considerably *different* from those selected at upper level, and many a student has found him/herself thinking of English literature as an accessible subject until they encounter the texts in the syllabus, the pedagogical approaches of their teachers and the examination requirements.

Subject uptake is made more challenging with the opening up of the curriculum to new subjects such as Business and Entrepreneurship Education, or the inclusion of Physical Education until upper secondary, where students can envisage career outcomes. Even after the new curriculum reform, literature is still relegated to a period or two on the English language teacher's timetable. It can be argued that during the formative years, when the *basics of literary appreciation* and study could have been effectively introduced, the subject is somewhat diluted so that many students, who perhaps did not continue studying literature, find themselves completely at a loss when they take English literature at upper secondary level. Thus, the positioning of English literature in the lower secondary curriculum impacts on how the subject is received at upper secondary, with educators struggling to start with the basics when there so many different texts to cover.

The participants pointed that so few students selected literature that the subject was opened up to those that had no prior exposure to it. While this ensured that English department staff have students, it has impacted on teachers who have had to adapt their classes and pedagogy to a new category of English literature students who did not want to be there in the first place, or who randomly chose literature. Teachers at upper secondary have therefore had to contend with very small classes and to adjust to working with such students. As some shared, this has often resulted in disenchantment when they consider what they expected to achieve in this subject and what they end up teaching as content. It also sheds some light on some teachers' comments on students' seeming "lack of maturity".

It could be argued that the inherent features of the discipline of English literature are different from many *other subjects* offered in the curriculum, calling for very different pedagogical practice. For instance, a strong current of interdisciplinarity is established with the study of authors, contexts, times and movements, with students learning not just about the content of the texts, but also about the economic, social, scientific, religious and cultural influences on the authors. It could thus be argued that pedagogical practices in the literature classroom cannot only aim to bring forth knowledge claims or facts about texts, settings and places. The emphasis on personal interpretation and response as learning and assessment outcomes at upper secondary level suggests that the literature teacher needs to adopt pedagogical practices that stimulate such responses in students. Moreover, through their own exposure to English literature at school and university, some teachers have encountered ways of critically reading and thinking, which they regard as valuable and which they would like to pass on through their own pedagogical moves in class.

Various current literature teaching models and approaches, such as the *personal development model*, the *language model* or the *cultural model* explore the different kinds of interaction a reader could have with a literary text. Applying some elements of literary or critical theory at upper secondary level could also open up literary texts to various interpretations, through a wide range of theoretical lenses. These different conceptions of what the subject could bring to the educational system are however, *not always* put forward, since a mainly examination-driven system could be pushing educators across different subjects to enact very similar sets of pedagogical moves to *ensure examination-readiness* among their students. This could explain the difficulty encountered by some teachers when faced with the challenge of teaching students who, although they have reached upper secondary level, still have to be taught basic literary terms and concepts. Coupled with *accountability practices* and perceived pressure to perform according to specific school deadlines, some teachers find themselves abandoning deeper exploration of texts.

While there are many ways to prepare students for examinations, the fact that most of the teachers identified *compromising* the qualitative aspect of the study of English literature in favour of more *surface-level understanding* of the text is revealing. One could thus question whether all subjects can be taught and assessed under the same conditions or whether the specificities of a subject call for a more specialised and individuated pedagogy. How could an educational system and schooling system account and make provision for a subject like English literature, which seemingly defies the boundaries of its own nomenclature through its interdisciplinary branchings?

This exploration of pedagogical choice in the upper secondary classroom in Mauritius offers overall insight into the role and importance of literature in the educational and cultural landscape. Within the educational landscape, and the establishment of a national curriculum, subject choices at upper secondary level help to clarify how academic subjects find their place within a national educational project and how they contribute to the economic, social and cultural composition of society. Some subjects go out of fashion or are made irrelevant over time due to pressing economic demands on the workforce to be skilled or trained in a specific

domain. For instance, the diminishing status of Agriculture, History and Geography could be testament to the shift in economic, political (and thus, educational) agenda in the local context. Will English literature take the same route and would its disappearance on the national level matter, given that it is already a significantly marginalised subject? In light of current public discourse on low literacy rates and the poor reading culture amongst learners around the world, young Mauritians' lack of interest in this subject brings to the fore the broader society's estrangement from *Mauritian literature in English*, which is much less significant than Mauritian literature in French or even Kreol Morisien, and which is often underrepresented in text choices at both lower and upper secondary level. Would it have made a difference if more Mauritian authors were represented in the syllabus? Perhaps this would have sparked more interest and engagement in the subject by providing young people with texts and contexts that they could relate to, unlike those which are often chronologically and topically alien to their everyday experience and which stylistically and linguistically, are very far from the usage of English that they are used to.

Another argument could be advanced about the ambiguous relationship between *English language* and *English literatur*e. In the Mauritian context, the English language has enjoyed great privilege and is predominantly used in the academic, official and legal domains. While there is dwindling interest in English literature as a subject, English is a compulsory subject in the schooling system. Nonetheless, the Mauritian situation presents some complex elements in relation to the role and purpose of the English language. Unlike the global trend, which has witnessed the rise of English, in Mauritius, people, especially students, could still be reluctant to use the language beyond social and official communication. Furthermore, the position of English literature is more problematic at the global level, perhaps highlighting shifting modes in the use and representation of language, especially in an era of multimodal communication.

It is perhaps important to demarcate the world of publishing and writing and that of literature as a domain. In the first instance, more authors are now publishing and being read on a number of platforms. On the other hand, more conventional "*literary forms*" could be suffering a crisis of relevance and purpose in today's world. In the local context, this divide is even more accentuated since only a small proportion of the local student population takes literature at upper secondary level.

With the "postcolonial turn" in literary and critical studies and the opening up of the literary canon to embrace *diversity*, the literature syllabus could arguably be an interesting ally in the complete decolonisation of Mauritius, helping the nation to affirm itself as a postcolonial one. However, this study shows that despite engaging with texts that are written in similar postcolonial settings as Mauritius, many teachers do not venture into such discussions or bring to the fore the similarities that exist across these societies. This is perhaps indicative of the sanitised way literature is approached by many teachers in Mauritius, and the deep abiding respect for canonical texts which are chosen year after year, although this is also changing amongst teachers and schools. Literature as subject could be effectively disenfranchised from its colonial past and agenda to contribute to nation-building in 21st century Mauritius. This

could start by *introducing* and *critically discussing issues pertinent to literature set in Mauritian or similar contexts* and would facilitate the shift from an unrecognisable, alien canonical body of works that might be of literary value, but of little significance to the learner of today.

8.6 Synthesis

Researching pedagogical choice enabled deeper understanding of how teaching and learning are planned, and how this engages the processes of teacher thinking. The upper secondary literature classroom provided a suitable platform for such an exploration, yielding insight into the nature of English literature as a discipline, as well as the different orientations and choices of teachers in their delivery of the content. A salient finding is the intricate intermingling of knowledges within the teacher who is the fulcrum of decision-making in the literature classroom. Within the classroom ecology, teacher beliefs, experience and knowledge are not the only influences on pedagogy; students are also one of the principal influences on teachers' instructional choices. However, the classroom space is not hermetically sealed, but porous to influences beyond the classroom such as policy and systemic influences which push the teacher to reconfigure him/herself and his/her teaching beyond the academic and disciplinary goals of a specific subject area. Syncretically, constructs such as a *pedagogy of resistance*, a *pedagogy of compliance*, *freedoms* and *unfreedoms* and *safety* and *risk* have been proposed as means to understand the phenomenon of pedagogical choice. The following chapter considers how these constructs lead to deeper understanding of the pedagogies adopted by teachers and theoretical insights into what, how and why teachers teach the way they do.

Chapter Nine: Theorising pedagogical choice

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapter expanded on some of the deeper insights generated in relation to the phenomenon of pedagogical choice in English literature classrooms. These show that pedagogical choice can be understood from a number of vantage points. For instance, from the teacher's perspective, teaching experience, teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge form a nexus that generates choices. These influences are, however, also mediated by knowledge of students, subject area knowledge and systemic influences such as policy, school culture and teacher education. This results in a variety of choices that were mapped out, in the previous chapter, onto a continuum of pedagogical possibilities, which highlight the complexity and fluidity of decision-making and suggest the possibility of deriving new insights into how teachers construct choices and their relationship to these. In the sections that follow, I discuss the findings in relation to the critical questions and outline the arguments that construct the thesis statement around pedagogical choice.

9.2 Orientation to the chapter

This chapter consists of six sections that lead to the development of the thesis. **Section One** addresses the insights developed in the course of this research in relation to the study's critical questions. **Section Two** elaborates on the key constructs which are essential building blocks for the formulation of the thesis, while **Section Three** brings forth the thesis statement itself. **Section Four** considers the implications of this thesis for theory, teachers, teacher education, policy and policy-makers and for research. **Section Five** addresses the theoretical and operational limitations of the study and finally, **Section Six** suggests potential directions for future research.

9.3 Section One: Seeking answers to the critical questions

9.3.1 Critical Question 1: How is English literature taught in upper secondary English literature classes?

This first critical question led to deeper understanding of the relationship between the subject of English literature and the impact of teachers' pedagogical choices at upper secondary level. One salient finding was that teachers derived their understanding of what the discipline entailed from the overarching national frameworks of curriculum policy and/or assessment. For instance, at lower secondary level, literature was initially framed within curriculum documents as a means of improving students' proficiency and appreciation of the English

language, with literature classes proposed as an extension of regular language classes. However, more recent updates to the National Curriculum Framework (2016) suggest a philosophical shift in policy towards cultural and critical literacy, to be developed through literature. Such policy framings inevitably lead to specific pedagogical postures in relation to teaching English literature.

At another level, pedagogical choices are also influenced by the educational systemic context, which includes enrolment and subject uptake. In many cases, this situation has led to the subject being offered in combination with other subjects, resulting in students with little or no prior exposure to literature being allowed to enrol for it. In the context of this study, as is the case for other subjects at upper secondary level, English literature is framed within curriculum documents provided by the official national examinations system.

At the level of the school and classroom, however, such conceptions become more blurred. Teachers have different conceptions of the subject area due to their own experience as students, their personal and academic orientations to literature and the framing of the subject in curriculum documents. In turn, these conceptions impact on the choice of pedagogical moves made by the teachers and suggest a dynamic relationship between the different knowledges a teacher brings to class and/or creates in class alongside students. Most teachers were not definite in their choice of approach, but adopted/adapted strategies which, in light of their experience, would fulfil specific pedagogical objectives to satisfy their students' learning needs. Some of these approaches are implicitly derived from past experience, or research, and many teachers do not necessarily identify or select specific "learned" strategies, or models of literature teaching, as formally introduced in teacher education.

Thus, literature teaching pedagogy is mediated by the macro-systemic policy environment, as well as by the lived, experiential personal philosophies – encompassing their experiences, beliefs and values – which determine how teachers approach literature teaching within their specific teaching contexts.

9.3.2 Critical Question 2: What factors influence teachers' choice of pedagogy in upper secondary English literature classes?

The study brought to the fore a number of implicit and explicit influences on teachers' pedagogical choices, at various levels and at different points in time, as illustrated in Figure 9.1 below.

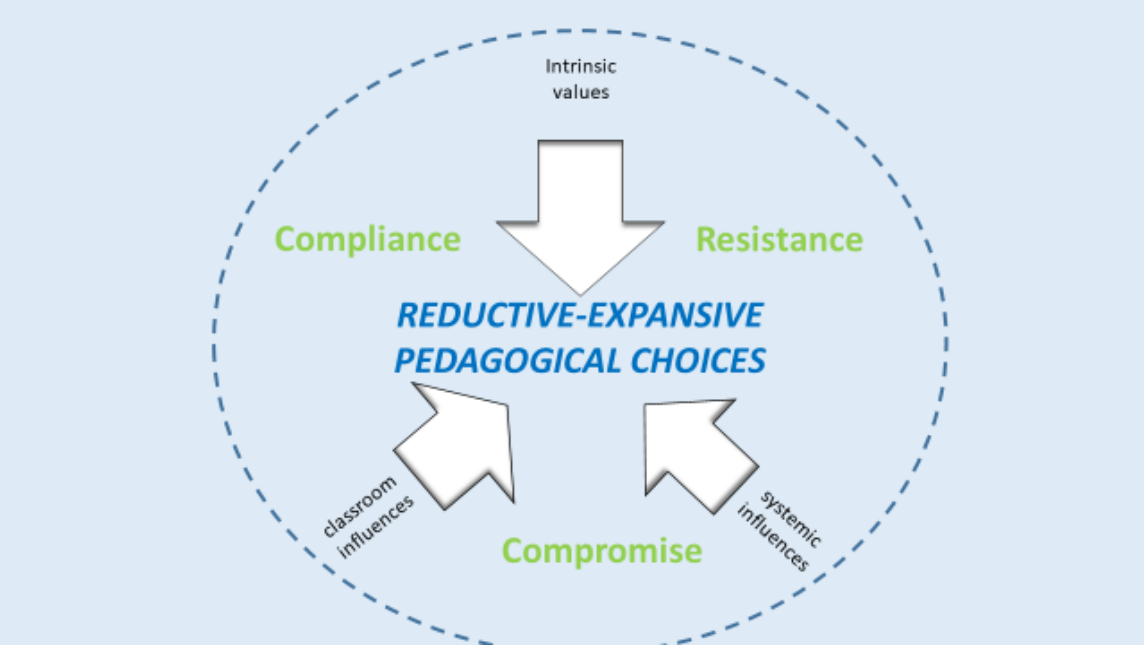


Figure 9.1: A continuum of pedagogical choices

Intrinsic influences, pertaining to the teacher, comprised factors such as teachers' own life experiences as students of literature, which were shown to have a lasting effect on some teachers; teacher beliefs, attitudes and values; professional knowledge; and teacher education and professional development. Of these, teacher beliefs proved to have considerably more impact on the choices teachers made in their literature classrooms in terms of approach, texts and resources. Varying conceptions of the purpose of teaching literature, and understanding of teaching situations, alongside knowledge of students' understanding and possible misconceptions, influenced teachers' choice of representations and instructional stances within the classroom. Some teachers enacted routine "scripts" or *heuristics* honed over years of experience at specific moments in the classroom, or stemming from continuous engagement with different student profiles. However, the disparity between the choices made by early career teachers and more experienced teachers did not seem to be that wide, perhaps due to other influences which troubled the running of these scripts or well-known teaching and learning scenarios.

School influences, comprising the institutional climate, characterised by the school environment, school administration and policies, as well as relationships with colleagues and students, also impacted on teachers' pedagogical choices. Prevailing cultures of performativity and accountability led teachers to see their own performance as contingent on their students' academic success. This potentially puts considerable pressure on teachers to make choices that would assist them in fulfilling these requirements, which were often officious, yet deeply influential in the school context. Some schools placed considerably more importance on the teaching and learning of literature and ensured that it was made compulsory at least up until Grade 10 or 11. The rationale might, however, be to ensure that students have viable subject

combinations as they reach upper secondary level, rather than stemming solely from appreciation of the discipline by the system and in curriculum documents. This, in turn, impacted on how students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders, ended up perceiving the subject. In other contexts, teachers deplored the lack of administrative support when the number of students started declining, causing some degree of anxiety amongst them.

The classroom was the site of decision-making, where instructional strategies were impacted by classroom events, especially the relationship between teachers and students. A variety of decisions at different stages, whether while planning, teaching or post-teaching, showed that decision-making was both implicitly and explicitly put into practice. While the literature suggests that teachers with experience eventually implement routine segments in their lessons and engage in rapid decision-making when the need arises, teachers showed different kinds of engagement with their classes. In some cases, they had already decided upon a pedagogical course of action that was determined by the student profile and their understanding of the students' knowledge and misconceptions about the subject. In other cases, teachers attempted to bridge the gap by engaging students through interactive strategies and linking the text to their personal, lived experiences. In some cases, a contract was set up between teacher and student to establish expectations and behaviour to reduce potential challenges in the teaching of literary texts; for instance, one expectation was that, for some texts, students would undertake independent reading and preparation before coming to class. Some teachers communicated how tenuous such expectations were and how they had to improvise or enact alternative strategies when students did not fulfil their part of the contract.

External influences such as parents' involvement could be amalgamated with fears of being held accountable for students' poor performance in their examinations. Accountability was thus instrumental, in many cases, for the types of pedagogical choices made in class, resulting in "safer" or "riskier" practices for teachers, even if teachers are, at least officially, in charge of the dispensation of the curriculum as they deem fit. *Curricular influences* such as the framing of the subject within the national curriculum framework and recommended literature teaching methodologies from teacher training institutions and curriculum documents also impacted on instructional practices, even if in most cases, the teachers stated that such institutions had limited influence. While these external factors seemed to have impacted to varying degrees on teachers' pedagogical choices, it could be argued that they do not passively respond to such influences but rather weigh the consequences of potential lines of action before engaging in some of their decisions in the classroom.

A number of reactions can thus be noted in relation to this situation. In some cases, guided by their *own beliefs and conceptions* about the way they should teach English literature, teachers engaged in dynamic and discursive interactions with their students, with the aim of deepening the latter's engagement with the texts. Such pedagogical choices often entailed an element of "risk", given that they involved diverging from a *pre-programmed schedule* which often emphasised text completion and preparation for examinations. The professional risk involved would be to appear less productive and efficient in fulfilling the standards of performance set within the school system. Rejection of institutional requirements and

expectations occurs as some teachers abide by their own beliefs about teaching and learning, and put aside some of the broader systemic requirements from the school and broader context.

Some teachers prefer to *capitulate***,** or appear to do so, by adopting "safe" practices which are not likely to place them in negative standing with the administration. Capitulation can also involve letting go of some of the higher-end goals of literature teaching to address more immediate issues in the classroom, as the teachers engage in *in-the-moment decisions* that sometimes diverge from planned decisions. Other pedagogical choices could stem from a standpoint of compromise as teachers try to negotiate their own teaching agenda with the learning goals they are assigned to deliver vis-à-vis their learners. Yet others, as pointed out in **Chapter Six**, could be engaging in strategic mimicry, by going "through the (pedagogical) motions" while enacting their own agenda in relation to what they perceive as essential learning goals within English literature.

However, teachers do not make always make the same choices; standpoints change at different points in time, showing the *potential for a variety of choices* to take place, even when these can seemingly threaten the autonomy of the teacher as decision-maker. Choices also vary from the point of planning decisions and the time it comes to implement them as the teacher dynamically reacts to in-the-moment decision-making and makes choices based on the requirements of the class and students' needs and profiles, beyond their own beliefs and conceptions about the subject and the way it should be taught.

While the literature prepared me for gaps between what teachers advocate and what they practice, what was surprising was how they internalised contradictions which may have arisen from the curriculum, their school context or their interactions with students, but which definitely moulded or distinctly warped their choice of pedagogical stances. It was apparent that, in many cases, the teachers were aware of engaging in an uphill battle or a near-impossible task, which however, they were still managing to do, despite constraints. The fact that the teachers could "see" where they could be free to choose their pedagogical stances and where they could not, made it even more necessary for me to establish the motivations behind such choices and how teachers understood their own sense of agency within their profession.

9.3.3 Critical Question 3: Why do English literature teachers use their chosen strategies in their classroom the way they do?

While the study uncovered the different influences that impact on teachers' pedagogical choices in the English literature classroom, they do not suffice to explain why some choices are made rather than others. As outlined in the previous section, choice in the classroom is not only contingent on *intrinsic, systemic and external* influences but also marks the intersections between *teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge, teacher efficacy and teacher agency* in relation to the demands of their profession. Pedagogical choices did not only impact on the learning context of the classroom; they also reveal the *school climate* and *the systemic affordances or restrictions* that teachers face, as well as teachers' reactions when faced with such challenges.

As outlined in **Chapter Six**, while some teachers comply out of habit, and enact "strategic mimicry" (Mattson and Harley, 2003) in their practices in performing their roles as biddable staff members, others go beyond expectations set by peers and the administration and act out their own pedagogical scenarios.

Factors such as personal beliefs about *the subject* and about *pedagogy, subject content and pedagogical content knowledg*e, (in some cases) *experience*, a supportive *administrative system* and leadership could encourage some teachers to venture out of their comfort zone and take pedagogical "risks" in their classroom. Making pedagogical choices could also be construed as statements of *intent*, and could reveal *ideological and pedagogical positionings* of individuals in contexts which could be equally *nuanced by power dynamics*. Thus, choice-making could entail greater stakes for the teachers who might seek to go "against the grain", since this involves a degree of professional risk. Performance-related anxiety, and doubts about one's professionalism are two of the corollaries of such dilemmatic situations, where teachers have had to make pedagogical choices that went contrary to their pedagogical content knowledge know-how. These *pedagogies arising out of anxiety* often lead to a *pedagogy of compliance* with the system, which could explain why even some of the more experienced teachers still felt trepidation in stepping out of line in their classroom. Teachers that had to "perform" their pedagogies in line with requirements that often ran *counter* to their *espoused beliefs* regarding the teaching of literature also expressed their anxiety at not achieving all the goals they implicitly associate with this subject.

On the other hand, there are those whose pedagogical choices are kept to the strict *procedural* or *instructional minimum*, since neither the syllabus nor the school requires that they be proactive, or innovative. The open-endedness of pedagogies characterised by freedom of choice and generativity suggest the opening up of possibilities in classrooms where the teacher is but one contributor amongst others. However, with more freedom come accountability and risk, and the teacher who opts for expansive pedagogical choices risks having to justify him/herself, being pushed to comply with the majority, or find means to overcome his or her current restrictions. Along the continuum, it could be argued that, even when they are under pressure and restrictive conditions, teachers are able to enact some degree of choice in terms of their own pedagogical practices. Decisions made in the name of professional safety, or opting for an "unfreedom" could lead to reductive sets of practices which could, however, also prove rewarding for some teachers; this is discussed in the following section.

While the consulted literature identifies a number of factors that could help explain why pedagogical choices happen the way they do in the literature classroom, few studies have considered the construction of freedom of pedagogical choice, the contexts and mechanisms that hinder or support such freedoms and the way these freedoms or unfreedoms are not only experienced by teachers but also constructed and used for a variety of purposes.

9.4 Section Two: Key constructs along the continuum of pedagogical choice

As described in **Chapter Eight**, the different pedagogical choices were mapped onto a continuum ranging from *more restrictive choices* to *more expansive choices* in the classroom. This section discusses the different yet interrelated constructs presented across that continuum and their impact on the types of choices that are made along three broad trends, namely a ***pedagogy of compliance*** and a ***pedagogy of resistance***, as well as a ***pedagogy of compromise***. This will subsequently serve as a foundation for the explanation of a freedom to exercise pedagogical choice (see **Section 9.5.4**).

Decision making in the literature classroom is dynamically linked to a number of influences that result in varying, often contradictory sets of pedagogical choices. This thesis does not attempt to present them as binary opposites along a linear representation of choices; rather, it could be argued that the continuum presents a *range of possibilities*, as illustrated in *Figure 9.2* below, and alternative, if not sometimes *parallel*, choices from which the teacher eventually makes his or her pick, even if they seem contradictory on the surface.

The consulted literature yielded theoretical understandings that were firmly framed within cognitive factors or ecological influences that impacted on specific choices. This thesis not only considers these different elements but also argues for deeper introspection on how they are experienced by teachers and how their pedagogical choices, in turn, are impacted by these different perspectives. Decisions taken could reflect the different choices made at different points in time, subject to the different agendas and influences at play, but also to how the teacher understands, processes and reacts to these situations.

However, the continuum represents more than one level of understanding of pedagogical choice. In one respect, it could represent the different *kinds of choices* ranging from teacher-centred pedagogies to learner-centred pedagogies, or the *pedagogical "moves"*. At another level, it could represent the *degree of comfort* or *discomfort* such choices bring about in relation to teacher practice and teacher effectiveness. In addition, along the continuum are plotted degrees of *professional safety and risk* that teachers face when they decide upon a particular course of action, or follow a set pedagogical approach in class. Thus, deciding on pedagogical choices, or *the process of 'choicing'* – reflecting on the process and implications of one's choices (instead of 'choosing' between alternatives) – is also a dynamic process which could be located at different points along the continuum, with different pedagogical stances.

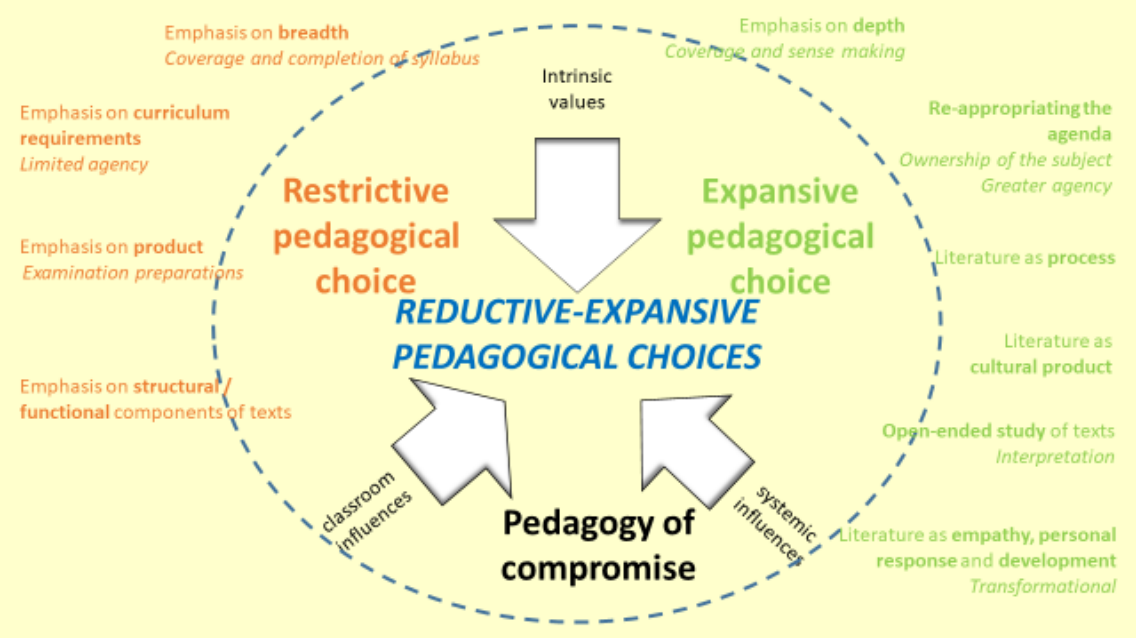


Figure 9.2: Constructs along the continuum of pedagogical choices

9.4.1 Breadth *and/or* Depth of coverage

One of the salient points raised by this study pertains to the breadth and depth of syllabus and text coverage. In the domain of literature, especially in contexts where teachers are provided with broad curriculum guidelines as to what is to be covered, engaging with either "breadth" or "depth" or a combination of both has practical implications in terms of the selection of texts, the time taken for the "coverage" of each text, and the type of instructional strategies used, as well as assessment. Pedagogical choices concerning what needs to be covered in the subject at a certain level in a schooling context reveal the complex relationship that teachers entertain with the curriculum and the ambiguous role they play in interpreting and enacting it.

The adoption of a range of pedagogical stances running from restrictive to more expansive choices thus interrogates the concept of "coverage" as a monolithic concept in the subject of English literature. Two salient notions arise out of this reading. Firstly, corresponding to the "breadth" paradigm, the conception of coverage could pertain to the enactment of basic specific engagements with texts on the syllabus, with the aim being "completion" of set targets with respect to a school syllabus and calendar. Another conception of coverage, more aligned with the "depth" paradigm, could refer to the aim of developing an intensive disciplinary understanding of the subject alongside the development of literary competence, critical thinking and empathy to engage with the higher cognitive demands of the subject.

While it could be argued that both types of coverage are necessary to achieve holistic understanding of the subject, teachers often find themselves opting for one over the other, even though these choices are likely to change according to contexts and circumstances. The noted discrepancies between the espoused beliefs of some teachers about the value of deep coverage and their choice of broad coverage as enacted pedagogy can yield deeper insights into pedagogical choice and freedom, especially when the reasons for such choices are made explicit. The curricular structures in place and accountability to school administration often lead to limited engagement with texts. On the other hand, pedagogies that focus on depth are activated by more intrinsic influences such as personal beliefs and conceptions about the nature of the discipline and how it should be taught. Sense-making and critical thinking are thus emphasised under such a paradigm, with students guided towards a more personal and dialogical relationship with the text with a view to developing the independent literary reader.

The different conceptions of coverage therefore highlight underlying tensions in the schooling context between how much should be taught and how much learning can take place, and the degree of autonomy and freedom a teacher can exercise in his or her professional duties, as well as the safety or risk involved in deploying pedagogical choices.

9.4.2 Assessment-driven pedagogy *and/or* Open-ended pedagogy

At one end of the continuum, teachers engage in an assessment-driven pedagogy, while others adopt an open-ended pedagogy. Such pedagogical choices could reveal their ideological and professional stance on what teaching and learning is for, and where, and how it should be directed. Those who are mindful of institutional and systemic deadlines tend to emphasise students' readiness in terms of examination preparation; the "product" here ironically being not only the skills to be developed and assessed, but also the type of student the system seemingly requires for it to be functional. On the other hand, a more open pedagogy allows for greater variety in terms of pedagogical choices in class.

The findings suggest that limited engagement with students through transmissive teaching further reduces dialogic contact time and prepares students for a more formalised engagement with texts. Emphasising the teaching of literature to prepare students for examinations highlights the element of professional safety and suggests that, while remaining sensitive to their learners' needs, teachers still make compromises at the level of pedagogy.

It can be surmised that expansive, process-oriented and learner-friendly approaches attempt to explore the nature of English literature as a subject, and its potential for learners' holistic development. The orientations that teachers adopt thus shed light on their engagement with the subject and the possible benefits they see in approaching texts the way they do. Educational systems with exit points determined by summative examinations, especially those established by international examinations providers, tend to have high stakes for students and teachers alike. While for some, the benefit might lie in creating an open, shared space for a more in-depth reading of texts, for others, there might be, from an instrumental angle,

advantages in preparing students from the start for the requirements of national assessments within the system.

9.4.3 Structural/Functional language competencies *and/or* Literature as a cultural project

There is a strong link between the approach to the subject (product/process) and the content that is covered in the syllabus. A product approach is more likely to involve the student in synthetic and comparative moves across texts while the process approach might dwell upon meaning-making and deriving intent beyond an understanding of basic literary devices. A pedagogy of compliance would tend to focus on the study of essential structural and/or functional components of texts since these are key elements or building blocks in literary analysis. However, such a rationale frames English literature as a subject with fixed boundaries and discrete knowledge items that can be retrieved or taught in isolation in class. From this perspective, the content of texts can be easily broken down into a syllabus that can be realistically covered over a given period.

Regarding literature as a cultural project has a different impact on the choices teachers make in class and once again raises a question about the significance of a particular subject within a curriculum. Through their choices, which are often informed by their prior experiences of literature, many teachers opt for a broader interpretation of the subject. Rather than seeing a series of knowledge items to be covered, some teachers prefer to ascribe an intrinsic value to literature. They derive ways to reveal the connections between literary text and context, literary text and art, and literary text and life, to provide rich content to young people. Opening up the text to multiple interpretations requires investment of time and effort. Exploring literature's potential to develop empathy, intercultural understanding and a deeper appreciation of language and art can be some of the consequences of such choices. One challenge would be identifying whose culture is being affirmed or marginalised when it comes to the choice of texts, genres, authors and pedagogical strategies. Literature studied under a cultural model could also subtly serve hegemonic purposes if, for instance, all the texts chosen or theoretical approaches belong to a specific paradigm.

Linking this theme to the depth/breadth issue, pedagogical choices in the literature classroom allow for questioning of the limits set in a domain of study which also forms part of art. Can the subject, or any other subject, be measured, and parcelled into individual learning packages? The different choices made by the teachers suggest that each approaches the subject from their vantage point and derives information, enjoyment and appreciation differently from the next teacher. Constraining pedagogical choices could thus bring about narrow, prescriptive stances, which would not provide students with a more in-depth view of texts that an expansive pedagogy would allow.

9.4.4 Literature as a colonialist instrument *and/or* Literature as personal growth

Inclusion of a subject such as literature within an educational system calls for analysis of its framing within the curriculum and the implicit or explicit intentions behind such placement. Given that literature served the colonial agenda as part of the "civilising mission" during the British Empire, its perpetuation as a subject within the curriculum could be questioned. Is literature linked to the prominent position occupied by the English language across local curriculum frameworks in a number of countries around the world?

While some subjects serve an economic nation-building objective, or aim to bring a country's population on par with global trends, literature as subject seems to have remained free from such "rebranding". Why, then, is it still being offered as a subject? It could be argued that English literature retains an aura of authority, venerability and canonicity that makes it difficult to remove from the list of offered subjects. Furthermore, it can be questioned whether English literature can fully divest itself of its colonial, hegemonic role as an instrument for the empire, since many of its canonical texts remain uncontested on syllabus lists. On the other hand, it could be questioned whether the Mauritian nation is ready for a postcolonial, post-independence reworking of an English literature syllabus that would reinforce appreciation of the language, without including only canonical authors and texts.

Pedagogical choices could reveal how the curriculum and its contents are read and enacted by teachers. The text choices that teachers make and their uptake or avoidance of imposed texts could reveal an element of capitulation to hegemonic literature. For instance, opting for a canonical British text could smooth the planning and preparation time of a teacher who knows that he or she will have access to numerous articles and learning material on the text or topic under study. Convenience could thus drive such a pedagogical move for a teacher who might not be familiar with another text on the syllabus or who might have been taught that canonical text as a student and therefore has developed an affinity for it (besides the advantage of already knowing the text).

9.4.5 Limited *and/or* Extended agency

The participants' expressions of the varying degrees and forms of agency can be mapped on the continuum of choices. However, what is problematic is that the notion of agency and the agentic teacher suggest the existence of a non-agentic teacher. From the data generated, this does not seem to be the case. From the outset, it is important to reiterate the difficulty in establishing the degree of agency of the different participants with respect to their professional roles. Clearly, agency is exercised at more than one level, and not necessarily with respect to learner-centred pedagogy. It however bears noting how teachers engage with their own conception of agency, or lack thereof. Those teachers who claim to have limited agency tend

to adopt a pedagogy that is equally as limited and is based on accountability structures that dictate performance. Limited agency may be due to specific work conditions and culture, the lack of an empowering community of practice, teachers' own experiences as students and limited access to professional education. However, those teachers also show that other pedagogical permutations are possible and that these are within reach, thus problematising their own description of lack of agency. Therefore, rather than speaking of a teacher with or deprived of agency, what can be discussed is how teachers deploy their own agency.

Across the continuum, the teacher is able to diversify the pedagogical options at his or her disposal so as to better cater to students' learning needs, even when operating under potentially limiting structures. Moreover, the teacher exercises his or her agency under different contexts and circumstances to create or find opportunities to enact key pedagogical moves by using, adapting or even subverting existing structures and resources. Such initiatives suggest more decision-making power, and more opportunities to go "off the script".

Paradoxically, the study shows that every single case is unique in its illustration of choices being deployed. Thus, for some teachers, a state of compliance and dependence, seemingly at the cost of agency and voice, might be a desirable option. While some find themselves in a situation where they have to enact a pedagogy of compliance, there are those for whom such pedagogy is synonymous with professional security. Greater professional risk is attached to those who display extended agency within the schooling context. It would thus seem that some teachers deliberately choose to be less free, or be in a state of "unfreedom" rather than making their own pedagogical decisions. The findings of this study however suggest that teachers retain their agency in choosing specific pedagogical moves across the different contexts and circumstances they are in, whether these are situations which might imply professional risk or comfort.

9.4.6 Teacher-centred and/or Learner/learning-centred pedagogical approaches

In previous sections, I outlined how pedagogical choices impact the way the subject is taught and received. The choice of pedagogical approach is equally important in the discussion of the reasons behind teachers' instructional choices. Again, the choice of approach also reveals the ideological stance of the teacher but might not necessarily be relevant to all teachers. A teacher-centred approach could present a number of points of interest in an exploration of pedagogical choice. At one level, teacher-centred strategies tend to be transmissive and didactic, with little scope for interaction between teacher and students. However, the distance and structure that such an approach entails might assist students with little background in the study of literature to have controlled insight into texts which might have been overwhelming with an expansive pedagogy. Teacher-centred strategies have also proven to be popular amongst those with bigger classes. Some of the teachers feel that they could not have engaged with their learners differently since they work under tight constraints. However, a discussion on pedagogical choice probably needs to take into account the difference each choice makes in

terms of achieving instructional objectives, in getting students to acquire knowledge and in developing the required skills.

Learner-centred approaches are often associated with the teaching of literature. The notion that classes could be of "value" or that learning could be multi-layered and process-oriented could determine specific pedagogical choices in the classroom. The belief that literature requires deep and sustained engagement and that learners need to "discover" and "react" could, however, potentially prove harmful if students are not prepared for such a choice of pedagogy. Thus, even if a strategy or approach is categorised as "learner-friendly", this does not mean that learning and enjoyment of literature are taking place. It is very possible that some teachers could be insisting on implementing their notion of "good" or "effective" pedagogy irrespective of learners' level or ability. The effectiveness of some approaches could thus be called into question when dealing with larger or smaller groups of students. The study's findings suggest that teaching approaches might not be fixed in time but rather may change according to the context, changing beliefs or student profiles that the teacher may currently be addressing. In some cases, the choice of pedagogy is a compromise between an inflexible working context and deeply held beliefs about how the subject should be taught.

9.4.7 Professional safety and comfort *and/or* Risk, autonomy and creativity

Pedagogical choices are also made in anticipation of comfort and/or apprehension of risk. Safety and risk are thus two important elements that teachers are very much aware of. Teachers that fear professional risk often choose pedagogical moves that protect their reputation and authority in their classrooms and their good standing amongst their peers, and ensure that they remain in management's good books. This often results in a limited range of pedagogical moves that are adopted to avoid tension as much as possible. Safety could also imply restriction in terms of teacher involvement in the classroom. Safe practices such as limited interaction with students or the texts under study could enable more experienced teachers to engage in their own developed heuristics in terms of teaching. Desire for professional safety might also explain why many teachers are wary of communities of practice at school level, since interactions within such a community require individual members to open up to their colleagues, and share their professional doubts and worries. If teachers are wary of losing their safety or feel they will lose the little autonomy they enjoy, it might be valuable to reflect on the sort of context that creates such a climate of uncertainty which could negatively impact their pedagogical stance.

The notion of comfort refers to the degree of ease with which the teacher has assimilated in the school environment. Once this has happened, there is little likelihood that this teacher will upset the status quo that serves his/her immediate and long-term personal and professional needs. A search for comfort is revealed in teachers' choice of texts, or using methods and strategies that address students' needs without additional effort. Can teachers leave their

comfort zone? The findings of this study suggest that motivation to do so can be stimulated by teachers' personal beliefs, experience, knowledge of learners and confidence in their subject content knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge. It may also be argued that risk-taking pedagogies, involving a number of pedagogical possibilities could represent a kind of comfort zone for some teachers, who might reject routine use of the same strategies across their classes but instead invest in innovative and expansive practices to better address their students' learning needs.

9.4.8 Restrictive *and/or* Expansive pedagogical choices

The study's findings reveal that teachers oscillate between strategies that may seem restrictive or reductive and those that might seem expansive. However, teachers do realise the compromises or sacrifices they make when opting for a particular line of action, and understand that some possibilities are put aside in the name of syllabus completion. Some try to rationalise this by commenting on student performance while others evoke the systemic pressures they experience. For some, the term "restrictive" might not be suitable, given that they openly welcome such pedagogies, which offer a number of advantages, including safety.

On the other hand, expansive choices refer not only to a variety of choices but also to the nature of the choices themselves, which tend to aim to develop learners beyond the immediate learning that generally occurs. As with restrictive pedagogy, the teachers are also aware of the impact of what they choose to do in class and the price they have to pay. To be expansive means to embrace a pedagogy of hope, that is, pedagogical and professional risks, to spend time on activities that could potentially not work out, and to spend time working on mid- to long-term development of their learners. There is hence an element of generativity, as teachers work for the greater benefit and development of their learners through their selected approaches.

9.4.9 Variety, complexity and flux in pedagogical choice

These categories are not necessarily isolated from one another. For instance, a teacher engaging in a teacher-centred strategy with an emphasis on lecturing or giving notes might suggest a more restrictive choice of pedagogy that goes against a learner-centred, expansive paradigm in the literature classroom. However, these choices could be linked to the teacher's deeper understanding of student learning, which would assist him/her to know when to optimally use specific strategies to promote student learning. In other cases, engaging in deep discussion of texts when students might not have acquired the rudiments of literary competence at upper secondary level might not necessarily be progressive or learner-centred. Using the diagram as a representational device enables me to reveal the 'fuzziness' of these categories, since the teachers that participated in this study did not necessarily conform to one specific

pedagogical stance all the time, but shifted from one to another, depending on how they construct their stance in relation to these choices.

Along that continuum, pedagogical choices are not singularistic alternatives from which the teacher could choose, but rather a palimpsest of opportunities and possibilities potentially in dialogue with one another as the teacher works through these options and considers which to adopt. This continuum is therefore not a linear one, as selection of specific choices is not necessarily binding, and teachers may shift from one particular pedagogical choice to another. Choices are not finite in themselves but protean, each leading to different sets of possibilities that require further in-the-moment decision making as the teacher makes his/her choices. Faced with complex situations, like most of us, teachers react instinctively, rationally, or draw on prior knowledge of similar or parallel situations, to make decisions. Choices are therefore not always rational, nor do they always follow logical principles in a dynamic context. Such choices are also complex since teachers need to consider a number of factors within and outside the classroom, such as student knowledge, assessment outcomes for set literature papers, and school requirements in terms of accountability and student performance. Moreover, prime drivers such as biographical experiences, personal beliefs, teacher knowledge, and context and curriculum also dynamically interact and further nuance teachers' pedagogical choices. All these influences, which are themselves constantly changing, impact on teachers' sense of self and their ability to make choices.

9.5 Section Three: Freedom of pedagogical choice

9.5.1 Freedoms and/or unfreedoms in pedagogical choice

In making their pedagogical choices, teachers feel empowered or capable of making certain decisions regarding their subject teaching. The extent to which teachers feel they have a choice is instrumental in explaining pedagogical choice. The ability to choose or not to choose, or even the inability to choose therefore become crucial elements. The concepts of *freedoms* and *unfreedoms* are used here to describe teachers' ability to make pedagogical choices, and the degree to which they feel capable of making such choices.

Freedom of pedagogical choice can be defined as a state in which the teacher is able to decide upon a pedagogical course of action without pressure or impediment. Such freedom refers not only to the alignment of specific factors that enable the teacher to take decisions regarding the teaching of literature, but more importantly, to the teacher's own assessment of the pedagogical possibilities open to him/her. The concept could thus enable better comprehension of how choices are perceived and constructed, instead of just represented as the end product of pedagogical thinking and decision-making. In this context, choice is activated by the teachers' self-schema filter, which comprises the different beliefs, experiences and contextual and curricular influences on pedagogy.

English literature teachers therefore make their pedagogical choices in dialogue with these different influences, with the perceived benefits and risks of these choices informing their sense of freedom to act. Freedom of pedagogical choice can thus be that enabling space that teachers, as active agents, create for themselves in order to enact their pedagogical decisions, based on the available information and influences around them. Teachers that overtly exercise freedom in their pedagogical choices often opt for expansive choices, with an understanding of how such choices can be linked to the more generative, developmental goals of literature. This implies a degree of independence, and in some cases, defiance or resistance to established contextual or curricular pressures.

Similarly, the teacher that opts to read the text in class and provide readymade notes is aware of the unfreedoms under which he/she operates, and which he/she has formalised through her compliance. Along the spectrum of freedoms, the notion of *unfreedom*, could be used to explain the representation of limited or no freedom of pedagogical choice. The concept of *unfreedom* is particularly appropriate since it maintains a tenuous link to the concept of freedom, and suggests the possibility of reversal or a shift in polarities as teachers navigate the complex world of pedagogical decisions. Unfreedoms are therefore not mere manifestations of structural and contextual elements that constrain choice, but refer to the way teachers construct their professional identities and selves in relation to the degree of (un)freedom they perceive.

However, like the constructs presented earlier, the notion of unfreedom(s) is itself multi-faceted, and subject to the teacher's understanding of what it entails. Unfreedoms on the continuum of pedagogical possibilities, thus need not represent imposition by external influences; they could also be assumed by the teachers themselves, as a professional and personal stance that could guarantee safety. Therefore, while the diagram posits a pedagogy of resistance as an act of choosing that is firmly grounded in a spirit of freedom, unfreedoms could also be acts of resistance under the guise of compliance.

Indeed, freedom of choice represents the freedom to choose, irrespective of whether the chosen pedagogy is considered as "reductive" or "expansive". In such cases, the freedom to choose also entails teachers opting for more pedagogically restrictive actions in class, but specific benefits are guaranteed. Paradoxically, there is safety and freedom in teachers' understanding of their unfreedom(s), and the study suggests that some will not only willingly give up certain pedagogic freedoms but will actively welcome such capitulation if it guarantees professional safety and continuity in the long run. In some cases, there is even acceptance of the way things are run in the school, which has conditioned a certain routine method to the teaching of literature, aimed at preparing students for a competitive world characterised by examinations. This restricted pedagogy leads to equally repressed and suppressed learner behaviours, which can potentially create a cycle where teachers reluctantly but gradually let go of more expansive choices to venture towards reductive ones. Questions could thus be raised as to the effectiveness of such strategies in achieving the different learning and assessment goals in the literature syllabus at upper secondary level, which not only require students to show evidence of literary competence but also the ability to present justified, independent opinions.

Including the notion of freedoms and unfreedoms challenges the common understanding of teachers being reactive to internal or external stimuli as events; the argument that could be made here is that teaching decisions bring forth a continuous reimagining and reworking of the freedoms that a teacher can avail him/herself of. Freedom and unfreedom of choice thus directly impact the choices teachers make in their classroom.

9.5.2 The self-schema filter in pedagogical choices

Inspired by the field of psychology, the self-schema concept refers to the memories and beliefs a person constructs around him/herself that assist his/her self-conception. The notion of schema is not new to the study of teacher cognition and decision-making (Bishop & Whitfield, 1972; Shavelson & Stern, 1981). However, the understanding of teacher 'schema' as mental frameworks mainly linked to classroom situations, and filtered through individual values, is extended here to encompass mental images of the teacher's professional self in relation to decisions to be taken. Another useful related concept is that of simulation as teachers mentally project "what-if" situations which enable them to anticipate and adapt to different pedagogical situations.

The self-schema filter is a construct that enables understanding of the cognitive, and emotional processes via which choices are effected. It provides the teacher with a self-image of him/herself in relation to the choices he/she makes and their consequences. Every teacher's self-schema will differ but it can be posited that some element of "mirroring" will take place as the teacher engages with specific choices in specific contexts. Here, the self-schema filter not only encompasses the field of possible teaching situations or teaching moments, but also understandings of consequences for both teacher and students. Processing information through one's self-schemata takes place more quickly when it is relevant to one's self-schema. Moreover, the behaviour and actions resulting from the self-schema often reinforce the individual's self-conceptions, or biases, be they positive or negative. The self-schema can be a useful construct in understanding how people's decisions, behaviour and actions could stem from pre-conceived beliefs, past experiences and current lived experiences. Expectations from one's context could also drive specific beliefs and expectations in teachers, highlighting, in the process, the conceptions that teachers could have of their profession, the subject they are teaching, their students and the system they find themselves in.

In such a mirroring, teachers would be able to project themselves into the consequences of their choices and ascertain whether short- or long-term decisions are worth taking. In some cases, capitulation or compromise might be preferable, since it would prevent being "flagged" as unconventional or non-cooperative. In other circumstances, being more resistant could be a deliberate choice for the teacher who wants to establish his/her own signature pedagogical style and would not want to compromise on that. The filter thus assists the teacher in navigating those uncertain choices and their corollaries.

9.5.3 Safety and/or uncertainty in pedagogical choices

In the continuum of possible pedagogical choices, where it becomes difficult to talk of categories when choices can be protean, choosing more expansive or more restrictive strategies incurs costs either way, which are often borne by the teacher. The different freedoms have an impact on the attitudes, practices, selections of texts, and modes of transmission within the class, and so on. For instance, the confidence generated by one's experience, or prior knowledge of specific texts, could help explain the confidence evident in the deployment of expansive strategies. *Restrictive* and *expansive* pedagogical choices bring forth concepts of safety and uncertainty at different points within the continuum. Beyond pedagogical considerations and beliefs about the subject and how it should be taught, teachers are often confronted with the impact of teaching decisions on their sense of professional safety. The school and class contexts are dynamic spaces where different forces contend and interact. Power dynamics amongst teachers, between the administration and the teacher, between teachers and students, or amongst students are an inevitable reality against which pedagogical choices are projected and reformulated.

Teachers do not necessarily opt for seemingly liberating pedagogies in relation to teaching literature, nor do they necessarily comply entirely with pedagogies that are procedural and *performative* in nature. While some choose to exercise their freedom of choice in going 'off the beaten track', which introduces an element of uncertainty, others choose 'safer' pedagogies that are not likely to be questioned or contested. Choosing pedagogies of safety or risk therefore entails shifting conceptions of what knowledge means, how to engage with different kinds of students and how to work with different learning objectives. The professional "risk" involved in adopting expansive pedagogical choices is not necessarily present in the field but is rather "constructed" in light of how these pedagogical stances impact on student learning and performance, as well as teacher performance.

The model presented above does not explain every single choice made by teachers in different kinds of contexts. However, it helps to deepen our understanding of how choices are interpreted in a framework of perceived freedoms and unfreedoms that impact on teachers' ability and willingness to set out specific pedagogical decisions.

9.5.4 A pedagogy of compliance, a pedagogy of resistance *and/or* a pedagogy of compromise

As can be surmised from the different points raised earlier, pedagogical choices are constructed and/or situated as pedagogical alternatives, processes and events. Based on the abstract constructs elaborated upon in this chapter, I thus propose a thesis on teachers' freedom of pedagogical choice, which can be framed as follows:

Teachers use their self-schema filter to mediate their understanding of freedom of choice, which in turn impacts on their pedagogical choices, while enabling them to position themselves and construct their own pedagogy along a continuum of possibilities in relation to the perceived risks, benefits and objectives of specific choices.

I have visually represented the thesis in the diagram (Figure 9.3) which follows:

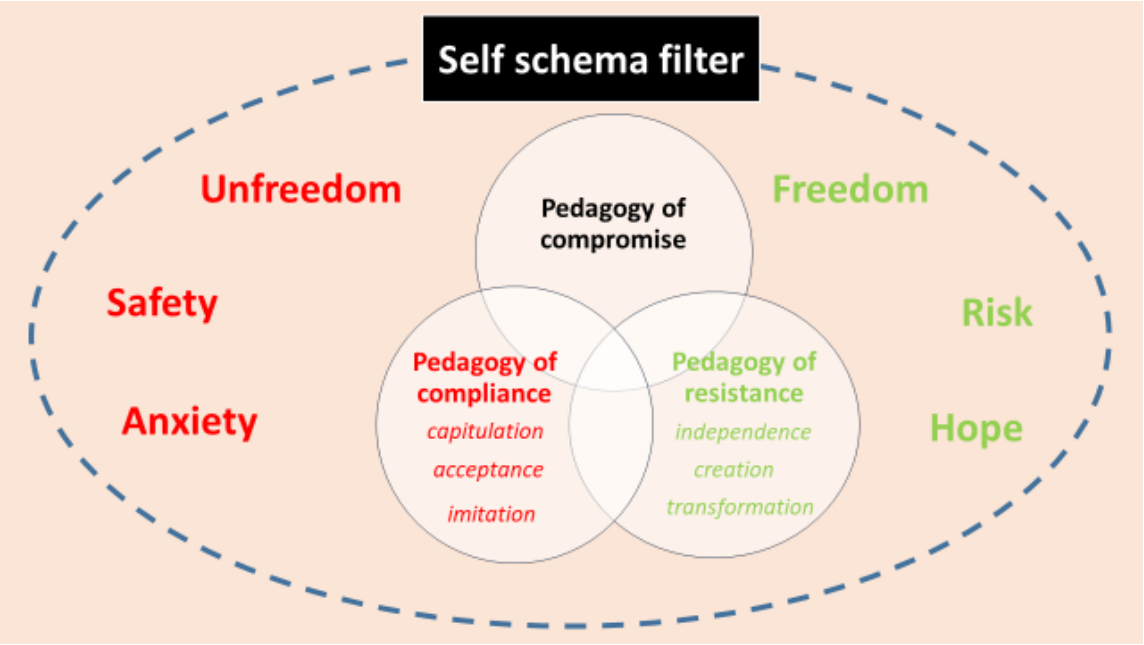


Figure 9.3: *Freedom and unfreedoms, safety and risk, anxiety and hope in pedagogical choice*

Choices can also be found along the continuum that embody different pedagogical intentions. As teachers find themselves deciding whether to "comply" or to "resist", there are also those who engage in a *pedagogy of compromise*, trying as far as possible to cover the aims of the syllabus while seeking to match learning needs, learners' profiles and learning objectives. Rather than simply complying with outcomes set by the curriculum and the system, some teachers find ways to integrate a greater degree of depth and interpretation in their literature classes. In other cases, however, teachers often find themselves teaching something other than what they had planned or in a way they had not anticipated teaching, because they are under pressure to complete a syllabus or are expected to produce proof of performance. *Compromise* thus becomes a way of ensuring safety in relation to a prescriptive system by "ticking" enough boxes so as not to stand out from peers.

However, compromise also suggests that some teachers feel restricted, restrained or

betrayed by a system that does not seem to acknowledge the specificities of literature as a subject area. The notion of a '*compromised pedagogy'* could be used to refer to the sense of anxiety that teachers experience when embarking on strategies they do not necessarily believe in. The notion of *camouflage* can be posited to describe how teachers dissimulate their beliefs about pedagogical content in order to externally conform to the prevailing way of operating. For example, a teacher might refrain from using role-play in drama or oral recitation of a poem because her class might disturb other teachers, even if he/she is convinced that a particular strategy is pedagogically sound.

Thus, different paradigms about the teaching of literature could co-exist. The fact that one pedagogy would be subsumed or capitulate to another, and that teachers could fully engage in one pedagogical stance when firmly convinced of the effectiveness of another one, points to the complexity of the decision-making process. In the enactment of a performative agenda, such *'camouflage pedagogies'* raise questions about the teacher's agency and subject beliefs, as well as the types of knowledges and learning habits that are created and sustained in these different contexts. Teachers could thus feel empowered to use *expansive strategies* covertly or feel inhibited by their own "camouflage framework" of pedagogical acts. If there is a compromise in terms of freedom of choice, could it represent an act of subversion from within the system? The question of whether there is a "right" choice in terms of pedagogy could also be raised. The possibility that, in some cases, teachers have to resort to covert coverage of curriculum objectives suggests the need for further probing into why they feel inhibited in establishing their own *pedagogical signatures* based on their experience, knowledge of the subject and knowledge of their learners. The issue could be systemic but it raises questions in relation to the way subject disciplines are managed in the education system as well as the nature of the 'subject specialist'. If the subject specialist in literature feels there are strategies that are pedagogically sound for the teaching of his/her subject, why would he/she feel constrained to let go of these? This suggests a reworking of what knowledge in that domain entails, which goes beyond the teacher's understanding of the subject area, and which is defined by curricular forces as well as systemic trends.

The larger constructs of a *pedagogy of compliance* and *of resistance* (see Figure 9.3) are an amalgamation of the various choices made by the teachers. These two overarching categories exist in tension with each other, not because they are diametrically opposite but because they represent possibilities that are within reach of the teacher. At any point in time, the teacher who is fully involved in a pedagogy of compliance could find a means to engage in more expansive practices. As earlier sections have pointed out, compliance arises due to many reasons, such as a culture of accountability, anxiety about professional safety, and a performance culture that emphasises product more than the process. A pedagogy of compliance therefore does not enable the teacher to explore the whole range of pedagogical possibilities in the teaching of the subject but is restricted to 'tried and tested' strategies that better prepare students for output.

This does not imply that teachers are not concerned with the learning that takes place in the class but that perhaps, whether it be through routine or convenience, these strategies have

become the standard pedagogy that many teachers refer or resort to. A pedagogy of compliance is also not always a conscious act, and many teachers might not be aware of the freedoms that they might be giving away in forfeiting some of the essential pedagogical requirements that a literary subject might require. Others could be convinced that their method is the most effective, given the nature of the class and the profile of their students. Working in isolation could compound this impression and result in the teacher replicating these strategies over the years and becoming convinced of their effectiveness in achieving learning outcomes. There are also those teachers who are complicit in relinquishing their freedoms to choose, because doing so ensures that they become 'part of the team' and promotes their professional 'survival' in the institution. Imitation and adherence to every norm regulating instruction and assessment, even if they could potentially be prejudicial to learners' learning, also ensure that teachers are able to teach without any contestation.

A *pedagogy of resistance* is such by virtue of its rejection of the status quo and as a result of deeper introspection on the nature of the subject, the purpose of teaching and learning, learner-centred pedagogy, teacher beliefs, teacher knowledge and the potential for this subject to promote higher-end thinking at upper secondary level. Such pedagogies often result from intrinsic factors but can also arise in situations where the teacher is empowered, for example, due to the institutional context or through ITE/CPTD. The realisation that students cannot fulfil their potential or are not being assisted to explore the subject deeply enough, triggers *expansive pedagogies* in some teachers. In other cases, it is a matter of experience and prior knowledge, with some teachers having learnt from an 'expansive' teacher and wanting to emulate this kind of pedagogy.

Midway across the continuum lies the *pedagogy of compromise*. While the study's findings show different degrees of *resistance* and *capitulation*, most teachers were, to some extent, compromising on one or more aspects of their teaching or their students' learning as they tried to balance the goals set by the system and their own professional goals. Compromise thus represents the dilemma that many teachers face within their institutions as they need to make difficult decisions regarding what to teach and how much to teach in class. It could be argued that compromise illustrates the situation of teachers who are trying to make sense of their professional duties in the face of pressure to conform or submit to trends that seem contrary to their beliefs about teaching, or which reinforce their understanding of what they should be doing in their class and institution. Since choice-making is sometimes only visible in its enaction or in the wake of its implementation, such processes might be challenging to capture, especially as teachers are constantly called upon to decide on their pedagogical practices in in-the-moment situations as well as during planning. Can and should a teacher, then, resist, capitulate or compromise? Each scenario rests upon assumptions made about the role of the teacher, and adhering to any of these situations also suggests acceptance of the image of the teacher conveyed by that stance.

A *freedom of pedagogy of choice* could thus be defined as a choice amongst many pedagogical possibilities that are varied, complex and in flux. It also entails *freedoms* and *unfreedoms*, as constructed and experienced by the teachers themselves. While comprising

safety and risks, pedagogical choices are self-chosen, with teachers implicitly aware of the affordances and constraints these choices entail. Many also involve some degree of compromise and uncertainty, as teachers, through their self-schema, filter, evaluate and project themselves in relation to the outcomes of their short-term, situated or long-term decisions.

The thesis highlights teachers' centrality in the making of pedagogical choices but also affirms their responsibility as *agents* within the system. Choices are not always imposed on the teacher but are also re-constructed and re-defined in terms of their degree of comfort, safety and freedom. The extent to which teachers have a hand in rejecting or affirming their own positionality within the educational system, the school and the microcosm of the classroom, can thus be questioned. If there is imposition or restriction on teachers' decision-making, who is responsible? What could the teacher's role and position in this process? Are they really captured in the eddies and flows of powerful currents which are beyond their control, or are they, to some extent, and in some situations, also complicit in their 'subjugation'? The thesis could thus help to explain why some teachers contribute to their own 'oppression'; capitulate to a performative display of pedagogical moves that are likely to be appreciated, or choose to free themselves by initiating their own *signature pedagogies* of *resistance* and *hope*.

9.6 Section Four: Implications of the study

Having elaborated the thesis of this study, I now address the implications of this thesis at different levels.

9.6.1 Implications for theory

This thesis adds to the body of knowledge on pedagogical decision making and teacher choice, extending the discussion from contextual factors and intrinsic influences such as beliefs and knowledge to *self-concept* and the notions of freedoms and unfreedoms. Theorising pedagogical choice provides a means of developing greater insight into teacher knowledge and practice. As pointed out in **Chapter One**, decision-making is often considered to be a core feature of teaching, and while research seems to have moved on to what teachers *know* rather than what they think and decide, researching choice provides the theoretical platform to research the link between thought and action (Borko et al., 2008). Rather than being limited to a set of alternatives, pedagogical choices are the nexus of dynamic influences that impact on different aspects of pedagogy and involve the teacher's self-schema, teacher knowledge, and contextual factors. The way teachers arrive at certain choices in their pedagogy raises important questions about the nature of knowledge(s) to which the teacher has access or which he/she constructs in his/her practice in relation to the individual teaching contexts in which he/she might find him/herself. Through its focus on teachers' '*choicing'*, the thesis provides a connecting point to theories on teacher knowledge and teacher praxis, which often lack context

and tend to present the teacher as at the receiving end of a number of influences. The very act of mediation through teachers' self-schema filter enables them to take some degree of ownership of the decision-making process, even if, in many cases, venturing into unfreedoms, capitulation or conformity are the external outcomes of such decision-making.

Furthermore, the study provides fertile ground to explore not only what teachers know and decide, but also how they learn and develop as teachers. It is becoming more and more evident that teacher education is called upon to study what happens in the classroom and to use that data to inform teacher education. Studying teachers' *'situated choicing'* enables a more authentic understanding of their realities as they grapple with the various influences within their teaching context.

While the following section considers the thesis' implications for teachers, it should also be considered how theoretical understandings of freedom of pedagogical choices could assist educators. The findings of this study may be relevant to researchers looking into the intersections between teacher decision-making, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, but it is also possible for the theoretical insights to be disseminated amongst teachers. The concept of *eupraxia* proposed by Smagorinsky, Shelton and Moore (2014), refers to good practice informed by reflection in contexts where degrees of choice are available. Discussing pedagogical choices as enacted within specific contexts and also within specific understood freedoms and/or unfreedoms could assist educators and researchers to explore the complexity of teaching as lived experiences that can be shared across a larger audience.

Decision-making is connected to pedagogic thinking and can thus contribute to a body of knowledge around issues of teaching and learning, where teaching effectiveness and learning within specific disciplines could be addressed in order to improve practice. Samuel (2017) suggests a "continuum of possibilities" (p. 24), ranging from "scholarly teaching" to a "scholarship of teaching and learning" as a means of engaging theory, context and practice. In particular, he identifies the latter concept as a means of generating "abstractions and principles which are governing the action of teaching and learning" (p. 24). Establishing a community of practitioners and scholars to share, disseminate and discuss their theoretical, methodological and pedagogical choices could be a fruitful way to engage teachers in a context where teacher education and policy seem to be more distant and thus less impactful on their practice. Discussing choices in a public arena could be a means of empowering teachers and researchers to engage with theory and "knowledge *for*, *in* and *through* practices" (Samuel, 2017, p. 32), which would allow a more authentic discourse around teaching beyond anecdotal evidence.

9.6.2 Implications for teachers

This study provided opportunities for the participants to reflect on their own pedagogical practices within the literature classroom, thus supporting Kouritzin's (2000) view of the benefits of narrative research in developing this kind of reflection in teachers. The very act of describing and explaining how they proceeded to make certain choices in their teaching

provided insight, and in a few cases, a more introspective outlook on their practices and what influences them. Responding to the different instruments used within this narrative inquiry enabled the teachers to step aside and consider what influenced their choices. More than one participant stated that the questions and discussions raised during this study made them question the way they usually proceeded with their teaching and that this made them more mindful and critical. While many of the questions and comments were centred around their daily practices, they nevertheless led, in some cases, to more thoughtful practices and introspection that were sustained beyond my interactions with the participants.

How could teachers engage with the findings of this study? The choices that a teacher could potentially make show that there is a possibility of a different orientation or second life for English literature. While it cannot negate its colonial past, it is now a discipline that spans more than one culture and country. Pedagogical choices such as text selection need to reflect such changes, which requires teachers to update themselves on the latest additions to the list of prescribed texts. It could be argued that the technical difficulties noted by some of the participants with respect to finding study material on such texts could render unprepared teachers unsettled at the idea of opening up a discussion on a relatively "unknown" text. Moreover, if the subject is treated instrumentally as a means for certification rather than for a larger didactic purpose, it is likely that it will cease to appeal to those in search of an "easy" subject. There is also the supposition that teachers of literature keep updated on changes in their field and do not necessarily fall back onto familiar canonical texts they may have studied. It could be argued that many teachers, once their professional training completed, do not look back on such training as a means to refresh or update their subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. There is thus some potential for ITE/CPTD to address any aspect that teachers may feel tentative about in relation to delivery of their subject area.

Moving ahead with a revisited agenda for English literature as subject, without removing any of the usual text-based analysis, could give a second life to this subject. The findings of this study strongly suggest that besides convenience, and ease of access, many teachers selected texts that they found personally meaningful. This is only possible if expansive pedagogical choices that enable deeper engagement with texts, are made. There is a possibility of a pedagogy that goes beyond instrumental teaching of the subject and ventures into a new paradigm of transformation, decolonisation, social justice and diversity, which could be addressed through the texts, themes and issues under study. Moreover, since the canon has opened up to include a more diverse set of authors and texts, many of which address the issues faced by post-colonial societies similar to Mauritius, literature could be the one tool that allows for growth and repair amongst a generation that is often disconnected from the past. Inclusion of elements of literary critical theory could assist learners to revisit canonical or colonial texts, which suggests that, more than the texts themselves, it is perhaps the treatment and approach towards teaching these texts that need to be revisited.

Teachers often operate in very hermetic spaces and perhaps feel that their experiences might not be the same as their peers. However, the study provides insight into some of the

influences on pedagogical choices, such as conceptions of subject discipline, aims and expected outcomes of teaching the subject, knowledge of students, and pressure to devote time to syllabus completion, and to prepare students for examinations, amongst others, which all the participants directly or implicitly identified. Different participants reacted differently to some of these influences. Some of these differences might be due to the context and infrastructure in which some teachers work, or their choice of approach. Kishan and Sam's worries about examinations and preparing their students to be ready to perform for these summative assessments are similar, even if their teaching contexts differ. Their narratives could also provide teachers with deeper critical insight into the pedagogical possibilities that some of their peers may have engaged in, and which they may not have thought of. The different narrative cases, while not representative of the entire Mauritian teaching experience, could thus provide a richer description of how English literature is being taught in a number of contexts by different teacher profiles. Understanding how choices are made and what impacts on these choices could thus provide other teachers with deeper insight into the phenomenon and equip them in their professional development.

Varying degrees of awareness of agency and choice emerged from this study and some teachers became significantly more sensitive to their own freedoms as education professionals. There is thus the potential for such a study to bring forth a sense of resentment and frustration at the idea of having restricted choices in terms of pedagogy. Indeed, some participants conveyed their dissatisfaction with the way they operated in their respective classes and schools. In such cases, great care should be exercised by teachers in ensuring that the choices they make in class do not jeopardise their students' learning and development.

At the same time, teachers need to acknowledge their role and agency in some of their choices. An important finding was that teachers were not passive receivers and implementers of policy. As suggested by Mehan (1998), they are "social actors [who] are not merely puppets dancing on a string of externally imposed constraints; they act in creative ways to produce the best available outcomes for students under trying circumstances" (p. 262). Many teachers exerted some form of agency not only in their pedagogical choices but also in their choice of more conservative roles within the system. For instance, different approaches to addressing a text, such as reading in class and providing notes, or certain text choices may not always be attributed to systemic influences impacting on teacher choice. In these cases, deliberate choices are often made by teachers who, out of habit or ease, might select heuristic pedagogical moves that do not come with a heavy work or time load. Choices were thus also dependent on the state of anxiety or liberation they could potentially trigger, and teachers were very mindful of the impact of their actions or inaction at school.

If *agency* is central to the teacher's freedom of choice and *autonomy* as a subject expert, it is just as important to identify potential sources or blockages of agency. Agency can not only be cultivated in a conducive working atmosphere, but can also be driven and sustained by personal beliefs and life experiences. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest that many teachers are, on the whole, largely, unquestioning and conforming when it comes to

implementing policy decisions, which hint at a possible cultural mindset towards authority that is reminiscent of the tentativeness of some other countries in the Global South (Zeleza, 1996, 2012). It is thus important to scrutinise the role of ITE and CPTD in equipping teachers with a range of pedagogical possibilities and assisting them to make judicious choices pertaining to their own contexts. Communities of practice could also be instrumental in affirming teaching staff's sense of agency through situated, work-based learning.

9.6.3 Implications for teacher education

One of the salient findings of this study was the disconnect between teacher education and the teachers' lived experiences in the classroom. It would seem that teacher education is not always able to cater to the practical needs of teachers, even if some of the participants were quite unclear as to the kind of support they expected. For those who could access professional development programmes, the knowledge, skills and competencies developed are undoubtedly useful, but overall, a general sense of scepticism about the effectiveness and relevance of professional training was noted amongst the teachers that participated in this study. Armed with their own home-grown or locally developed knowledges and experiences, teachers are generally able to address the different challenges they confront in their day-to-day routine, and find little support in professional training programmes that do not necessarily valorise their understandings and experiences.

This does not necessary mark the impending death of initial and continuous teacher training programmes. While many teachers might not list "learned" theories and approaches as direct inspiration, their strategies suggest that they have adapted instructional theories to their classroom contexts and student needs, based on their own beliefs about teaching and learning, their perceptions of students, the learning objectives, knowledge of classroom and school contexts, amongst others. This "ownership" or re-appropriation of pedagogical approaches needs to be taken into consideration by teacher educators and theorists. In cases where teachers have not had access to teacher education programmes or any sort of professional education support, it would be worthwhile exploring how their pedagogical content knowledge is developed.

Teacher education institutions thus need to valorise programmes that enable teachers to integrate the theories to which they are exposed with the professional knowledges and experiences that in-service teachers bring to their practice. This would involve revisiting the orientation of some of these programmes to better address and integrate such prior knowledge with the teacher education syllabus. It would ensure that teacher training becomes a platform for interaction and dialogue between theory and practice. For teacher educators in particular, discussing pedagogical practices with practitioners could enable better understanding of teaching in context, and deeper insight into teachers' lived experiences. The influences on pedagogical choices also need to be taken into consideration. Whether it be the need to adhere

to established curricula and syllabi, set texts, or accountability factors, choices are rarely only impacted by classroom events but are often part of interconnected decisions that teachers make in order to address teaching and learning needs.

With their emphasis on the theoretical underpinnings of pedagogy, complemented by practicum and work placements, teacher education programmes tend to only be associated with the former by some teachers. Many in-service teachers are thus reluctant to sign up for such courses. This suggests the need for teacher education institutions to more proactively and transparently inform future trainees and perhaps all stakeholders, of the nature of their programmes, especially when such programmes have themselves undergone review in order to better cater to the needs of teachers.

How can teacher education institutions and programmes assist teachers in their pedagogical choices? While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to all pedagogical problems, case studies and discussions based on actual pedagogical practices could lead to more insightful decisions when pre-service and in-service teachers are invited to reflect on the factors that influence their practice. They would then reflect not only on the theoretical rationale for their choice of pedagogy and assessment but also anticipate and discuss the factors that are likely to present a challenge in their classroom practices. Such shared sessions could serve as incubators for ideas and suggestions from peers and teacher educators alike, as they try out ways of addressing recurring issues. Providing such platforms, ensuring that teacher education programmes and courses respond to teachers' practical needs, and empowering teachers to be informed and confident in selecting their pedagogical moves, would enable teacher educators to demonstrate their value and relevance as resources to teachers.

9.6.4 Implications for policy and policy-makers

Choice, freedom and agency are interrelated concepts that depend on the infrastructure that either enables or restricts them. Decisions taken at policy level thus have ramifications within the classroom. Like Ball (1994) who raised questions about the presence of teachers in the curriculum, this study questions the lack of visibility of teachers in the decision-making process pertaining to the curriculum. While professing to abide by international educational standards and benchmarks, policy and curriculum documents seldom address the practitioner, who inevitably is the one that translates policy and theory into practice and is thus best placed to judge what is feasible or not in the classroom context, and how students will react to the selected content and approach. As nearly all the participants in this study have disclosed, teachers are often ambiguously situated within a pedagogical state of limbo, expected on the one hand to "perform" the different observable steps required in the implementation of their practice, while at the same time, cut off from the broader objectives of the subject, which might require them to go 'beyond the script'.

It is therefore important that policy makers pay heed to the lived experiences and daily challenges that teachers face within their working contexts and realise that policies that are often constructivist in vision can lose some of their idealism as they trickle down to be implemented at "grassroots" level. Processes that aim to ensure that teachers are productive and that their students achieve positive results in their examinations, especially at upper secondary level, tend to raise the stakes and teachers often have to contend with unrealistic deadlines and performance requirements, often at great personal cost, or at the expense of their sense of professionalism or students' academic and personal development. The fact that most of the participants have had to compromise some aspect of their pedagogy to ensure that they answer to the policies adopted by the system raises questions as to whether these policies really respond to the needs of stakeholders. If forced into a position where they only execute or implement policy decisions, without paying heed to the contextual factors that impinge upon their practice, teachers are likely to feel diminished and pressurised, which would negatively impact their pedagogical practice.

If teachers are to be agents of reform and change in the educational sector, policy documents should reflect the political will to ensure that their views are taken on board. Excluding teachers from such dialogues inevitably sends the powerful message that they are expected to implement policy without questioning. In contrast, working in close collaboration with trusted and reliable practitioners in the field would provide ample opportunities to address the discrepancies noted at the level of implementation, so that the curriculum becomes more sensitive to the learning and developmental needs of actual learners in the local context.

9.6.5 Implications for research methodologies

Methodologically speaking, the use of narrative inquiry has been an effective tool for professional introspection. Given the possibilities it offers for co-construction of meaning and its ability to provide rich data on lived experiences, further research could be conducted on how this method of inquiry could be used to represent teachers' professional development. In my experience, narrative inquiry was an effective tool to capture policy and make links between thinking, planning and action in the classroom. While the use of vignettes is not uncommon within educational research, the use of video clips as (fictional) parallels to teachers' own practice could offer "safe" ground for discussion of pedagogical practices, especially amongst in-service teachers.

Ethical issues pertaining to representation choices, language choices, re-storying choices and corroboration of participants could be further explored in relation to the use of narrative inquiry, especially when issues of power and choice are foregrounded. However, this method is firmly premised on the relationship established between researcher and participant. As such methodologies become more common in education research, another avenue for investigation would be how participants engage with this "doubling" of their self as they

engage with fictional renditions or reinterpretations of their lived experiences, and the degree of freedom with which they confirm or reject such representations by the researcher.

9.7 Section Five: Limitations of the study

The aim of this study was to explore the phenomenon of pedagogical choice within upper secondary English literature classrooms in Mauritius. While the data generated and its interpretation provided a number of insights into the phenomenon of choice from the point of view of teachers, the study's findings on the phenomenon of pedagogical choice cannot be generalised to the international context. Indeed, the study has shown that such experiences varied even in the Mauritian context across the different schools and would probably have yielded different findings with more participants, or with participants with different profiles and from different teaching contexts.

9.7.1 Theoretical limitations

Certain limitations and risks are attached to the use of a qualitative method such as narrative inquiry which I tried to address in this study (this was elaborated on in **Chapter Three**).

While this study did not aim to present a comprehensive picture of how literature is taught at upper secondary level, it might be felt that working with eight participants could limit one's grasp of the phenomenon, or that these participants may not be varied enough to represent the full spectrum of teachers teaching literature in this context. The interpretive paradigm as well as the instruments pertaining to narrative inquiry provided deeper insight into different experiences of pedagogical choice-making without necessarily aiming at a universalist picture of choice across all possible contexts. To this end, I had to ensure that the information was trustworthy and authentic, which required that sufficient material was generated in the field. This meant that strategies had to be adopted, such as keeping meticulous and detailed records, acknowledging any personal bias that may or may not have influenced the findings, using more than one instrument to ensure rich data, carrying out cross-case comparisons, and engaging in respondent validation.

While an a priori set of thematic orientations was identified from the existing literature, the questions and instruments were formulated in such a way to enable the participants to come up with their own ideas rather than being pushed to answer specific questions. This also meant that I was able to use the interviews, informal conversations and vignette responses to identify themes, patterns and contradictions that were generated in the field rather than seeking confirmation of these themes in the literature.

The initial theoretical lens that was elaborated in the early stages of the research served to inform its orientation as well as the identification of themes for the subsequent levels of data

analysis. However, following a more grounded approach afforded greater freedom in interpreting the data being generated within the field, without being circumscribed by potentially restrictive theoretical frameworks from the start. The choice of narrative inquiry was not only made after careful consideration of the different approaches to data generation and research within the qualitative paradigm, but also lent itself very well to the field explored as well as the profile of the participants. However, narrative inquiry has what could arguably be called limitations. The researcher not only depends on the memories and statements of the participants but also has to acknowledge, as an interpretivist, the possibility that some of the information received, especially pertaining to personal, lived experiences, bear more "truth value" than 'truth' as individuals visit and revisit their self-identities (Kathard et al., 2010, p. 51). Moreover, sufficient trust has to be established between the researcher and the participants within a relatively short period of time, and it was not always easy to set aside the positionality (as teacher educator) that one came with. The collaboration of these participants was thus of paramount importance but I acknowledge that my interactions with individual participants varied and may have impacted on the kind and amount of data produced during those encounters.

9.7.2 Operational limitations

Educational research in schools is fairly recent in the Mauritian context (although it has been a component of many professional development programmes) and is fraught with gatekeeping issues at various levels, which had to be addressed in order to carry out some observations and interviews in the participants' work spaces. In most cases, schools were cooperative and access was not restricted, especially after authorisation was sought from the Ministry (for State secondary schools) and SeDEC[104] (in charge of Catholic Confessional Schools). However, the administrative delays incurred in such gatekeeping processes, some of which were beyond the control of the researcher, and which then had to be restarted, meant that greater efforts had to be made to sustain participants' interest in the study and to ensure that they were still willing to participate in the data production process.

It is important to outline the inherent issues stemming from the use of specific instruments. Given that, in most cases, the first meetings with the participants started with an introductory ice-breaking chat, followed by a semi-structured interview, these first contact moments were conducive to more open sharing in subsequent meetings. The semi-structured interviews allowed for some direction and insight for the participant to see where the discussion was going, with most questions leading to sub-questions, following the flow of the conversation. There was a risk, however, that the more open-ended questions could lead participants to respond ambiguously or vaguely, and that continued probing might be coloured

[104] The Service Diocésain de L'Éducation Catholique, also known as the Diocesan Service of Catholic Education, was, before 2016, formerly known as the Bureau D'Education Catholique (BEC). Under the aegis of the Catholic Church, the SeDEC is in charge of coordinating and implementing educational programmes and monitoring schools under its jurisdiction.

by my own preconceived notions and beliefs. This risk was mediated by being constantly self-aware of the directions the discussion took and by allowing participants to take control of the flow, if need be.

While I was prepared to engage with the participants in the language they felt more at ease with, I am also mindful that the linguistic choices I or the participants made could have resulted in the kind of data that was produced. It occurred to me that, in some cases, the vagueness of some of the answers might have been contrived, especially at the point when the participant and the researcher were still getting to know each other, and mutual trust had not yet been fully established. Some pertinent questions thus had to be reframed for a subsequent interview, but in a few cases, the responses remained limited or vague. I thus had to keep in mind that I might not always be provided with information in the way I would expect and that much would thus depend upon the interactions and the relationship that would be built, if I wanted to understand the teachers' motivations and beliefs.

While some of the instruments used during the process did not always generate much response from some participants, they were effective in bringing out a good deal of information from most of the participants within the constraining time period I had at my disposal. This information subsequently became the raw material for the synthesising narratives that comprised the first level of analysis, and the teachers of literature responded positively to the framing of their views and experiences in the form of narratives, which they could corroborate and endorse.

Administrative delays also meant that some schools did not respond at the same time, even when informed of authorisation obtained from higher authorities, and this had practical implications for the time spent on school premises for class observations, for instance, within the official span of the fieldwork. It did not impact the contact time with the participants, many of whom proposed that we meet and continue interviews beyond the space of the school. Despite gatekeeping letters and authorisation, curiosity from school management was also to be expected, and I realised, after a few visits to one school, and after noting the circumspect responses of one participant that management was asking questions about the nature of our discussions. This led to us changing the venue for our discussions to one that would not necessarily entail management's involvement (actual or perceived), putting the participant at ease.

The profiles of the participants were a further limitation. While I attempted to include a broad range of school profiles and teachers with a variety of teaching experiences and different professional education backgrounds, I was not able to capture one particular profile of teachers whose voices I initially also intended to listen to, namely those who taught English literature in private "international schools". I had approached teachers from two of the prominent English-medium schools that service the International Baccalaureate instead of the national Higher School Certificate. However, both declined to participate, and I was not able to contact other people from their respective schools. I feel it would have been interesting to determine whether pedagogical choices operated differently under different educational

programmes. However, I consider that the eight participants represented sufficient variety in terms of their profiles and those of the different schools where they worked.

While I did have some participants with a few years of teaching experience, I could not approach more teachers with such a profile. This was due to a number of reasons, such as the fact that some early career teachers were uncertain about participating in the study, or, as was the case in a number of schools, few early career teachers would be assigned to literature classes at upper secondary level as these classes would usually be reserved for more experienced teachers. However, the study's findings point to diversity in pedagogical choices even amongst the experienced participants, which my initial literature search did not necessarily prepare me for. While I had been expecting a more obvious divide in terms of pedagogical choices according to the age and experience profiles, the fact that experienced teachers had such different practices pushed me to look beyond these boundaries and identify the other influences at work.

Despite these limitations, it is felt that sufficient precautions were taken at the level of research design, methodology and analysis to ensure that the data generated, and possible interpretations thereof, are credible and dependable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). While care was taken to ensure that the participants' voices were heard, it was also understood, in a constructivist stance, that the researcher's presence and expressed views, as well as the interactions between the researcher and the participants generated genuine and relevant responses to the study's critical questions. In all cases, I endeavoured to cater to the participants' choice of venue, time and language for the different interviews. Clarifications were sought to avoid ambiguity in terms of the information produced during those encounters. The methodological instruments used for data production were also designed with the participants' particular circumstances in mind, so that they were not involved in answering heavy questionnaires or submitting extensive write-ups. Grounding the discussions in their lived experiences in the classroom and providing space for them to give voice to imagined experiences of pedagogical decision-making through the vignettes provided a platform for a more fluid exchange of views on the phenomenon. I am also mindful that this study relied primarily on interview data, which was 'thickened' with the use of other instruments such as stimulated recall and observation. The representations of teachers' beliefs and intentions, which, in the course of this study, was heavily mediated through language brings along the inevitable question of what exactly is the nature of the data being generated and the degree to which researcher and the research participant impact on meaning-making.

Finally, I acknowledge that the study's limitations could lie in my own inherent personal and professional beliefs and experiences as a teacher educator in English language and literature, which could have coloured my interpretation of the data. There cannot be dialogue without input of the different interlocutors and I have to acknowledge that there are implications upon the relations and subsequent engagement with participants that stemmed from who I was (male person, academic, teacher educator, amongst others). While I feel, however, that the aforementioned measures in response to some of the limitations, minimised some of these limitations and assisted in achieving the aims of the research, I nevertheless

acknowledge the different ways, as subtle as they may be, that my own positionality and my own implication within the research could have led to the outcomes and subsequent realisations.

9.8 Section Six: Potential directions for future research

Despite the limitations set out in the previous section, this study has shown, through the lived experiences of teachers, how pedagogical choices were made in specific circumstances and could provide a platform for more in-depth research in the fields of pedagogical decision-making, pedagogical practices, teacher agency, professional development and pedagogical content knowledge in English literature teaching. Future areas of research that could be considered include:

- Do all teachers make pedagogical choices under similar conditions and for the same reasons? Would the ability to make pedagogical choices be the same across different levels of schooling? Would teachers at pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels differ in their freedom to choose their pedagogical practices? Are there systemic influences that cut across all levels and impact on teachers' decision-making, irrespective of level? Exploring pedagogical choices in other subject areas and at different levels of schooling might yield valuable information to confirm or reject the influences noted in English literature classrooms.
- Further research could be conducted on the differences between subjects that are framed within a national curriculum framework and those that are offered beyond the nine-year compulsory schooling system. Exploring how literature is taught at lower secondary level could offer a point of comparison with upper secondary classes in relation to pedagogical decision making and instructional practices. Are the curriculum documents provided by national and international examination-providers sufficient for teachers to design their own syllabus? In what ways could teachers benefit or not from having a detailed curriculum document for subjects offered at secondary level?
- This study highlighted that most of the participants found formal professional training and teacher education programmes to be inconsequential in terms of the pedagogical choices they made. It warrants further investigation of the role and relevance of professional training institutions in preparing pre-service and in-service teachers for the profession, as well as teachers' assumptions and expectations vis-à-vis such institutions. These institutions could also explore how educators construct and engage with their pedagogical content knowledge and how this informs their practice as they navigate the various pedagogical possibilities open to (and in some cases, imposed on) them.
- What factors influence the formation of communities of practice within and beyond school contexts, and how could they propose an alternative pathway to professional development? While this study suggests that many teachers avoid communities of practice within their workplace as they are not part of an ingrained school culture, and

are often set up as contrived collegiality, it also shows the possibilities inherent in being part of a community with similar interests that could provide support and act as an additional source of workplace knowledge. The benefits of such an alternative to formal professional development structures could be further explored. Such communities could contribute to a scholarship of teaching and learning that is less hierarchical, more localised and thus, more potentially acceptable as a means of generating and sharing teacher knowledge.

- While there have been a number of educational research projects, the informal feedback received from some stakeholders suggests that those that promote more "horizontal" collaboration between practitioners and education researchers are still quite rare. How could research be carried out to not only expand the field of knowledge but at the same time be relevant and useful for stakeholders? Can research carried out by an institution responsible for teacher training divest itself of its inherent power relations with the researched? There is ground for further introspection into the nature of the research process and the influence of researchers' own 'baggage' as they engage with others in generating data.
- Closer study of policy documents and decisions taken by policy-makers could be undertaken to explore the framing and positioning of teachers within these documents and their roles in the education sector as well as to examine teachers' degree of engagement and involvement in policy making and implementation.
- Further research could be carried out on the managerial trends that seem to permeate the educational sector which could impact on teachers' agency and professional development. How these trends are enforced and how teachers react to mechanisms that seek to regulate and quantify their performance could also be further investigated.
- Earlier studies have shown that teacher knowledge also encompasses an understanding of student knowledge and conceptions and misconceptions of the subject. While not within the bounds of the current study, a potential follow-up could look into how students construct their literary competence and conceptions of literature in relation to what and how they are taught in class. The findings of this study suggest the embeddedness and situatedness of teachers' pedagogical practices into the context they teach in, as well as the engagement with other members within the same system, who bring about different relations. It is important to note that teachers' pedagogical choices cannot be analysed away from the contextual influences that partly shape those choices. Moreover, these pedagogical choices are spread out across the continuum and form part of the repertoire of potential pedagogical actions that the teacher can take at different points in time and space. The narrated experiences of the different teachers suggest that choices are made in contexts characterised by fluidity and contradiction. Someone who is agentic at one moment may find himself or herself with reduced freedoms at another. The continuum of pedagogical choices thus represents the different degrees of freedom and agency that teachers enjoy across a variety of contexts. As this study was being concluded, educators and education systems around the world were contending with the challenges presented by the pandemic Covid-19. Certainly, it may be surmised that "pandemic pedagogy" (Ebner, 2020) may be redefining teaching and learning as

teachers navigate new channels of communication and explore new tools to interact with their learners beyond traditional face-to-face formats. It could also be speculated that pedagogy as we know it could shift to a new "normal", where social distancing becomes the norm, redefining "pedagogy", "classes", "subjects", "learning" and "learners" as a result. While this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this study, some of the issues raised by this research, especially pertaining to teachers' conceptions of the subject they teach, their handling of the curriculum, and the degree of freedom they hold in the deployment of pedagogical choices could be further explored under the challenging contexts of an increasingly 'contactless' world, but where (for now) old accountability frameworks still hold sway.

There are hence a number of aspects that could be researched as a result of, and beyond the scope of, this study. While I noted in the section on the study's limitations that its findings cannot be generalised, it would be valuable to carry out similar studies at different levels, such as from pre-primary to tertiary levels, to explore how educators at various levels engage in decision-making and pedagogical choices in their teaching contexts. Further comparisons with other educational contexts might also yield deeper insights into the phenomenon of choice in such contexts and the freedoms and agency that teachers may or may not have access to.

9.9 Closing thoughts

This chapter concludes this study on the phenomenon of pedagogical choice in English literature classrooms at upper secondary level in Mauritius using narrative inquiry. In-depth insights into the discipline of English literature as taught at upper secondary level were generated. Teachers' pedagogical choices within situations of freedom and unfreedom are made with varying degrees of acceptance, or resistance in light of the safety and risks involved. These pedagogies of compliance, resistance, hope and transformation are also largely dependent on the system, schooling context, texts and the students the teachers engage with. The proposed thesis considers how teachers use their self-schema filter to construct their pedagogical choices in light of perceived freedoms and unfreedoms, leading to a continuum of pedagogical possibilities that are varied, complex and in flux. It also highlights the interrelatedness of these different influences on pedagogical practices that are increasingly regulated within a performativity-driven assessment culture of schooling and examinations. If teachers are to address the various challenges inherent in teaching their subjects, they could perhaps be encouraged to acknowledge some of the choices they make implicitly in their day-to-day planning, teaching and assessment, and reflect on what these choices inevitably entail for themselves and their students.

Epilogue: Where I now stand

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

The metaphor of the journey is often used in academic discourse to represent the researcher's growth. While it is certainly apt as a metaphor, I find the literary term 'anagnorisis' (or recognition) to be even more suitable. Certainly, any amount of prior research does not prepare one for the uncertainties of engaging with other human beings and producing data together. Making meaning together with my participants is something that I am still amazed at having done, and the tentativeness of the entire process has been nerve-wracking albeit rewarding. I keep reflecting upon notions uncovered in the course of this study, such as agency, freedom, and choices. Am I, as teacher educator, freer to choose my own pedagogical choices, or am I also subject to systemic constraints and "mind-forg'd manacles"? Do my andragogical objectives consist of assisting educators in making better pedagogical choices or to prepare them to be independent decision-makers (or both)?



Figure 10.1: "Decisions, decisions" (Gauld, 2018)[105]

[105] Reproduced with permission of the artist.

I started on this journey with questions about the pedagogical decisions taken by English literature teachers because I, too, was uncertain and remain uncertain about a "right" way to teach this subject. Such a position of uncertainty rarely translates well in the actual world of the adult classroom; despite an underlying andragogical principles of valuing adult learners' experiences, the teachers I work with still look for reassurance and guidance, and still seek, in our classes, a voice of authority which will somehow validate what they know and experience in the field. It thus becomes a challenge to engage with uncertainty and complexity, especially when attempts at displacing power from the "lecturer" towards learners and learning sometimes ironically end up being misconstrued as lack of subject content expertise on the part of the lecturer.

I was never too far from the field of teaching, so I cannot claim to be walled within the white towers of academia. Yet, here I stand troubled, because one of my earliest assumptions as teacher educator had been that knowledge brought about at the right moment could help solve pedagogical problems. My interactions and shared anecdotes with the teachers in this study brought forth issues both within and around them which implicitly or directly influenced their pedagogical choices. Their construction of their professional selves and their decisions were as much a systemic product as they were related to their lived experiences. I am therefore reminded of the many times educators have pointed out the difficulty of implementing specific approaches to teaching literature because of issues I may once have dismissed as inconsequential. Far too often, teachers are assumed to look for 'quick-fixes' but they may, in fact, be looking for guidance in navigating a world of complexity where the outcomes are often more prized than the process. Vis-à-vis that earlier self, I consider myself now to be better informed. This study has enabled me to develop greater insights and more empathy towards the different processes a teacher undergoes in deciding what, how and why to teach the way he or she does.

What this study has also brought to the fore is how those different narratives or slices of lives shared with me remind me of the possibilities and choices I myself have faced. While a number of those choices may have been driven by specific beliefs and contexts, there are none of them which I cannot, now, understand, since I am myself, as educator, constantly thinking of means and ways to carry out my own classes. This provides me with the ability to engage with teachers with more humility and hindsight and teaches me to be more circumspect about their experiences. Engaging in narrative enquiry thus has proved to be a rich methodology to tap into the diverse experiences of teachers in a variety of situations, and suggests that this narrativizing of experiences can be integrated more fully within teaching contexts.

The findings of this study contain seeds of hope. Teachers are far less powerless within the system than would initially appear; they are able to engage with the different constraints they face and adjust accordingly. Their freedom, in that sense, lies in their ability to choose, even when situations seem dire, and if some have seemed troubled, it has often been due to challenges they have encountered in trying to teach their students against difficult odds.

Teachers' agency is thus framed from a variety of vantage points. Since I have started to engage with data analysis and theorisation, I find myself now referring more and more in class to choices teachers can make and how these choices can result in different consequences for the teacher, students and school. Framing those comments around choices, to me, signals a stronger involvement of the teacher rather than listening to lecturers speak of 'strategies' and 'approaches', which seemingly exist by themselves and suggest, at least in the mind of some teachers, direct application from theory to the classroom. This, in my sense, is one way to encourage teachers to "own" their own teaching choices and to reflect more pointedly around what such decisions entail. If this research is to benefit the teachers who have inspired it, then it is my wish that these teachers realise their own potential and expertise as professionals and decision-makers in their field.

This troubling of academia and teacher education is certainly not new in research but does raise the question of what we base ourselves upon when we make pedagogical choices. How can teacher education reconcile theory and the eddies and flows of teaching in "real life"? Perhaps, this is where a pedagogy of choices; or reflection into pedagogical "choicing", in opening up to possibilities can be fruitful to teachers who have to engage with complex systems and human elements. Such pedagogies of uncertainty and of trialling, which eschew ready-made solutions, can help prepare in-service and pre-service teachers to teach responsively. Certainly, possibilities seem to exist for teachers to empower themselves and control their agency. A knowledge system that is inspired by and, in turn, informs teachers' practices through a scholarship of teaching and learning can provide a much-needed space that is not entirely the province of academics and researchers. In fact, such kinds of scholarship can assist in setting up a knowledge system that benefits all those involved and not just knowledge production in academia. While communities of practice did not seem to be favoured by many teachers in the study, they still remained valuable for those who did resort to them, which suggests that teachers can be encouraged to develop their decision-making through such communities.

As someone who has been a student of literature, a teacher of literature and now a teacher educator invested in teaching literature didactics, what is my role and standpoint in relation to this subject? Certainly, my own insights and experience in teaching English literature were enriched with exposure to other educators' beliefs and practices, and allowed me to understand that a variety of viewpoints pertaining to the teaching of this subject exists. Although current text options now seem wider, the field of English literature itself as a taught subject seems to be a largely canonical field of study, and is fuelled by, and fuels in return, teachers' conceptions of literature. While reflecting upon the text choices that my participants made, I cannot help but be mindful also of the various currents of thought which also have colonial undertones. Interestingly, for a strongly independent republic emerging out of centuries of European colonization, the teaching of literature is illustrative of some of the inherent beliefs and biases pertaining to the perceived superiority of canonical texts. Is this an aspect that we, at teacher training, are failing to address across the board and across disciplines? In current educational discourse, the expression "unlearn to relearn" is often bandied about but rarely takes place due to certain predominant structures and mindsets. Perhaps before even

wondering about the canonical text choices of my participants, I should look more sharply at our own academic and teacher education systems and wonder if those systems can themselves become decolonial in nature.

At another level, as someone professionally engaged in teacher education, engaging in this study has raised a number of questions about my own positionality as academic in the field of teacher education. I have to acknowledge the different ways whereby I may have sustained or been complicit to upholding a specific agenda. Could I have contributed to silencing my participants while interacting with them? Could my identity as teacher educator have led my participants to pause, withhold, or misrepresent information which may be construed as "risky" in the hands of someone in my position? Inevitably, who I am as a person, with all the influences that have shaped me, as well as my core beliefs, values and understandings, also colour my interactions with others. This, I realise now, is not inherently a negative thing, but rather, an exercise in academic honesty, as I lay bare my own conditioning, which may or may not have impacted on the way I have depicted my research participants, for instance. Have I thus unknowingly framed them using the models of teacher education that I am used to? Have I been tone-deaf to some of the richness and multitudes within teaching practices in context in a quest to see "good" teaching? Engaging in this study, with my participants and the data we have produced have led me to start questioning how teacher education institutional discourse and curriculum documents present and re-present teachers. As I ponder upon what choices teachers make in their classroom, inevitably the question ricochets back to me to ask what choices I provide to my own students and how I assist in their learning and professional development. Clearly a critical reflection on teacher educator praxis within my own ecology is required which will help me to clearly understand the teacher's ties with space, context, time and audience.

I start off this section with a quote referring to coming back to where we were, but this "return" is neither static nor fruitless. I am able to reflect with more insight upon my own teaching and the way my own choices as well as my students' pedagogical choices are shaped. Certainly, the continuum of choices could well be applied to my own situation as teacher educator and academic and having to juggle numerous roles within one identity. What are my own responses to the different influences and how do I use my own personal resources to construct my zones of danger, compromise, safety and comfort in relation to my practices? Undertaking this study has provided me with invaluable insights into the nature of teachers' knowledge and praxis but also on my own roles and conceptions of what teacher education entails. Will this study have drastically changed the way I teach? Perhaps, this will have led me to take "the road not taken" and make a "difference", and, in turn, assist other educators in making their own choices much more easily.

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Appendix 1: Letter to Participants and Informed Consent Form

Research Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participant,

I am a staff member of the English Department at the Mauritius Institute of Education and I am currently engaged in a research project pertaining to English literature teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary level. The aims of this study are principally to shed light upon the pedagogical choices that English literature teachers make when they teach at Upper Secondary level as well as the factors that impact upon these choices. Moreover, I wish to understand English literature teachers' conceptions of the discipline itself as well as their beliefs as to what constitutes the most suitable pedagogy for its teaching in Mauritius. In this respect, I am writing to request your participation in this study. As a literature teacher, you would be aware that there is sadly little research carried out or available on the local context and I feel that this study can help clarify a lot of what is going on in our schools at the moment as well as some of the oncoming challenges facing the literature teacher in the future. Therefore your contribution will be of utmost importance to the findings of this study as I seek to explore an area which has not been explored in the local context.

Participation will span over about 3 months; initially we will have a meeting where you will be invited to share your views about your current teaching practices in an interview. Please note that this interview will be digitally recorded simply to ensure that no data is left out from the transcription. Following this interview, your responses to a number of small reflective tasks will be solicited, where the aim will be to reflect upon your own teaching strategies, planning, use of resources and so on. Finally I would be grateful if I could be granted access as observer to some of your literature classes. Please note that if this part of my study is an issue, you may choose not to carry on. However, I feel that discussing with you on your own classes might be of great help to me to achieve the objectives of my study.

Please note that should you accept to be a participant in this study, you can withdraw at any moment without the need to provide a reason. Your contribution is very valuable and should you at any point feel uncomfortable by the questions or activities, please feel free to voice out your doubts and concerns. If the above sequence of activities inconveniences you, please feel free to discuss this with me. Rest assured that every precaution shall be taken in order to protect your anonymity. Coded names will be used to represent your answers and care shall be taken that your responses do not identify you or your institution. Only a critical peer will have partial access to the recordings to ensure that I am not biased in my transcription of data. Any personal data shared with me will be kept confidential and preserved in a safe location once transcribed. Please note that as soon as this is done, the recordings will be permanently erased.

The interview and observations will be used in a PhD thesis, and might be published as an article or as a book. In return for your co-operation, I would be happy to provide a copy of the research findings, and/or provide assistance/training in relation to the subject area at a later stage. Do note that this intervention is not meant to cause any disruption in your teaching of your set texts – rather we are seeking to investigate how you will prepare for and carry out the teaching of literature texts. Even after the study is completed, you may still contact me for further collaborative work or anything I may be of assistance, especially in relation to English literature teaching.

Once more, I would be very grateful to have your contribution to this study. If you are willing to participate, please complete the attached Participant Consent Form. I remain at your disposal should you have further queries.
Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely,

Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

English Department

Mauritius Institute of Education

Email: r.bungaree@mieonline.org

Telephone number: 57143206

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Michael Samuel

Contact details: Samuelm@ukzn.ac.za

For administrative information regarding this study:

Bongekile Bhengu, the Postgraduate Administrator, School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, tel. +27 (0)31 260-3888, fax: +27 (0)31 260-3650 or e-mail: bhengu@ukzn.ac.za

Research Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius

1. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.
2. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.
3. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions (face to face, via telephone and e-mail) at any time.
4. I understand what my role will be in this research, and that my participation is voluntary.
5. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study.
6. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the information sheet.
7. I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
8. I consent to having some of my classes observed for the purposes of this study.
9. I consent/do not consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes. (Delete whichever not applicable)

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: / /

Contact details: **(Phone)**_____

(Email)_____

Researcher's Name: **Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree**

Researcher's Signature: _____

ATTN: Mr R.K.Bungaree
FAX: 4661654

Appendix 2: Letter to School/Rector

English Department
School of Arts and Humanities
Mauritius Institute of Education
Reduit

Date

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am a staff member of the English Department at the Mauritius Institute of Education and I am currently involved in research which will culminate in a PhD thesis. I have identified a need for research into English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius. I am writing to ask if it would be possible to recruit a participant for this study from your school. I have chosen to address myself to you since your institution presents one of the variables under study.

I have prepared and attached a description of the study, and what is entailed for potential participants, for your perusal. As you will note, I am targeting teachers who are teaching English literature at Upper Secondary level. This may include teachers of Form IV to Form VI. My aim is in investigating their use of specific resources and strategies in teaching English literature. For that purpose, I will be interviewing the teachers in the context of teaching a specific prescribed text. Ideally, I would like to begin data collection in September 2013 but I am open to your own suggestions as to what would constitute a convenient period to come visit. Please note that while my focus would remain on teachers and their views, I would also like to request permission to attend a few of the literature classes concerned, as a spectator and as unobtrusively as possible.

I would be grateful if access could be granted to your premises on specific days where I could meet with the participant in his/her own free time. My objective is to cause as little disruption as possible. Please note also that all information will be made anonymous and that the personal data generated in the interviews will be recorded on disk and then transcribed. Once transcription is complete, all the recorded data on disk will be erased. The interview and observations will be used in a PhD thesis, and might be published as an article or as a book. In return for your co-operation, I would be happy to provide a copy of the research findings, and/or provide training in relation to the subject area at a later stage.

I hope that you find the attached project of interest and will be kind enough to grant me the required permission. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries. I would be willing discuss the research with you in more detail, in order for you to explain to potential respondents what participation in the research would entail. However, I would also be willing to meet with potential participants, individually or in a group, to explain all relevant issues and to answer any questions.

Should you be agreeable to my request, I would be grateful if permission for access could be grated on the attached form.

Thank you for your attention and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

English Department

Mauritius Institute of Education

Email: r.bungaree@mieonline.org

Telephone number: 57143206

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Michael Samuel

Contact details: Samuelm@ukzn.ac.za

For administrative information regarding this study:

Bongekile Bhengu, the Postgraduate Administrator, School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, tel. +27 (0)31 260-3888, fax: +27 (0)31 260-3650 or e-mail: bhengu@ukzn.ac.za

Permission to access school premises

Research Project Title: English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius

School Name:

_____

Having taken cognizance of the nature of the study and its requirements, I hereby grant / do not grant *(please cross out whichever is not applicable)* permission to Mr Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree to carry out the research titled, "**English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius**," on the school premises.

I understand that the researcher will only be on the premises for the purposes of teacher interviews and classroom observations, with minimum interference from the researcher, over a period of time to be determined with the participant (Teacher). The usual progression of the syllabus and class will not be hindered as the researcher is interested in observing English literature classes as they are currently taught.

Classroom observations will be accompanied by observation notes and there will be limited contact with students. The researcher undertakes to keep all information gathered confidential and not to cause the school's name to be jeopardized in any way.

I understand that I can withdraw consent at any time and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as pertaining to my institution, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

Name of Rector:

Signature:

(Please validate this document with the school stamp or any other relevant alternative)

Appendix 3: Letter to Ministry of Education requesting access to schools

English Department
School of Arts and Humanities
Mauritius Institute of Education
Reduit

24.09.13

The Director

Mauritius Institute of Education

Dear Sir,

Request to Ministry of Education regarding Access to Schools

As you may be aware, I am currently in my second year of study into the PhD and I have now reached a critical moment in my study where I need to venture into the field and gather information from selected participants. The sample I have chosen is quite varied and consists of private, para-statal and government secondary schools. While most of the schools have positively reacted to my request to include them in my study, I would greatly appreciate if you could forward my request regarding access to state secondary schools to the relevant authorities at Ministry level, so that my data production phase can start without any hurdle. Please find attached a letter addressed to the Ministry pertaining to my request.

Thanking you for your collaboration,

Yours sincerely,

Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

English Dept.

(UKZN Cohort 1)

English Department
School of Arts and Humanities
Mauritius Institute of Education
Reduit
24.09.13

Mr S. Bhowon
Director (*Human Resource Management & Development*)
Ministry of Education

Thro' Director (MIE)

Dear Sir,

Request for Access to State Secondary Schools

I am a staff member of the English Department at the Mauritius Institute of Education and I am currently involved in research which will culminate in a PhD thesis. To this effect, I would like to request access to secondary state institutions across the zones to carry out this research. This permission would be of paramount importance as I make contact with potential participants.

The project is as follows: I have identified a need for research into English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius. I am researching on teachers who are teaching English literature at Upper Secondary level. This may include teachers of Form IV to Form VI. My aim is in investigating their use of specific resources and strategies in teaching English literature, and looking at how they perceive the teaching of this subject. For that purpose, I will be interviewing the **teachers** in the context of teaching specific prescribed texts. Ideally, I would like to begin data collection in *September-October 2013* with teacher interviews. Please note that while my focus would remain on teachers and their views, I would also like to request permission to observe a few of the literature classes concerned, as unobtrusively as possible, at the beginning of next year, i.e., *January-February 2014*.

I would be grateful if access could be granted to state secondary school premises where I could meet with the participant in his/her own free time. Please note also that all information will be made anonymous and confidential.

I hope that you find the project of interest and I would be grateful if permission for the study to take place could be granted, so that I may approach the schools regarding access. It is understood that I will not enter school premises without approval from Zone Directorate/Ministry of Education.

Thanking you for your kind consideration,

Yours sincerely

Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

English Department

Mauritius Institute of Education

Email: r.bungaree@mieonline.org

Telephone number: 57143206

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Michael Samuel (University of Kwazulu-Natal)

Contact details: Samuelm@ukzn.ac.za

For administrative information regarding this study:

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Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

10 December 2013

Mr Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree (212557528)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0346/013D
Project title: The study seeks to look into English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius

Dear Mr Korlapu-Bungaree,

Expedited Approval

I wish to inform you that your application dated 29 October 2012 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.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Professor Michael Samuel, Dr Pascal Nadal and Dr Emmanuel Mgqwashu
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr NM Davids
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
Founding Campuses: Edgewood, Howard College, Medical School, Pietermaritzburg, Westville

Appendix 5: Clearance from Ministry of Education and Human Resources (Mauritius)

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Date: 28 November 2013

Mr Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree
83A Royal Road
Coromandel

Dear Sir,

Permission for Access to State Secondary Schools

Your letter dated 24 September 2013 refers.

2. I am pleased to inform you that approval has been obtained for your access to State Secondary Schools in the four zones to enable you to conduct your research involving English Literature Teachers of Upper Secondary Classes for the period January/February 2014.

3. You are kindly requested to liaise with Rectors of the State Secondary Schools concerned so as to allow them to make the necessary arrangements prior to carrying out your research.

4. You are further requested to submit to this office a copy of the report on the project before it being officialised.

5. It is, however, understood that all information gathered by you will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Yours faithfully,

S. Bhowon
for Acting Senior Chief Executive

MITD HOUSE, PONT FER, PHOENIX – MAURITIUS
Tel:601 5200 Fax No: (230) 698 2550

Appendix 6: Information Sheet (for Parents) and Consent Form (for Students)

Research Information Sheet (for Parents)

1. **This project seeks to develop a deeper understanding of English Literature teachers' pedagogical choices in the teaching of this subject.**
2. **The outcome would be a more comprehensive understanding of what informs teacher pedagogy, with implications for both teachers and students within this subject area.**
3. **The procedures are as follows: The research will take place for about three to four months at school. During that time, I will be gathering information from teachers through a number of techniques (namely, interview, classroom observations, reflective write-ups and video). Students will only be observed in their usual classroom interactions during the English literature class. Their responses in class will only be noted down. There will be no digital recording of those interactions.**
4. **No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.**
5. **No risks are foreseen. Your child's participation is voluntary. Opting out of this research will not affect the grade of your child.**
6. **The information gathered during these observations will be kept confidential. They will be transcribed and processed. Statements or utterances by your child may be quoted, in which case, a pseudonym will be used so that the child is not identified in any way.**
7. **I remain at your disposal should you require further information on the project and what it entails, and can be reached by phone (57143206) or by email (r.bungaree@mieonline.org).**

Name of Researcher: Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

Contact details: (Phone) 57143206

(Email) r.bungaree@mieonline.org

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Michael Samuel

Contact details: Samuelm@ukzn.ac.za

For administrative information regarding this study:

Bongekile Bhengu, the Postgraduate Administrator, School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, tel. +27 (0)31 260-3888, fax: +27 (0)31 260-3650 or e-mail: bhengu@ukzn.ac.za

Parental Consent Form for Participation in Research

Research Project Title: English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius

10. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

11. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.

12. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions (via telephone and e-mail) at any time.

13. I understand what my child's role will be in this research, and that his/her participation is voluntary.

14. I understand that the information gathered by researchers will be treated under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the information sheet.

15. I consent to my child being observed for the purposes of this study.

16. I consent/do not consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes. (Delete whichever not applicable)

I give my consent for my child _____ to participate in the research titled, "**English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius**," which is being conducted by Mr Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree, from the Mauritius Institute of Education. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I or my child can withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as my child's, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: / /

Contact details: **(Phone)**_____

(Email)_____

Researcher's Name: **Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree**

Researcher's Signature:_____

Research Information Sheet (for Students)

1. **This project seeks to develop a deeper understanding of English Literature teachers' pedagogical choices in the teaching of this subject.**

2. **The outcome would be a more comprehensive understanding of what determines the way teachers plan and teach English Literature, with implications for both teachers and students within this subject area.**

3. **The procedures are as follows: The research will take place for about three to four months at school. During that time, I will be gathering information from your teacher through a number of techniques (namely, interview, classroom observations, reflective write-ups and video). Students (ie, You) will only be observed in their usual classroom interactions during the English literature class. Your responses in class will only be noted down. There will be no digital recording of those interactions.**

4. **No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.**

5. **No risks are foreseen. Your participation is voluntary. Opting out of this research will not affect your grades in any way.**

6. **The information gathered during these observations will be kept confidential. They will be transcribed and processed. Statements or utterances made by you may be quoted, in which case, a pseudonym will be used so that you are not identified in any way.**

7. **I remain at your disposal should you require further information on the project and what it entails, and can be reached by phone (57143206) or by email (r.bungaree@mieonline.org).**

Name of Researcher: Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

Contact details: (Phone) 57143206

(Email) r.bungaree@mieonline.org

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Michael Samuel

Contact details: Samuelm@ukzn.ac.za

For administrative information regarding this study:

Bongekile Bhengu, the Postgraduate Administrator, School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, tel. +27 (0)31 260-3888, fax: +27 (0)31 260-3650 or e-mail: bhengu@ukzn.ac.za

Research Assent Form (For Students)

Research Project Title: English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius

1. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.
2. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.
3. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions (via telephone and e-mail) at any time.
4. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.
5. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the information sheet.
6. I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
7. I consent to being observed for the purposes of this study.
8. I consent/do not consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study to be used for any other research purposes. (Delete whichever not applicable)

I agree to participate in the research titled, "**English Literature Teachers' pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level in Mauritius**," which is being conducted by Mr Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree, from the Mauritius Institute of Education. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Date: / /

Contact details: **(Phone)**_____

(Email)_____

Researcher's Name: **Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree**

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix 7a: The Mauritian Educational System (Extract from Statistics Mauritius)

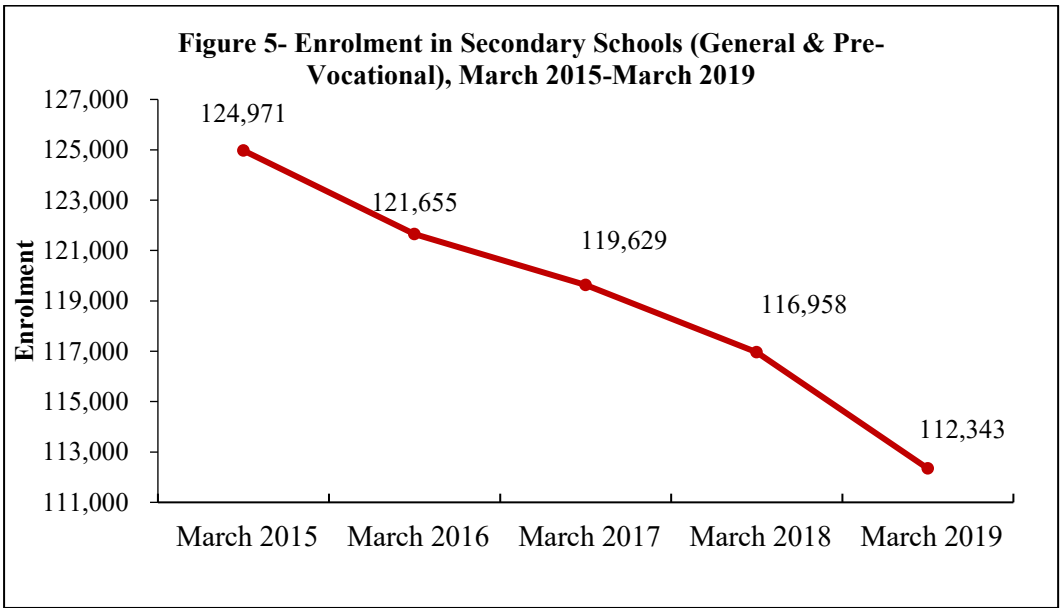
5. Secondary General and Pre-vocational Education

5.1 General and pre-vocational education

With the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education, all children completing Grade 6 of Primary move on smoothly to Grade 7 in a secondary school to complete the last 3 years of the nine-year basic education cycle.

Pupils who have not reached the minimum standards at the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) Assessment are channeled to the Extended Programme in their secondary school. The curriculum is specially adapted to their needs and allow them to complete their basic education in 4 years instead of 3.

As at March 2019, the number of secondary schools, offering both general and pre-vocational education, stood at 110 while 70 schools were offering general education only and one pre-vocational education only.



The graph depicts a continuous fall in total secondary (including pre-vocational) enrolment from March 2015 to March 2019.

5.2 Secondary education (General and Extended streams)

5.2.1 Schools

Out of the 180 schools dispensing secondary general education, 172 were in the Island of Mauritius and 8 in Rodrigues. State administered schools numbered 69, while the other 111 were private aided and non-aided schools (Table 5.1).

5.2.2 Enrolment

Secondary education enrolment decreased by 2,153 from 110,715 in 2018 to 108,562 in 2019. Table 5.3 shows that 56,015 (51.6%) were girls. Some 43.8% of the secondary school population was in state schools and 56.2% in private (aided and unaided) schools. Gross Enrolment Ratio (secondary education enrolment as a percentage of the population aged 12 to 19 years) for the general and extended streams was 72.5%.

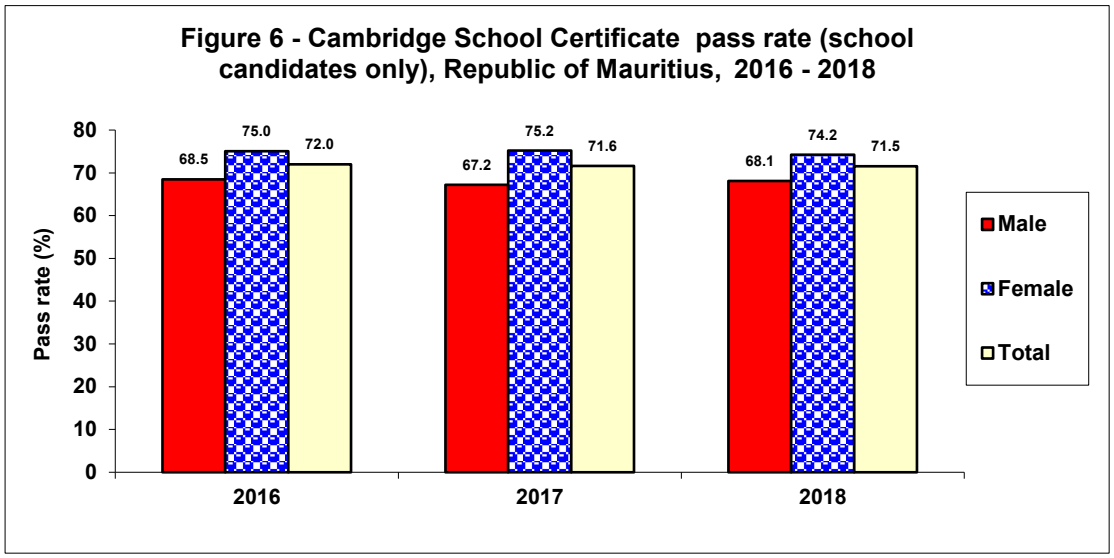
5.4 Personnel

The number of teachers working in secondary schools offering general, extended and pre-vocational education increased by 193 from 9,590 in March 2018 to 9,783 in March 2019.

The secondary education teaching staff in the general and extended streams stood at 8,813 (3,199 males and 5,614 females), representing an increase of 2.4% over the 2018 figure. The pupil/teacher ratio works out to 12. On the other hand, the pre-vocational education teaching staff was 970, of whom 580 were females, giving an average of 4 pupils per teacher (Table 5.18).

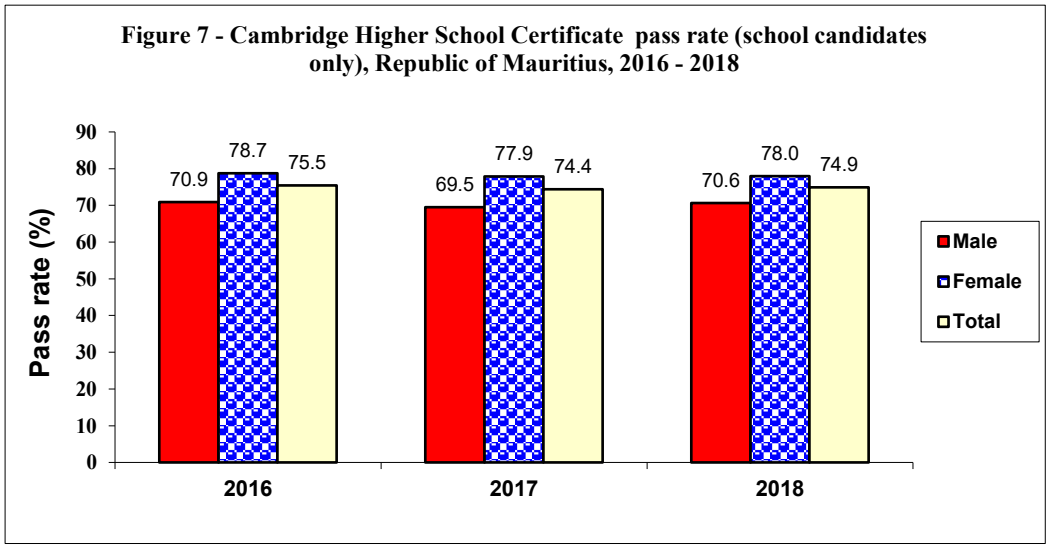
5.5 Cambridge School Certificate (SC)

In 2018, out of 15,374 candidates (6,828 males and 8,546 females) who took part in the Cambridge School Certificate examination, 10,994 were successful. Comparison with the 2017 results shows that the overall pass rate decreased from 71.6% to 71.5% (Table 5.19 and Figure 6).



5.6 Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC)

The number of students taking part in the 2018 Cambridge Higher School Certificate examination stood at 9,408, of whom 58% were females. The overall pass rate is 74.9%, higher than the 2017 figure of 74.4% (Table 5.20 and Figure 7).



[Extract retrieved from **Statistics Mauritius (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development): http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/Publications/Pages/Edu_Stats_Yr19.aspx (September 2019)]**

Appendix 7b: Some commonly used terms

Forms: During the six years of Primary schooling, pupils are placed in year groups called 'Standards' (Standard One to Standard Six). The next 7 years which constitute Secondary schooling range from Grade 7 to Grade 13 (formerly known as Form 1 to Form 6). Following the Nine-Year-Schooling Reform, one common term across Primary and Secondary schooling started being used, namely "Grade".

HSC: The Higher School Certificate (also known as A' Level) is a Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)-set examination, which students sit for, at the end of two years of study at Grade 13 (around the age of 17-18).

Main/Sub: At HSC level (A' level), students study up to three subjects which are offered at **Principal** level, also colloquially referred to as **Main** (subject), and two subjects at Subsidiary level. For instance, English, taken at Principal level or as 'Main' subject, consists of three literature papers which cover up to 9 literature texts to be studied. English, offered at Subsidiary level for the HSC, covers up to 6 texts. There is currently no English language Principal subject offered in Mauritius. General Paper, is a compulsory Subsidiary subject which is mostly English language-based and serves as benchmark of language proficiency at HSC level.

Parastatal schools: "Parastatal Bodies operate as autonomous bodies under the umbrella of a ministry and have their own goals and objectives. They are seen as the Executive arm of government to support and promote government vision and to implement its national policy. Each PSB is managed by a Board of Directors, appointed by the Government, which sets the policies and directions of its operations", retrieved from http://prb.pmo.govmu.org/English/PRB%20Reports/Documents/report2016/vol22/para.pdf

Primary (level or schooling): The six years of initial schooling, from ages 6 to 12 [Grades 1-6].

Private Schools: Schools under private management, receiving no financial subsidy from the State, and which usually follow a different curriculum from the national curriculum (for instance, schools offering the International Baccalaureate or French Baccalaureate).

Private-Aided Schools: Schools under the jurisdiction of the Private Secondary School Authority (PSSA) and which are under private management, receiving financial subsidy from the state.

Private-Aided Schools (Confessional/Denominational): a school associated with a particular religious denomination and receiving financial subsidy from the state. In the context of this study, the Confessional schools mentioned are under the management of the Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique (formerly named, Bureau of Catholic Education).

SC: The **School Certificate** (also known as O' Level) is a Cambridge-set examination, which students sit for, at the end of two years of study in Grade 11 (around the age of 16).

Secondary (level or schooling): The seven years of post-primary education, from ages 12 to around 18 [now called Grades 7-13].

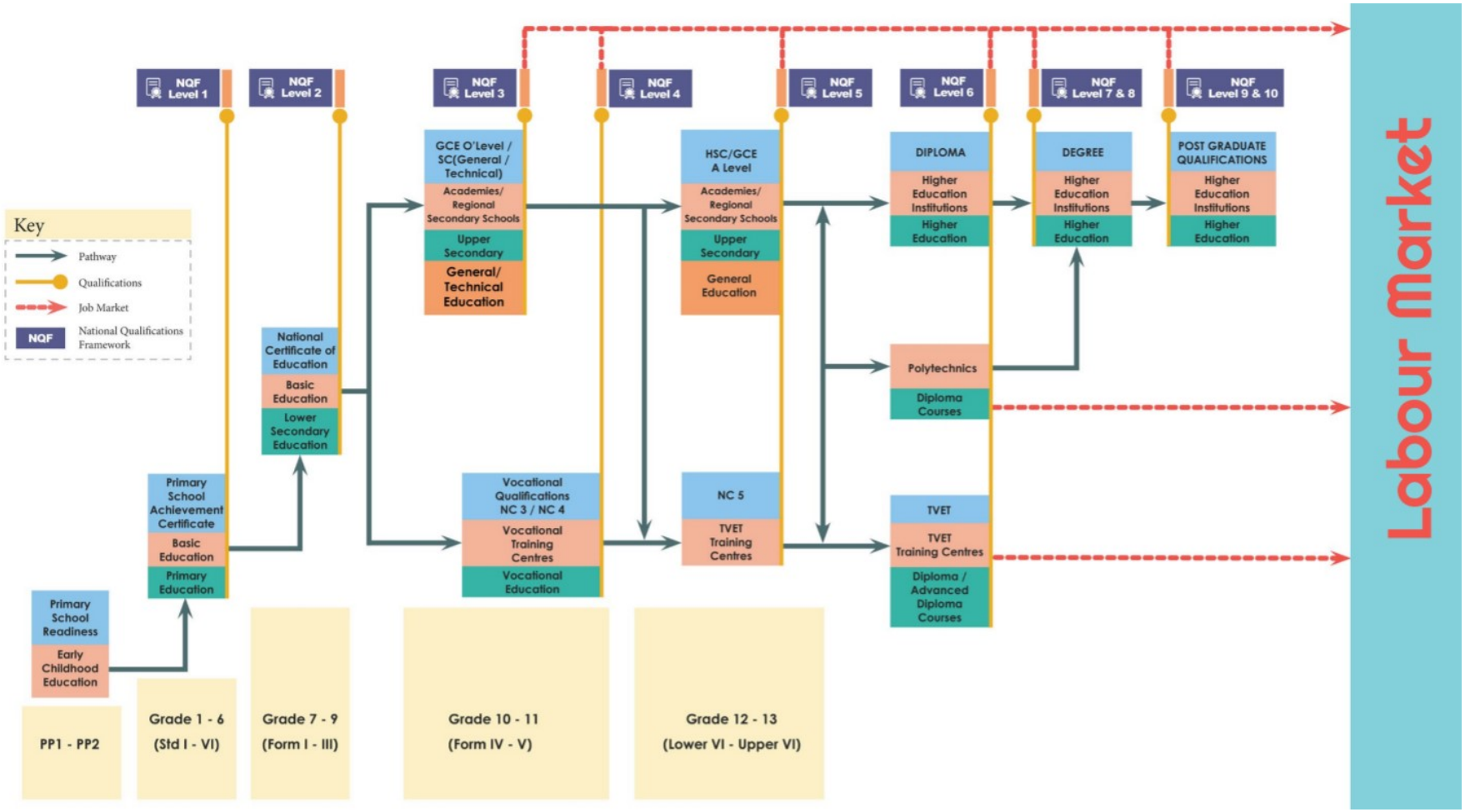
State Secondary Schools/Colleges: These secondary schools are public schools and are fully sponsored by the State.

Institutions:

MIE – The Mauritius Institute of Education is a Higher Education Institution mandated to carry out teacher training, curriculum development and research.

MES – The Mauritius Examinations Syndicate is an institution functioning under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and which is responsible for the setting up and regulation of National Examinations at national level.

Appendix 7c: Academic Formal Education in Mauritius



(Ministry of Education, Nine Year Schooling Booklet, p. 12) – retrieved from

Appendix 7d: Students' academic performance in Literature in English at HSC and SC levels (2016)

English and Literature in English – Results at SC Level (2016)[106]

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

Cambridge School Certificate 2016

Grade Distribution by Subject - School Candidate

		Grade Achieved									Total Examined	*Credit*	*Pass*
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**		***1 - 6***	***1 - 8***
English Language (Mauritius)	B	48	327	627	423	660	1620	2020	1546	1119	8390	3705	7271
		0.57%	3.90%	7.47%	5.04%	7.87%	19.31 %	24.08 %	18.43 %	13.34 %	100.00 %	44.16 %	86.66%
	G	152	651	1049	537	805	1922	2038	1301	661	9116	5116	8455
		1.67%	7.14%	11.51 %	5.89%	8.83%	21.08 %	22.36 %	14.27 %	7.25%	100.00 %	56.12 %	92.75%
	Total	200	978	1676	960	1465	3542	4058	2847	1780	17506	8821	15726
		1.14%	5.59%	9.57%	5.48%	8.37%	20.23 %	23.18 %	16.26 %	10.17 %	100.00 %	50.39 %	89.83%
						2.15%	8.89%	19.74 %	30.68 %	38.54 %	100.00 %	11.04 %	61.46%
Literature in English	B	1	15	21	11	19	64	74	89	173	467	131	294
		0.21%	3.21%	4.50%	2.36%	4.07%	13.70 %	15.85 %	19.06 %	37.04 %	100.00 %	28.05 %	62.96%
	G	29	75	123	73	135	360	305	383	358	1841	795	1483
		1.58%	4.07%	6.68%	3.97%	7.33%	19.55 %	16.57 %	20.80 %	19.45 %	100.00 %	43.18 %	80.55%
	Total	30	90	144	84	154	424	379	472	531	2308	926	1777
		1.30%	3.90%	6.24%	3.64%	6.67%	18.37 %	16.42 %	20.45 %	23.01 %	100.00 %	40.12 %	76.99%

Literature in English – Results at HSC Level (2016)

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE
Cambridge HSC/GCE 'A' Level 2016
Grade Distribution and % Pass - Principal Level

	Grade Achieved											Total Examined		Principal Pass		Subsidiary Pass
	A+	A	B	C	D	E	U	b	c	d	e					
Literature in English	10	11	47	141	292	362	345			2	35	1245	382	863	1208	37
	0.80 %	0.88 %	3.78 %	11.33 %	23.45 %	29.08 %	27.71 %			0.16 %	2.81 %	100.00 %	30.68 %	69.32 %	97.03 %	2.97 %

[106] Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (2017)

Appendix 7e: Students' academic performance in Literature in English at HSC and SC levels (2018)

A: A' Level/HSC Results (2018) for Literature in English at Principal level

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE Page 3 of 4

Cambridge HSC/GCE 'A' Level 2018
Grade Distribution and % Pass - Principal Subject (School Candidates)

	Grade Achieved											Total Examined	Principal Pass	Subsidiary Pass
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	a	b	c	d	e			
ISLAMIC STUDIES	2	6	43	78	70	49	0	0	0	0	0	298	248	0
	0.67%	2.01%	14.43%	26.17%	23.49%	16.44%							83.2%	
LAW	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	15	4	1
					6.67%	20.00%					6.67%		26.7%	6.7%
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH	2	14	34	110	292	410	0	0	0	8	77	1406	862	85
	0.14%	1.00%	2.42%	7.82%	20.77%	29.16%				0.57%	5.48%		61.3%	6.0%

[Extract retrieved from: http://mes.intnet.mu/English/Documents/Examinations/Secondary/cambridge_hsc/2019/performance_princi_subject.pdf]

B: A' Level/HSC Results (2018) for Literature in English at Subsidiary level

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE Page 2 of 3

Cambridge HSC/GCE 'A' Level 2018
Grade Achieved - Subsidiary Subject (School Candidates)

	Grade Achieved					Total Examined	Subsidiary Pass
	a	b	c	d	e		
GENERAL PAPER (MAURITIUS)	961	1597	2776	2475	1552	10218	9361
	9.40%	15.63%	27.17%	24.22%	15.19%		91.6%
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH	2	2	14	38	70	296	126
	0.68%	0.68%	4.73%	12.84%	23.65%		42.6%

[Extract retrieved from: http://mes.intnet.mu/English/Documents/Examinations/Secondary/cambridge_hsc/2019/performance_subs_subject.pdf]

C: O' Level/SC Results (2018) for Literature in English

MAURITIUS EXAMINATIONS SYNDICATE

Cambridge School Certificate 2018
Performance by Subject - School Candidates

Subject		Examined	Passed	Pass Rate (%)
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH	BOYS	476	307	64.50
	GIRLS	1800	1364	75.78
	OVERALL	2276	1671	73.42

[Extract retrieved from:
http://mes.intnet.mu/English/Documents/statistics/scstats/scstats2018/sc2018_performance_by_subject.pdf]

Appendix 8a: Literature in the Lower Secondary Curriculum

Literature in English in the National Curriculum Framework Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education – 2016[107] (Extract, p. 48)

8.5 The Place of Literature in the Curriculum

Literature is of considerable value to human life. This is because it often draws its inspiration from human society and 'reality', and plays a central role in the transmission of knowledges across generations and geographical barriers. When transposed to the curriculum as a subject, the pedagogical benefits associated with literature are manifold. As an art form, it constitutes a rich source of aesthetic gratification, as learners experience the sense of beauty associated with the appreciation of different literary genres. Also, by virtue of its interdisciplinary nature, it cuts across different subject areas and provides opportunities for the transfer of skills (such as creative and critical thinking skills) to and from related fields, like history and sociology, for instance. At experiential level, literature develops the affective domain and fosters the development of values. It also contributes to a heightened sense of empathy, as learners undergo a process of growth through their exposure to the different situations and intra/inter-personal relationships depicted in literature texts. If properly exploited, this exposure can also pave the way to greater intercultural understanding as well as ensure a form of cultural empowerment. Moreover, the 'performative' dimension inherent to the subject provides enhanced opportunities for engagement in active learning exercises like tableaux, mimes, role-plays, and simulations. This realization of literature in performance adds practical and aesthetic elements to learning, makes texts more accessible and enhances confidence in learners. In relation to language study, literature has been hailed as a powerful tool to promote linguistic proficiency, especially when avenues are sought for the establishment of links between the language and the literature classes.

8.5.1 Literature Teaching Methodology

Given the nature of literature as an art form/subject, teaching should not be restricted to the reading and explanation of texts. Instead, the more eclectic the teaching approach, the more accessible and enjoyable literature is to learners with diverse learning styles, and the broader are the perspectives opened up to learners. This also ensures the development of higher order skills. To that end, the application of ICT is one avenue that is worth pursuing to revisit the teaching of a subject that sometimes brings learners in contact with literary materials dating back to the Classical era. Equally important is the need to take on board context-specific factors while selecting literature texts, and planning, conducting and assessing the literature lesson. This particularly matters in sociolinguistic contexts where learners have diverse linguistic profiles. Finally, teaching approaches that are geared towards the setting of practical tasks are strongly recommended to underscore the 'performative' attributes of the subject.

[107] Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (2016), pg. 48

8.5.2 Assessment in Literature

In Grades 7-9, literature will be assessed separately from language and will carry a 100 % weighting. Even though literature is more often assessed through written work, it is highly recommended that alternative assessment modes be devised. These will, for example, be in oral form or based on tasks and/or projects to be carried out either individually or in groups. Assessment is also conducted in the form of practical exercises like role-plays, especially when the objective is a formative one. Such exercises are particularly suitable to tap into the creative potential of literature students and enable them to plough back personal insights into the appreciation and analysis of texts on the syllabus. Finally, given the increasing focus on language-based literary appreciation and criticism, it is imperative that both summative and formative assessment tasks focus on the skills needed to appreciate and study literature with growing confidence and autonomy. This is what will eventually lead to the assurance and skills needed to engage in exercises like commentaries on unseen texts.

Appendix 8b: Literature in the Upper Secondary Curriculum (O' Level)

O'Level Cambridge (2020) syllabus for Literature in English (Extract)

The syllabus aims summarise the context in which you should view the syllabus content and describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus. They are not listed in order of priority.

The aims are to develop learners who:

- communicate accurately, appropriately and effectively in speech and writing
- understand and respond imaginatively to what they hear, read and experience
- enjoy literature and appreciate its contribution to aesthetic and imaginative growth
- explore areas of universal human concern, which will lead to a better understanding of themselves and others

The syllabus enables learners to read, interpret and evaluate texts through the study of literature in English.

Learners develop an understanding of literal meaning, relevant contexts and of the deeper themes or attitudes that may be expressed.

Through their studies, they learn to recognise and appreciate the ways in which writers use English to achieve a range of effects, and will be able to present an informed, personal response to the material they have studied.

The syllabus also encourages the exploration of wider and universal issues, promoting learners' better understanding of themselves and of the world around them.

O'Level Cambridge (2020) - Assessment in Literature in English

Assessment overview

All candidates take Paper 1 Poetry and Prose, and Paper 2 Drama.

All candidates take:		and	
Paper 1	1 hour 30 minutes	**Paper 2**	1 hour 30 minutes
Poetry and Prose	50%	Drama	50%
50 marks		50 marks	
Two questions, each on a different text		Two questions (these may both be on one play or may be on two different plays)	
Externally assessed		Externally assessed	

O'Level Cambridge (2020) - Assessment Objectives for Literature in English

AO1 Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary texts.

AO2 Understand the ways literary texts can be interpreted from surface level to deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes and their contexts.

AO3 Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language.

AO4 Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers achieve their effects (e.g. structure, plot, characterisation, dramatic tension, imagery, rhythm, setting and mood).

AO5 Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to what is read.

[Extract retrieved from https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/]

Appendix 8c: Literature in the Upper Secondary Curriculum (A' Level)

A' Level Cambridge (2020) syllabus for Literature in English (Extract)

Successful Literature in English learners develop a lifelong understanding and enjoyment of literary texts, and, importantly, gain a range of essential skills, including:

• the ability to write clearly and effectively

• skills in developing arguments

• skills in researching and managing information

• the ability to analyse complex texts in different forms and styles.

Key Concepts for Literature in English

As a teacher, you will refer to these concepts, which can serve as tools when considering both familiar and unfamiliar works of literature.

• When we say *imaginative literature*, we are referring to the texts as literary, imaginative constructs.

• By *form*, we mean the main characteristics of prose, drama, and poetry, and how these contribute to meaning and effect.

• *Structure* refers to the organisation of a text or passage, its shape and development and how this contributes to meaning and effect, for example, the structure of a poem created by the number of lines, line length and rhyme pattern.

• *Genre* encompasses the characteristics of different genres: for example, tragedy, comedy and satire.

As a teacher, you will refer to these concepts, which can serve as tools when considering both familiar and unfamiliar works of literature.

• *Conventions* are the rules or traditional features which are characteristic of, for example, a play (dialogue and action), or a romantic novel (narrative point of view), or sonnet (length, shape, argument, counter-argument and conclusion).

• *Context* is the relationship between a text and its background – historical, social and cultural.

• *Audience* and *readership* implies the interaction of texts with the reader or audience (audience in the case of drama).

• *Language* and *style* covers the variety and use of language and style in different forms, genres and periods, and for different audiences and readerships.

• *Interpretation* involves the appreciation and discussion of *different critical readings of a text* (Cambridge International A Level only).

Syllabus

Cambridge International A Level Literature in English requires candidates to answer three compulsory papers and one from a choice of optional papers. The compulsory papers are:

Paper 3 Poetry and Prose,

Paper 4 Drama, and

Paper 5 Shakespeare and other pre-20th Century Texts.

The optional papers are:

Paper 6 1900 to the Present,

Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation, and Component 8 Coursework.

Overall, at A Level candidates are required to study eight set texts, or six set texts plus two unseen texts if Paper 7 Comment and Appreciation is chosen.

In each paper candidates answer two questions, each on a different text. Candidates are required to answer questions from a range of poems, prose and plays, with options from the canon of English Literature and modern texts in English. Close study of all the texts chosen is needed in preparation for a choice of essay and passage-based questions. In Paper 5 only, candidates must answer on at least one passage-based question.

The syllabus aims to develop:

• appreciation of and informed personal response to literature in English in a range of texts in different forms, and from different periods and cultures

• the interdependent skills of reading, analysis and communication

• effective and appropriate communication

• wider reading and an understanding of how it may contribute to personal development.

[Extract retrieved from https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/]

Appendix 8d: PGCE Part-Time: Subject Didactics III (Literature Teaching Methodology) Module

English Department: Semester IV

Module Title : Subject Didactics III–Teaching Literature in English
Module Code : PG 408-4

No. of credits: 3

Aim

To equip trainee educators with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to teach Literature in English at secondary level

Learning Outcomes

Trainee educators should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of literary genres and theories
- implement relevant strategies for the teaching and evaluation of Literature in English
- use appropriate tools and resources for the teaching of Literature in English

Content

- The importance of Literature in the Curriculum
  - The origins and evolution of Literature in English
  - The teaching of Literature in English as an academic subject
  - Teaching the canon
  - Literature teaching goals in the NCF and Cambridge Syllabi
- An overview of major Literature teaching models
  - The Language Model, Cultural Model and Personal Model
  - The Generic Approach – The nature and characteristics of the three main literary genres (Prose, Drama, Poetry)
  - Text-based approaches; The Thematic Approach; Stylistic Analysis of texts
- Literary theories and critical interpretations of texts
- Strategies to develop critical and empathic understanding of text, theme and character
- Tools and resources for the teaching of different genres at lower and upper secondary levels
- Evaluation of students' work and remediation

Teaching and Learning Strategies

Lecture, group work, brainstorming, independent learning, e-learning

Mode of Assessment

Continuous Assessment: 100%

Appendix 8e: B.Ed Full-Time: Literature Teaching Methodology I & II Modules

The BEd (FT) English programme comprises the following:

- The study of key concepts in linguistics and in language
- The study of literature and literary theories
- The study of the language and literature curriculum at secondary level
- The study of language teaching methodology
- The study of literature teaching methodology
- Conducting research

The study of literature and literary theories

- Acquire a good grounding in literary theories
- Explore and reflect upon the evolution of literature across the centuries
- Critically analyse and respond to a range of literary texts
- Develop an appreciation for literature

The study of the language and literature curriculum at secondary level

- Develop an understanding of the nature and aim of the English and Literature curricula and syllabi at secondary level
- Acquire skills to develop, implement and test curriculum materials
- Produce tools for testing and evaluation
- Critically reflect upon the importance of teaching/using English across the curriculum

The study of language teaching methodology

- Show evidence of knowledge of theories and practice in second/foreign language teaching
- Display the ability to use relevant teaching strategies
- Devise and implement tools for testing and evaluating performance in English at secondary level

The study of literature teaching methodology

- Demonstrate an understanding of principles guiding the teaching and testing of literature
- Develop the skills to teach different genres at different levels of the secondary school
- Devise and use a variety of tools for evaluation

ENG 122 Literature Teaching Methodology I
Application of theories for textual analysis; appreciation; strategies for the teaching and testing of short stories and novels.
Continuous Assessment: 100%

ENG 222 Literature Teaching Methodology II
Application of theories for textual analysis; appreciation; strategies for the teaching and testing of poetry and drama.
Assessment: 50% Coursework; 50% Examination

(Extract from B.Ed FT 2013-2014 Handbook, Degree offered by MIE/University of Technology, Mauritius)

Appendix 9: Data Production Plan

Data Production Plan		
Phases		Sequence
Phase 1	• Scoping the Field • Identification of Participants	• Document search • Snowball sampling
Phase 2	• Piloting the data production tools • Application for Ethical Clearance • Gatekeeping and Contact with Participants	• Trialling all instruments • Making amendments to instruments where applicable • Participant Data Sheet and Securing Consent/Addressing Gatekeeping issues
Phase 3	• Entering the Field	<u>Stage 1:</u> • Semi-Structured Interview (audio-recorded) • Write-up 1 (or integrated within interview)
		<u>Stage 2:</u> • Observations of literature classes • Post-observation Stimulus Recall Interview with teacher (audio-recorded) • Classroom Artifacts (where available)
		<u>Stage 3:</u> • Vignette Conversation (audio-recorded) • Write-up 2 (or integrated within conversation)
Phase 4	• Disengaging with the Field	<u>Stage 4:</u> • Validation of Transcripts/ Narratives

Phase 5	• Analysing the data	• Transcribing interviews and observation notes • Writing of narratives • Return to field/participations for additional information/corroboration of transcripts/narratives • Data analysis

Appendix 10: Report on Pilot Study

The Pilot Study

Rationale for the Pilot Study

After a first set of instruments was prepared, I felt it necessary to trial them out in a pilot study. The purpose of the pilot was to determine whether the data production tools elaborated would be able to yield the desired data. The tools would thus be used in a realistic context that would enable me to gauge the extent to which they were of help in answering the critical questions. I understood, from the literature I had consulted, that there was no such need for a pilot study, especially in a qualitative study where instruments would be as much mediated by both researcher and participant as the answers themselves. However, since I had the opportunity, while waiting for ethical clearance, I thought of working on improving the instruments by using them in an actual context.

Description of Participant and the case

Estelle (fictional name) is a 29 year old English teacher with about seven years of teaching experience. She currently works in a 'Confessional' school, and has taught the upper grades for about three years. In 2011, she completed her PGCE at the MIE. This year, she teaches a group of six Grade 12 girls. The secondary school she works at offers English literature from Grades 7 to 13. It is a single-sex school. Generally, there is a preference for French as medium of instruction and communication between teachers and students, and amongst students themselves in this college.

How I approached her – having met her informally on some other occasion, I seized the opportunity to outline the broad lines of my research. She seemed willing to participate, and subsequently, I forwarded her the participant consent form as well as a letter of gate-keeping. I also got in touch with the school authorities and obtained consent to come and observe the teacher in her class.

Duration of Pilot

Stage 1 – May 2013	**Stage 2 – June 2013**	**Stage 3 – June-December 2013**
Interview (Completed)	Write up 1 (Completed)	Classroom observations (Completed)
	Classroom observations (Completed)	Write up 2 (Completed, end 2013)
		Vignette* (1/3 segment trialled)

Gatekeeping Issues

After this initial contact, I formally contacted the head of school to explain my project and my aim in approaching them. I also sent letters of gate-keeping so that the school management as well as the teacher involved would be apprised of the general aims of my study. They were also informed of future collaborations with their institution, in the form of workshops and the eventual dissemination of

findings from this study. It was at that point – around mid-May – that I arranged to have the semi-structured interview.

Instruments Trialled

The Interview

We started with the interview. The teacher was given free rein to choose where to have the interview but finally, since she had to come over on another business to my institution, she proposed to have the interview in my office. I was anxious that the interview take place in a relaxed atmosphere – but proposing to come to the MIE in the afternoon proved to be a good idea. The office was empty at the time, with minimal noise in the background, and we did not face the risk of being interrupted by colleagues or students at this point in time. I however realised that I was quite lucky in starting this pilot interview in such a controlled environment. I knew that future interviews might not take place the same way. However, we moved to a neighbouring vacant room as I felt that this office space could compromise the openness which I wanted in this interview. I also made sure that my seat was placed in such a way so as not to create a position of power and we started with the interview.

The pilot participant was quite willing to go in depth into some of the questions, so it was not surprising that we finished after more than an hour. As I discussed with her, I also reviewed some of the questions I was asking – in some cases, ambiguity and redundancy in some sentences was removed. The sequence of some of the questions was also reviewed. Fortunately, the pilot participant did not need much encouragement but actually volunteered an interesting amount of information.

Class Observations

At school, I made arrangements for visiting a few classes. As I was trialling out the observation schedule, I had planned for about 3 to 4 visits. The school administration was given assurance that I would remain as discreet as possible and that my presence in the classroom would not hinder the progress of the lessons being observed. It was evident that my presence could not be absolutely negated, so the teacher took upon herself to tell the students in advance about a 'visitor'. Given that visits by heads of department, heads of schools or zone inspectors are a recurrent feature, it did not cause much disturbance when I entered the class. In fact, the next time I stepped in class, the students hardly paid attention to me. There were only six students studying English Literature at Grade 12 level. The size of the class was something that strongly impacted upon the teacher's choice of pedagogy, as she considered that the smaller size of her class meant that she had to keep them motivated and interested in the subject.

I observed three different lessons involving the same class during the month of June. I made use of the TDOP, the Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol, devised by Hora and Ferrare (2010) (and its revised version, the RTOP) to help me take down notes while observing. I had realised, from the way the TDOP was structured, that it could be quite effective for a quantitative record of teacher behaviours. However, in my case, it was not necessarily the number of times a question was asked which was of prime interest, for instance, but rather how the teacher addressed the question and turned it into a teaching and learning moment. I also realised that while looking for the right symbol in the complex teaching dimensions key sheet and then circling the right symbol on the record sheet, I could actually be missing important moments of observational data. I therefore resorted to noting down descriptions of the events, especially the 'teaching moments' and the 'pedagogical moves' in the lesson, using the

TDOP observational code bank only as reference. While observing I also kept in mind Shavelson's (1976) notions of the teacher as planner, as technician and as evaluator as well as Shulman's (1985) description of pedagogical content knowledge. The observations were followed with a semi-structured interview on one occasion, although during the next two visits, I found that adopting a more informal approach through stimulus-recall conversation helped the teacher voice out more readily about the recently-observed class.

Unfortunately, due to the personal involvement of my pilot participant in a dramatic production, I could not trial out my last data production tool, namely the vignette conversation within the timeline I had set for myself. However, we eventually trialled it when she was able to free herself. Interestingly, in June 2013, I attended a workshop by Srilata Ravi, where the film vignette was used to elicit responses from us about Mauritian culture and inter/transculturalism. She showed us clips from local and foreign films about Mauritius and, while she did give us some guiding questions, she allowed the discussion to rise from what had struck us. I felt that it was an interesting coincidence that someone else was also using this tool to obtain rich information from individuals. Subsequently, I read Reginald Dudley Forde's (2010) thesis, where he describes his use of the film vignette as well. However, he tried it with different focus groups whereas I have planned to obtain individual responses from teachers. Moreover, the fact that there would be only one individual made it clear that I could not overstretch this exercise – so three movie clips have been chosen to represent teachers of English in specific situations in order to elicit personal, empathic responses.

Due to limited time on the part of my pilot participant, I could not complete trialling the full instrument, but since it consisted of 3 segments of the same nature, I managed to trial out one segment and get her reflections. There was indeed an awareness that the teacher in the film was a fictional representation – but there was no doubt that my respondent had things to say about the scene observed.

Reflective Tasks:

Implementation-wise, I feel that these tasks involve a certain degree of risk, in the sense that putting the task out to them might seem like a burden to them. The reason I opted for the reflective tasks was to provide them a space where they could express themselves at a certain length without being overly prompted by a number of questions. The questions I ask in those two tasks could well have been asked during the interview. In fact, they at some point featured in the initial list of questions. However, I felt that these questions required a degree of thought and they needed time to reflect upon them.

I had also already explained the first write-up which my pilot participant had accepted to write and which she submitted to me in June. I realise now that I could have used less complex language when drafting this task, and as a result, even though the pilot participant fully understood, I simplified the instructions to avoid ambiguity.

Interestingly she took a bit longer to respond to the second text, and I realised that I could potentially overburden my participants with extra tasks and little motivation. I thus ensured that teachers understood what I was looking for, in terms of information, and allowed them the freedom to choose whether they wished to do it orally or in writing.

Amendments or changes as a result of trialling instruments

In the meantime, I reworked most of the tools and removed those which were redundant or not feasible. It was increasingly obvious, for instance, that I would not necessarily obtain lesson plans from every teacher in this study and could thus not take it for granted that the teachers would be providing such. I am aware that such a pilot is not representative of all cases, and that those tools might still yield vastly differing results.

Other actions taken included:

- Revising some of the questions.
- Considering how to produce information on the following: Important aspects identified in the literature – biography, teacher's professional training/development, teacher knowledge/cognition, the students, the department, the school, ie the environment or context, curriculum and examinations, teacher conceptions of the subject, Signature pedagogies, types of texts or genres.
- Things I had not catered for: biography, which I rectified soon after, in one question about how they themselves learnt and what stood out as a memorable learning experience in the English class.
- Limitations of the observational schedules. Running records to supplement.
- One of the films was also changed to bring in more gender parity in the representation of the teachers.
- Classroom management and organisation. Although I noted it down in my observation notes, I had not planned to have a schedule to outline that. But I also made note to include that.
- Other pathways I have also been advised to consider: MES, the examination provider/organiser angle, comparing changes in syllabi and what they might entail for the teacher (eg, removal of empathic question, change in examination papers)
- Changes in government policy, advocating more and more the use of ICT for instance, and requiring teachers to work with it. --- not yet in HSC but could have an impact upon Grades 10 and 11.

Obstacles encountered

There were no obstacles as such although once more, I realised how important it was to build a rapport between oneself and the interviewee. It could not be a one-sided matter – I had to bring in something that would convince the participants that their views would be of paramount importance. I think the initial interview can act as an ice-breaker, in the sense that there is an understanding which you try to build up and which can stimulate the participant to volunteer more information. Interestingly, another aspect to reflect upon was how changing one's questions could lead to the input of a specific type of information being given.

I also had to think of the sequencing of the instruments within each case. I suspect that it might differ slightly from teacher to teacher but roughly the phases have been planned in such a way that the following instruments occur in order: interview, observation, write-up and film vignette discussion.

Appendix 11: Data Production Instruments

Appendix 11a: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Please fill in your details in the following sections. This information will remain confidential.

Name:

Age: Sex: M / F

College:

Years of Teaching Experience:

Highest qualification:

Teacher/Professional Training: YES / NO

Grades taught:

Texts you are currently teaching at

Grade 10/11 level:

Grade 12/13 level:

Appendix 11b: Semi-structured interview

Note: These questions are meant to raise broad issues and serve as guide – the ensuing conversation might lead to other areas as the interview is meant to be open-ended, informal and subject to narrative elicitation to generate greater depth of information. *Depending on the responses received, not all the questions might be asked.*

Semi-Structured Interview

Aims of Interview:

- To gather teachers' conceptions and beliefs about English Literature as a subject;
- To obtain a broad overview of current strategies used by literature teachers;
- To understand what determines choice of certain strategies in class.

- **Interview Schedule**

Project : English Literature Teachers' Pedagogical choices at Upper Secondary Level

Time of Interview :

Date :

Place :

Interviewer : Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree

Interviewee :

Position of Interviewee :

Example of Opening Comments : Hello and thank you once again for accepting to be part of this research.

As you know, this interview is part of my research on teachers' pedagogical choices and its aim is to invite you to think aloud about your own profession and the subject that you teach, as I believe those responses will give me interesting insights into the phenomenon I am investigating.

Please note that you may interrupt or stop this interview at any point. I would also like to remind you that I will be recording the session so that I do not lose any aspect of the data. This will help me to come up with a transcript later on, which I will run through you.

Is there anything you would like to ask me before we start ?

Part A: Teaching English Literature

1. How long have you been teaching English literature? Have you taught a) lower secondary b) upper secondary c) both lower secondary and upper secondary?

2. Which do you find more **enjoyable**: teaching literature at lower secondary or at upper secondary? Can you say why?

3. Is there a genre, type of text or author that you prefer teaching in your literature class? Can you say why?

4. How were **you** taught English literature at college? Do you recall any memorable literature lesson that you had as a student?

5. How would you define your **own style of teaching**?

6. Do you have a **preferred** teaching style (whole-class lectures, group work, etc?)

Part B: Professional Training

7. If you had **professional training**, how has this prepared you to cater to your literature classes? / (If not) In what ways do you feel professional training could help you in your teaching of English literature?

8. Are there aspects of literature teaching which you were not initially prepared to address? What did you do then to address this issue?

Part C: Choosing/Teaching Specific Texts/Genres

9. What are the texts that you teach with your upper secondary class? Who chose them?

10. Do you discuss at the level of the department what texts should be chosen out of the prescribed list?

11. Does every teacher come up with his or her own strategy or is there some discussion as to how to teach a particular text or genre with members of your department ?

Part D: The Syllabus and Assessment

12. How do you find the English literature **syllabus**? How important do you feel it is to prepare the students for examinations?

13. What do you think your students have learnt beyond the examinations requirements?

Part E: Dealing with Students

14. According to you, what do you think will encourage more student participation and enjoyment of literature classes?

Part F: Challenges

15. According to you, what challenges do English literature teachers have to face in the Mauritian context?

16. Do you feel there is scope for **innovation** and **creativity** in the teaching of literature? Can you think of some examples?

17. What do you feel about the use of **multimedia** and **technology** in the teaching of literature?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix 11c: Observation schedule

Aim: To understand how the participant puts the resources placed at his disposal into practice. Researcher will pay close attention to the learning outcomes of the lesson and how the resources are used by the participant to achieve those aims. Researcher will also consider the pupils' involvement/participation during the lesson.

One way to obtain detailed descriptions of practice would be through the use of the Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol (TDOP)*. The TDOP captures five dimensions of teaching (i.e., teaching methods, student-teacher interactions, pedagogical moves, cognitive engagement, and use of instructional technology) in two-minute intervals. These dimensions will be taken into consideration while identifying key pedagogical moments within the lesson will be noted in the following schedule:

	Lesson Observation Schedule
Date:	
Class:	
Subject:	
No. Of Pupils:	
Duration of Class:	

Time	Procedure/Activity	Additional notes

Planning		
	Clarity of aims/objectives/outcomes	
	Plan for individual and group learning	
	Planning sufficiently detailed to aid effective delivery and learning	
	Variety of delivery and assessment strategies planned.	
	Use of records of progress and achievement to inform future planning	

Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning		
	Teacher's knowledge/competence contributes to effective delivery and assessment	
	Learners understand objectives	
	Methods and Styles used are consistent with programme aims and learners' personal objectives	
	Learners are acquiring new knowledge, developing ideas and increasing their understanding.	
	Learners understand what they are doing, how well they are doing, and how to improve	
	Learners are challenged and inspired	
	Evidence of good working relationships which foster learning	
	Learners are active, apply effort to succeed, work productively and make effective use of time	
	Teacher presents material in a way which is sensitive to issues of equal opportunity	
	Resources promote effective learning where appropriate	
	ICT is used to enhance learning where appropriate	
	Health and safety is taken into account	
Learner Response and Achievement		
	Learners are expected to attend regularly and be punctual	
	Learners are stimulated and show interest and enthusiasm for learning and achievement	
	Learners are acquiring new knowledge, skills, understanding and developing their ideas	
	Learners are developing skills of critical evaluation, research and analysis	
	Challenging learning goals are achieved.	

	Learners make significant progress towards achieving their goals	
	Learners' achievements are recorded.	
General Evaluation of Session		
	Were the objectives/outcomes suitably challenging for the learners and met by them?	
	Were there any difficulties with learning identified?	
	Were these overcome?	
	Further comments on the effectiveness of the lesson	

[*Available at : http://tdop.wceruw.org]

Extract from the Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol (TDOP)

Observation Code Bank

The following list of codes includes only code definitions. For more extensive discussion of coding rules and different instructional scenarios that will likely be encountered, please consult the "TDOP Coding Rules" document.

Teaching Methods

L Lecture: The instructor is talking to the students and not using any visuals or demonstration equipment.
LPV Lecture with pre-made visuals: The instructor is talking to the students while using pre-made visual aides, such as slides, transparencies, posters, pre-written chalkboard notes, etc. The instructor must be referring to topic contained in the visual.
LHV Lecture with handwritten visuals: The instructor is talking to the students while actively writing and presenting notes, creating charts/diagrams (must either be writing or referring to what they are writing).
LDEM Lecturing with demonstration of topic or phenomena: The instructor uses equipment (e.g., lab equipment, computer simulation, or other physical objects) to convey course content. The objects must be in active use in relation to topic.
LINT Interactive lecture: The instructor is talking to the students while asking multiple, successive questions to which the students are responding, and student responses are either guiding or being integrated within the discussion.
SGW Small group work/discussion: Students form into groups of 2+ for the purposes of discussion and/or to complete task.
DW Deskwork: Students complete work alone at their desk/chair.
CD Whole class discussion: Students are answering and asking questions amongst themselves for a sustained period of time. This is different than an interactive lecture in which the instructor is directing all of the questions.
MM Multimedia: The instructor plays a video or movie (e.g., youtube or documentary) without speaking and while the students watch.

SP Student presentation: The students are giving presentations to the class or otherwise acting as the primary speaker or instructor in the classroom. In this instance, only select this code and none others as long as the primary instructor is not actively teaching the class.

Pedagogical Moves

MOV Moves into audience: The instructor walks up aisles or enters the student seating area of classroom.
HUM Humor: The instructor tells jokes or humorous anecdotes; this code requires laughter from students.
RDS Reads: The instructor reads verbatim from prepared notes, text or PowerPoint slides; must be extensive reading and not just reading slide headings or definitions and then elaborating extemporaneously.
IL Illustration: The instructor uses real-world examples or illustrations to demonstrate, show, or otherwise convey course content. Anecdotes and stories that are not substantive demonstrations or illustrations of the course material should not be coded.
ORG Organization: The instructor writes or posts outline of class or clearly (and verbally) indicates transition from one topic to the next, including transitions from previous class to the present class.
EMP Emphasis: The instructor clearly states that something is important for students to learn or remember.
A Assessment: The students take a test or quiz, or are asked a question verbally or through the use of clickers that explicitly seeks content-related knowledge from the students.
AT Administrative task: The instructor and/or students make announcements, discuss upcoming assignments or exams, or engaging in other logistical tasks.

Instructor/Student Interactions (Types of Q&A)

RQ Instructor rhetorical question: The instructor asks a question without seeking an answer and without giving students an opportunity to answer the question.
DQ Instructor display question: The instructor seeks a specific factual or conceptual answer, or asks students to solve a computational problem or a conceptual dilemma.
CQ Instructor comprehension question: The instructor checks for understanding (e.g., “Does that make sense?”) and pauses for at least two seconds, thereby indicating an opportunity for students to respond.
SNQ Student novel question: A student poses a question to the instructor that seeks new information (i.e. not asking to clarify a concept that was previously being discussed).
SCQ Student comprehension question: A student poses a question to the instructor that seeks clarification of a concept that is part of the current or past class period.
SR Student response: A student responds to a question posed by the instructor.

Cognitive Engagement (of students)

ART Articulating: Students are verbally articulating thoughts, ideas, solutions or opinions on a topic. More than 1 person must be answering a question and/or engaging in dialogue.
RMF Reciting and/or memorizing facts: Students are provided verbal or handwritten definitions of terms or equations, or are asked to define a term or recall basic facts through a verbal question or clicker question.
PS Problem solving: Students are asked to apply understand and solve an analytic process. This includes computations or evaluation of conceptual dilemmas, and is evident through explicit verbal requests to solve a problem, or to engage in thought experiments or conceptual dilemmas that require students to consider alternatives and identify solutions.

CR Creating: Students engage in creating their own ideas or products, as indicated by instructors providing opportunities for students to be creative and/or generate their own ideas and products. The outcome is open-ended rather than fixed.
CN Connections to the real world: Students make connections between the course material and their daily lives, as indicated by instructors using illustrations that link material to popular culture, the local environment, etc.

Instructional Technology

PO Poster: Posters such as the periodic table or a map of tectonic plates.
B Book (s): Books used during the class period.
N Notes: Lecture notes actively used by instructor during the class.
P Pointer (e.g., laser pointer, metal pointer)
CB Chalk-board/white-board
OP Overhead/transparencies
PP Powerpoint or other digital slides
CL Clickers
D Demonstration equipment
DT Digital tablet: This refers to any technology where the instructor can actively write on a document or graphic that is being projected onto a screen. This includes document cameras as well as software on a laptop that allows for writing on pdf files.
M Movie, documentary, video clips, or Youtube video
SI Simulation: Simulations can be digital applets or web-based applications.
WEB Website: Includes reference to course website or other online resource (besides Youtube videos) as active part of instruction.
OB Object: Random object used as part of instruction (e.g., chair).

[Hora, M., & Ferrare, J.. (2010). The Teaching Dimensions Observation Protocol (TDOP). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wisconsin Center for Education Research.]

Appendix 11d: Post-observation conversation (with stimulus recall)

Note: This instrument aims at gathering teachers' commentaries on their choice of pedagogy (including preparation, classroom actions, use of resources and assessment) in the lesson observed.

Interview Schedule

1. What were you trying to achieve in this lesson?

2. How would you describe the different phases of your lesson?

3. Why did you choose to carry out the lesson in this way?

4. From **whom** did you learn the strategy/strategies?

5. Has any particular methodology/technique/strategy been **prescribed to** you? If so, who prescribed its use?

6. Do you consider any theories about the teaching/learning of English literature when making your choices?

7. In what way(s) do the types of learners you have in this particular class influence your choice of strategy?

8. Do you consider this a **successful lesson**? Why? Why not?

9. If you had to teach the lesson again what would you **do differently?** Why?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix 11e: Vignette conversation

Description of Activity: This activity consists in eliciting responses from teachers after they have watched three video clips featuring English/English Literature teachers in cinema. Each clip would be about 8-10 minutes long. The entire activity should last around an hour.

Aim of Activity: The aim of this activity is to obtain teachers' thoughts and reactions towards the scenes, and getting them to relate the behaviour/actions shown in the clips to their own beliefs and practices about literature teaching.

Films Chosen: clips will be selected from 3 films.

No.	Title	Year	Director
1	Up the Down Staircase	1967	Robert Mulligan
2	Dangerous Minds	1995	John N. Smith
3	Freedom Writers	2007	Richard LaGraveness

Vignette Conversation Schedule

Preliminary comments:

Hello and thank you for receiving me once more. Today I would like to show you some video clips. In each of them, you will see a teacher at work in a fictional setting. I will play them one at a time, after which we can have a small chat before we move on. You can stop the clip at any moment if you wish to say something. Do you have any questions?

Let's play the first clip.

[After first clip is played] *Have you watched this film before*? [6 minutes]

[Explain where the clip comes from – 2 minutes]

What are your thoughts upon what you just saw? [free conversation for 12 minutes]

Let's watch the second clip. [Same procedure as before – 10 minutes]

What would you say is different between this teacher and the previous one? [free conversation – 10 minutes]

And now let's play the third clip. [Same procedure as before – 10 minutes]

Would you have reacted the same way if you had been in the same situation?

Can you tell me more? [10 minutes]

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me. They are indeed very insightful.

Vignette Conversation			
	Time	*Description of activity*	*Participant response***
Part 1	*6 minutes*	*Clip 1 is played*	

	2 minutes	*Explanation of Clip1*	
	12 minutes	*Discussion on Clip 1*	
Part 2	*10 minutes*	*Clip 2 is played + Explained*	
	10 minutes	*Discussion on Clip 2*	
Part 3	*10 minutes*	*Clip 3 is played + Explained*	
	10 minutes	*Discussion on Clip 3*	

Response** could not only be verbal but in terms of body language, tone, facial expressions and other paralinguistic features that may be noted.

Appendix 11f: Participant reflective write-ups (as extension to questions in Appendix 11c)

Write up 1

Aim: This instrument prompts teachers to reflect upon their own conceptions of English literature and what it means to them as a domain and as a subject. They are free to use whatever medium or text type or genre (including visual) to express themselves. The researcher may provide some examples without seeking to influence the choice of output in case the respondent is not clear about what is expected.

What is your definition of English literature? As a teacher of English literature, describe what it means to you as a domain and as a subject in Mauritius. You are free to use whatever medium or text type or genre (including visual) to express yourself.

Write up 2

Aim: This instrument aims at prompting teachers to write down what conceptions they have about the teaching of English literature and will also yield data on the factors that may impact upon literature teaching pedagogy at school.

Imagine you have to give advice to new teachers venturing in the field of English Literature. What do you know <u>now</u> about the field and the job which you would advise a novice teacher to be prepared for in order to teach English Literature at Upper Secondary level?

Appendix 12: Data sets

Data sets [coded]										
Instruments/Participants	**Description of Data Set**	**Participant A** **Kishan**	**Participant B** **Ravin**	**Participant C** **Smita**	**Participant D** **Rita**	**Participant E** **Vimla**	**Participant F** **Lovena* -** **data set not included in narratives**	**Participant G** **Vedika**	**Participant H** **Sharda**	**Participant I** **Sam**
Participant Info Sheet	Written form	A1	B1	C1	D1	E1	F1	G1	H1	I1
Interview 1	Oral + Recorded = Transcription	A2	B2	C2	D2	E2	F2	G2	H2	I2
Observation 1	TDOP Sheet + Running Records	AO1A	BO1A	CO1A	DO1A	EO1A	FO1A	GO1A	HO1A	IO1A
Post-Obs Conversation	Oral + Recorded = Transcription	AO1B	BO1B	CO1B	DO1B	EO1B	FO1B	GO1B	HO1B	IO1B
Observation 2	Same as for O1	AO2A	BO2A	CO2A	DO2A	EO2A	FO2A	GO2A	HO2A	IO2A
Post-Obs Conversation	Oral + Recorded = Transcription	AO2B	BO2B	CO2B	DO2B	EO2B	FO2B	GO2B	HO2B	IO2B
Observation 3	Same as for O1	AO3A	BO3A	CO3A	DO3A	EO3A	FO3A	GO3A	HO3A	NA
Post-Obs Conversation	Oral + Recorded = Transcription	AO3B	BO3B	CO3B	DO3B	EO3B	FO3B	GO3B	HO3B	NA
Reflection 1	Written form/Oral	AW1	BW1	CW1	DW1	EW1	FW1	GW1	HW1	IW1
Reflection 2	Written form/Oral	AW2	BW2	CW2	DW2	EW2	FW2	GW2	HW2	IW2
Vignette Interview 1	Oral + Recorded = Transcription	AV1	BV1	CV1	DV1	EV1	FV1	GV1	HV1	IV1
Classroom Artifacts	**<u>If available</u>** – could include lesson plans, resources, handouts used, etc	AC1	BC1	CC1	DC1	EC1	FC1	GC1	HC1	IC1
Researcher Diary Entries		RDA	RDB	RDC	RDD	RDE	RDF	RDG	RDH	RDI

Appendix 13: Information about Participants, Schools and Texts taught

Teacher (Pseudo) & Profile	Type of School	Class Size/Profile	Level(s) Taught	Author	Name of Text/Genre	Background/ Context	Text Selection	Other
Smita Age: 29 Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MA English Linguistics, Educator's License Classes Taught: Grades 7-13	School: Private-Aided (Confessional[108]), urban	10 students, female	1. Grade 12 2. Grade 13	1. Arundhati Roy 2. Harold Pinter	1. God of Small Things (novel) 2. The Birthday Party (play)	1. 1960s-1990s Rural Indian society; postcolonial; class and caste issues 2. 1950s England; Absurdist drama	• Usually the head of department chooses, but this time, the new HOD asked for their opinion. • Many times, teachers do not agree with the selection. For ***Birthday Party***, she was not asked. • In Dept. meetings, they are asked for their opinion but texts get chosen anyway.	
Ravin Age: 56 Teaching Experience: 32 years	School: Private-Aided[109], rural	20 + students, female and male	1. Grades 10/11 2. Grades 10/11	3. University of Cambridge 4. Geoffrey Chaucer	1. The University of Cambridge Anthologies of Poetry and Stories: Songs of	1. Various 2. 14th century England; Middle	• He chooses/finalises the texts, with some suggestions from departmental members	

[108] School under the management of the Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique (formerly named, Bureau of Catholic Education), receiving financial subsidy from the state.

[109] School under private management, receiving financial subsidy from the state.

Highest Qualification: B.Ed Classes Taught: Grades 10-13				5. William Shakespeare 6. E.M. Forster 7. Robert Bolt 8. Harold Pinter	Ourselves (poetry) 2. Wife of Bath (poetry) 3. As you Like It (play) 4. A Passage to India (novel) 5. A Man for All Seasons (play) 6. The Birthday Party (play)	English; Religion 3. Elizabethan (16th century)England		
Kishan Age: 28 Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MSC Educational Administration and Technology; PGCE Classes Taught: Grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12	School: Private-aided, rural	4 students, male (Grade 12) & 15 students, male (Grade 11)	1. Grade 11 2. Grade 12	1. University of Cambridge 2. University of Cambridge 3. Henry Miller 4. Arundhati Roy	1. Songs of Ourselves (poetry) 2. A Midsummer Night's Dream (play) 3. All My Sons (play) 4. God of Small Things (novel)	1. Various 2. Elizabethan (16th century)England; Greek Mythology and Fantasy as base 3. 1940s, post-w.war II America 4. 1960s-1990s Rural Indian society; postcolonial; class and caste issues	• Teachers in the English departments in both schools (boys and girls) select texts from the CIE prescribed text list. It ensures that both schools are teaching the same thing and it becomes easier to prepare common examination papers for both schools. • Selection criteria depends on availability of text for more than 2 years in, accessibility/ease for students	

							• Personal choice not really foregrounded in data.	
Vimla Age: 36 Teaching Experience: 13 years Highest Qualification: MA English Classes Taught: Grades 9-13	School: Parastatal, urban	25 students, female and male	1. Grade 12	2. William Shakespeare	1. A Midsummer Night's Dream (play)	1. Elizabethan (16th century) England; Greek Mythology and Fantasy as base	• The whole department, along with the head of department, choose the texts. • Teachers teach the texts they have an affinity or specialization in – For Vimla, it's drama/Shakespeare • The person doing a particular paper or genre gets to choose the text they would like to teach from the list of prescribed texts.	
Sam Age: 60 Teaching Experience: 35 years Highest Qualification: MA English Classes Taught: Grades 10-13	School: State (Girls), urban	20 students, female	*1.* Grades 10/11 *2.* Grade 12	1. Tsitsi Dangarembga 2. William Shakespeare	1. Nervous Conditions (novel) 2. As You Like It (play)	1. 1970s Uganda; Patriarchy, Politics, Postcolonialism 2. Elizabethan England	• Texts chosen as per affinity of teacher • Collegial decision over texts but individual tastes and comfort of teachers are taken into consideration.	

Vedika Age: 30 Teaching Experience: 7 years Highest Qualification: MA English Cultural Studies Classes Taught: Grades 7-13	School: Parastatal[110], rural	10 students, female and male	1. Grade 11 2. Grade 12	1. Geoffrey Chaucer 2. William Shakespeare	1. Wife of Bath 2. A Midsummer Night's Dream (play)	1. 14th century England, Middle English 2. Elizabethan (16th century) England	• Teachers informed in advance which year group/texts they will be teaching • They sometimes have the leeway to swap with a colleague if they do not like/want to teach the text • Texts are chosen at departmental level from list of prescribed texts from the Cambridge International Examinations website[111] • Department members discuss appropriate of text in relation to student level and ability, degree of difficulty and enjoyability. Preference given to 'lighter' (shorter and easier) texts	

[110] "Parastatal Bodies operate as autonomous bodies under the umbrella of a ministry and have their own goals and objectives. They are seen as the Executive arm of government to support and promote government vision and to implement its national policy. Each PSB is managed by a Board of Directors, appointed by the Government, which sets the policies and directions of its operations", retrieved from http://prb.pmo.govmu.org/English/PRB%20Reports/Documents/report2016/vol22/para.pdf

[111] http://www.cie.org.uk/

Sharda Age: Undisclosed Teaching Experience: 25 years Highest Qualification: BA, B.Ed Classes Taught: Grades 9, 11, 12	School: State (Girls), urban	15 students, female	1. Grade 11	2. University of Cambridge 3. William Shakespeare 4. Anita Desai	1. Songs of Ourselves (poetry) 2. The Tempest (play) 3. Fasting, Feasting (novel)		• Texts selected at level of department, with the teacher doing the paper having the last say (i.e she herself rejected a choice made by another teacher and ended up with her own choice, after convincing the students) • texts chosen should be on syllabus for more than 2 years[112]; texts where notes can easily be found.	
Rita Age: 54 Teaching Experience: 23 years Highest Qualification: PGCE, PGDHR Classes Taught: Grades 7-13	School: State (Girls), urban	15 students, female	1. Grade 12 2. Grade 12 3. Grade 10	1. William Shakespeare 2. Oscar Wilde 3. J.B. Priestley	1. King Richard III (play) 2. An Ideal Husband (play) 3. An Inspector Calls	1. Elizabethan (16th century) England 2. Victorian (19th century) England 3. 1940s England	• Texts chosen at departmental level from Cambridge list of prescribed texts. • Choice depends on availability of texts on local market, appeal for students, accessibility in terms of language • Individual members can swap with a colleague if they prefer a specific text or genre	

[112] Cambridge International Examinations bases its literature examinations on set literature texts which are changed over time. There is a risk when a school chooses a text that, if a student fails a particular year, the text that he was studying might no longer be on the prescribed list, and a different text might be selected the following year, which would require more time and effort to cover if they are re-taking the examinations.

							• Choice of text depends on the content/themes of specific texts (Personally she avoids texts with violence and sexual connotations)	
Lovena Age: late 30s Teaching Experience: 8 years Highest Qualification: BA Classes Taught: Grades 7-13	School: Parastatal, urban	15 students, female and male	1. Grade 11	2. Tsitsi Dengare mbga	1. Nervous Conditions (novel)	1. 1970s Uganda; Patriarchy, Politics, Postcolonialism	• Teachers have the leeway to choose the text they like to teach, out of the list of prescribed texts.	Data not included in the final set of narratives

Appendix 14: Extract from Observation notes

Observation 1

Teacher: Ravin

Class: Grade 11

Text: A Man of All Seasons

Time: 0850

School details: This private secondary co-education school is situated in a rural region. It offers classes from Grade 7 to Grade 13. It consists of two buildings which are found at a small distance from one another. The school population is around 1500. English is compulsory till Grade 11, and an optional subject as from Grade 12.

Teacher Profile (from Participant Information Sheet):

Age – 56

Sex: Male

Years of Teaching Experience: 32

Highest Qualification: Bachelor in Education

Grades taught: Grade 11, Grades 12 and 13

Texts currently teaching at Grade 12 level: *Songs of Ourselves*, *Wife of Bath*, *As You Like It*, *A Passage to India*.

Observation Notes (Descriptive + side impressions)

(NB) – Observation notes have followed the structure proposed in the TDOP schedule regarding field notes. Following the TDOP checklist faithfully proved to be counter-intuitive for my observational purposes at this point, but I used the categories in the Protocol to describe teacher actions and interactions with students in the same document as description of the lesson.

		Impressions and Comments
Description of Setting	- A fairly large classroom (8mx7m) - Windows (and the only door) only on one	In comparison with some other schools visited, this room is actually quite spacious. But the class population is also quite high (around 20 – there were some absentees on the day)

	side, facing the corridor. - Old desks and chairs - Front wall dominated by large central board and small side boards - There are admin messages written with chalk on the wall. There is also a message about the importance of reading, again chalked on the wall.	– there is space however. Most students are seated quite haphazardly around the room but they occupy mostly the front 2/3rd of the room. There are rows of desks in the following formation (- -, - - - -, - -). The teacher sits in front – not central – but a bit more to my right (I was sitting at the back but roughly in the middle of the row). No one sat near me, so the entire class was just seated right in front of me.
Lesson Duration	Technically: around 40 minutes – but the class on that day lasted around 25-30 minutes.	
Participants	Grade 11 class. Mixed group of boys and girls. More girls than boys.	Quite at ease interacting with the teacher. In fact, I would describe them as quite outspoken. (Must check if this is same for other lessons) However, not everyone speaks all the time. There is a core of about 5-6 students out of the 20 who are more likely to voice out. A couple of boys were more outspoken than the girls.
Description of Lesson	Teacher starts by telling them what the class will be about. He	

	asks them to open their books. He uses English throughout, with some minor exceptions to make a general comment about the text. He does not move from his chair throughout the lesson. Reads the text. Asks a question. Students answer in a mix of English and French The theme of honesty is raised as he reads. He explains the theme, and asks the students to underline/highlight in their books, which they do. He makes references to society and the world in general. Makes a statement about people offering bribes. Some students comment, without being solicited by the teacher, sharing their point of view. He gives extra information about	I wonder how this impacts upon the dynamics of the class. I know a section of the class is following and is interested because of the questions and comments they raise.

	characters, for instance, "Meg" He asks questions, tries to see what is understood. While discussing the theme, technology was raised and one of the students mentioned the tablet being distributed at school. He replies, "Forget about the tablet" Lesson continues. He still reads the dialogues himself and stops to make a running commentary. He tells the students about the 'dramatic importance' significance of Act 1 and scene 1.	Interesting – although he seems quite transmissive in his style at this present stage in the class, the students nevertheless feel free enough to interject and comment. Ravin uses a number of rhetorical questions as he explains, and it is not immediately clear that he is in fact inviting responses. Yet, the students seem used to the lecturing style adopted by Ravin. The fact that some of them intervene with thoughts and impressions of their own shows that their participation is not frowned upon. This is possibly something I need to keep track of, during other observations. He seems quite skeptical about the tablet, but the mention here is not about the teaching of literature but more about what the young people will do with said tablet. (Must compare with question on technology from Initial Interview, and possibly raise the matter another time) Why is the student in front of me reading from her French literature book? 'Bel-ami'

	He also introduces who the protagonist and antagonist are. Question from student: "What is antagonist?" He gives information from the text, tells them who the character is. He asks questions about the motivations of that character. The students explain in Kreol. He also asks about another theme: "What about corruption?" but he explains it himself. He wraps up the class and tells them to "prepare pg 6, 7 and 8"	Teacher has not noticed. He read through the text. Would it have made a difference if he got them to read the dialogues? The students in my line of sight were following from the text, minus the one right in front of me doing something else. Is that question from student answered? 'Let them explain, perhaps?', was the thought that came to my mind at this point. What does "preparation" mean? Shared code. Need to ask further.

Type of Instructional Methods (based on TDOP Protocol)	Mostly delivers content by lecturing He provides examples from familiar issues or topics to illustrate themes (honesty, corruption, for instance) Only book was used. The board was not used for this lesson.	There is some interaction and discussion but I do not feel it is initiated by the teacher. The students respond as and when they feel they need to. But not everyone does that. Ravin seems very comfortable with the lecturing/explanatory mode.
Some issues/questions to ask the teacher afterwards		Some Questions I jotted down to ask as I was observing him in class: How did you introduce the text? What prior preparation was there? What were your objectives in this lesson? Do you think they were met? How do you find the level/participation of your students? Which strategies do you think is appropriate for them?

(NB: Extract from Observation Log only - post-observation discussion transcript not included in this document)

Appendix 15: Extract from Personal Log [Visiting Ravin]

Visiting Ravin – First visit (extract)

"Ah the bureaucracy"

I had already cleared with Ravin that I would be coming on a specific day to observe him. He indicated to me that I should come around 0830 in the morning. However, when I reached the school, after almost an hour of travel, I had to wait at the administrative office, where I was asked to fill forms, told to wait again, during which time I called Ravin, and then before going to his class, we had to meet the Principal of the school as well. I was made to understand that while my request and letters of gatekeeping had all been duly processed and accepted, I still had to request the Principal if I could step in for the day. I had not been told this when I had called up Ravin to see if I could come. He had just told me it was OK to come, as I usually do ask if there is any issue prior to me coming over. However, I soon found out it was just a matter of minutes. I met the Principal; she spoke to me a few minutes about my study, and she let me go soon after.

I finally climbed up the two storeys along with Ravin. The class I was supposed to be observing was already on. He did not seem to be in a great hurry. As we reached his classroom, we met yet another person, the Deputy Principal, who had come up to see who had come. He started chatting with Ravin. there itself, at the door of his classroom, with the students observing us. I was standing next to Ravin during this conversation.

The two men started commenting on the tent that was being erected in the school yard. Apparently, members of the Opposition was going to hold a political meeting in the school in the afternoon and had not hesitated to spend a hefty sum in setting up a lavish tent. The political remake was another subject that was being raised. I was trying to hint to Ravin that we should go in, especially since the students in the class were looking at us, and some were even commenting about us. One student passing by in the corridor stopped to ask me if I was going to be teaching here.

I don't mind saying that by this time, I was quite anxious about the feasibility of the observation. I already had initial questions budding in my mind at this point. Is that how things usually are? Had I disrupted things with my arrival? It seemed (although I might be wrong) that such corridor conversations were not that rare since Ravin seemed comfortable enough to stand outside the class during the class period.

Ravin finally led me into the class. That small interlude outside the class had taken about 5 to 6 more minutes. He quickly introduced me to the class. "Li bien zenn!"

('He's very young!'), I overheard someone say. Ravin told me I could sit wherever I wanted, so I sat at the back. The students already had their books out. I initially got some curious looks but as soon as Ravin started, from my point of view, they quickly forgot about me.

Appendix 16: Sample semi-structured interview transcript (extract)

NB: Words in italics represent emphases, or shifts in tone

[…]

Interviewer: Ok. So, even then, therefore, do you recall any … way that you were taught, which stands out or…?

VIMLA : To be honest, I don't really remember the classes.

Interviewer: Is there a memorable lesson that you remember?

VIMLA : Yeah, one poems' teacher, I think, (murmurs: What was that?) Blake's poems, I think. The teacher was so good and explaining so well – I just fell in love with poems.

Interviewer: Ok…

VIMLA : and… because before that I really hated poems.

Interviewer: Ok..

VIMLA : My … literature was more or less novels and...

Interviewer: Prose?

VIMLA : Yes. But not really poems. And then, with this teacher, with this lecturer, actually, I really enjoyed… I really enjoyed poems. And then I think it stayed. But if you ask me, I don't really remember the name of….

Interviewer: ..of the lecturer.

VIMLA : ..of the lecturer. (laughs)

Interviewer: But in a way, this has made you enjoy poetry?

VIMLA : yeah…

Interviewer: …and teaching it as well? Do you enjoy teaching it?

VIMLA : I never really *taught* literature at such in upper classes, but lower classes, *yes*, I do enjoy.

[02.59]
Interviewer: How would you define your own *style* of teaching? (Whatever comes to you mind, if you had to define it)

VIMLA : Style of teaching (murmuring as she thinks)

Interviewer: (rephrasing) if you had to define. What is it that you do, which is your *own* brand?

VIMLA : I think I always try to bring [it] in my class whenever I am teaching literature so that they don't get bored like I used to get bored in class. [laughs]

Interviewer: Ah... Ok.

VIMLA : (laughs) This is one thing. And I always let the students go, I mean, before they… before we go into the text, I always say, 'Ok, let's stop today; let's stop here' – let's say, 'if you were the writer, what would you have done, what do you think about this person, or that character?'

Interviewer: So you think it's important to have their personal opinion?

VIMLA : Yes, of course it is... And I think they enjoy this way. Otherwise it's just going into the text all the time and, you know, when you are doing a tragedy, especially Shakespeare, if you go too much into the tragedy, the students also become very depressive (laughs) so it's good if you lighten the moment a bit .

Interviewer: By getting them to voice out also.

VIMLA : Yeah.

Interviewer: So do you have a preferred teaching style, that is, do you like, for example, whole class lectures, or group work, or… other things?

VIMLA : hmm not really..., I mean, group work, to be honest, even if we would like to have group work, we don't get time enough, we have to finish the text - limited time. And… so you need to rush a bit. If I do group work, then it will take more time.

Interviewer: more time..

VIMLA : Yeah. So, we don't get that. So basically it's more like teaching, explaining, going into details…

Interviewer: Exposition?

VIMLA : Yes. And questions and answers but not really doing things we would have wanted to do, like, you know, like making them act the play.

Interviewer: So you would have liked to have more time to do these classes.

VIMLA: Yeah, of course.

Interviewer: Ok. But what makes you not do them?

VIMLA : Because, you know, you have only two periods for one text, *per week*, and if you come… especially at the [Name of Institution], you have so many activities, it means that if you have 21 weeks to teach literature, you get only 15. Fifteen by 2 means 30 periods.

Interviewer: 30 periods, just for one text?

VIMLA : Yeah, just for one text. So it's not enough.

[…]

Appendix 17: Sample transcript with annotations/colour-coding

Extract from Vedika's first interview

Date: 24.01.14

Location: BR Shopping Mall (Food Court)

[NB: Yellow signals the references to teaching and pedagogy; Green refers to students and their attitudes towards literature as a subject; Blue represents specific genres, writers or examination papers to be studied; Grey represents biographical information]

RKB: So thank you, VEDIKA, for accepting to participate in this interview. So I have a few questions I'd like you to answer, so we'll proceed in order. How long have you been teaching English Literature?

VEDIKA: Almost 7 years

RKB: almost 7 years... and have you taught at lower secondary, upper secondary, or both?

VEDIKA: Both. Lower and upper secondary..

RKB: Ok.. thank you. Which do you find more enjoyable: teaching literature at lower secondary, or upper secondary?

VEDIKA: Uh.. Lower secondary, because you introduce the subject to them for the first time; there is .. there is more awareness to know about it.. and out of curiosity, they are going to listen and.. upper secondary, it's slightly different because they already come with their prejudices that literature can be a boring subject, or it's quite scoring and light as well, so .. meaning, in comparison with other subjects, they kind of underestimate it.

Students' attitudes towards E.Lit as subject

RKB: Ok.. They think it is light?

VEDIKA: Yeah, they think it's light and it's scoring, so usually when they don't find good options for subjects, they just opt for literature.

RKB: Ok, so it's not exactly out of enjoyment or interest that they go in for it.

VEDIKA: Yes, but sometimes you have students – they are very motivated for literature. They will pick it up till upper classes but there are some who believe that it can be taken just as a safe option.

One of the rationales behind subject selection at upper secondary

RKB: Ok..so, I'm just skipping a question there, but how do you feel when you have such types of students who come in just to score?

VEDIKA: Ah, it's like.. you start from day 1; you have to introduce the subject, make them *like* it, first of all, so usually I refer to literature movies. I tell them to go and watch these. Very good references would be **Pride and Prejudice**, because they kind of really like that kind of movie, because it relates to what they are used to see, and then slowly you have to bring them up to what is literature, especially how literature .. mirrors life, and all this, and then slowly they will get but not quite easily.

Strategies employed by teacher

RKB: So it's hard work?

VEDIKA: It's hard work! (laughs)

RKB: So, ok the next question: is there a genre, or type of text, or author that you prefer teaching in your literature class?

VEDIKA: Usually, I like Indian writers, because I've noticed that students prefer Indian writers, especially Feminist Indian writings; they have a lot of description and I think our students feel connected, connected to Indian writing because we have that portrayal of customs, traditions, family, rituals and all this, so they connect easily. Else, I've noticed students liking African texts as well; it's only when it comes to Chaucer, when it comes to Chaucer, they have problems with the language. So first stage would be simplifying it for them, and finally really making them like the concept and all. I did *Wife of Bath* last year, and it was a great success, despite [that] in the group, there was three boys who were not so happy by the manipulative side of the Wife of Bath but the girls really enjoyed it and actually they told me it portrays like, our modern, contemporary time, where you have, like, girls being more in power, trying to entice boys, and then kind of using them, so they really enjoyed that.

RKB: But that's like you've answered more in terms of the students themselves. What about you, your personal preferences in terms of the texts, that is, you have to teach certain texts, what are your preferences?

VEDIKA: Preferences… I like teaching Shakespeare a lot because I have read almost all of his texts, so there is a kind of a comfort zone there and I can easily compare with other plays, but when it comes to students, they prefer more, like I said, Indian texts.

RKB: Then, another question… how were you taught English literature at college?

VEDIKA: Ah, that's a different story (laughs). So, English literature.. My first literature class, we were studying Macbeth, and the teacher told us, 'Ok Act 1, scene 1, go home and prepare the lines'. And I was at a loss what to prepare. Fortunately my father is an English teacher, so I got great help from him, else my other friends, they had to absolutely look for someone who could really explain to them like. the language, it's Old English, how to convert it to new English and all this, but in that sense, I consider myself lucky because the way we were taught literature was very different because we were just asked to go and prepare the lines, and when we come to class, we would just say what we understood. So it wasn't a real, proper way of doing a text, and teachers used ..well, they really motivate us to like the subject.

Biography: How she was taught literature at school

RKB: So when you say like, you had to come and prepare and tell us what you understand; that it was not the 'real, proper class', what is a proper class for you, from that time?

VEDIKA: Because, we were Grade 10, so the first time we were taking literature because we like literature, and then you are in front of a Shakespeare text, which was ***Macbeth***, and then you read the lines, the Witches' scene, actually, and you can't really understand when they are reciting the incantation..

RKB: What are they saying..

VEDIKA: Yes, and then, the teacher just tells you, 'Go home and prepare the lines', you find nothing in the dictionary, and at that time, internet was not so popular. So we were at a loss, and then it could have, you know, we could have risked not liking the subject, or dropping it, in fact.

RKB: But what happened?

VEDIKA: So that's what, meaning, for me, fortunately, my father helped me to understand the lines, but I had a few friends; they started hating the subject because they couldn't understand the lines.

Appendix 18: Planning the narratives (some initial considerations)

Planning for Narratives: What to consider:

- Biographical information (Refer to Bio sheet)
- How they have learnt literature at secondary school (biography)
- Any home/external factors on their learning of literature (eg, cultural capital, environment, personal habits)
- How they ventured into the domain of English and why (if possible)
- Did they receive any formal training in the teaching of English and Literature?
- Did their academic studies (BA etc) give them an insight into what should be taught in English literature and how it should be taught?
- What do they perceive to be the key forces influencing their teaching of literature?
- What do they think about the texts they have to teach, the genres they have to teach, the students they are teaching, the timeframe they have, the examinations?
- Do they feel free to adopt any type of pedagogy? What facilitates/impedes their teaching/assessment?
- Do they feel prepared for teaching literature at upper secondary level? Are there aspects where they feel they could have been supported/assisted in any way?
- What do they teach? Is it their choice? What informs their choice of papers/genres/texts?
- Do they have a fixed teaching plan when coming to class? Do they prepare resources, etc prior to coming to class? What preparation is expected of students before coming to class?
- What is their preferred strategy when teaching literature and why?
- Any critical incident in their own experience of teaching literature? How did they address it?
- What informs their choice of assessment in the class?
- What learning objectives do they feel they have achieved in the literature class?
- What is their understanding of changes happening in the subject itself and its teaching? How will those changes impact upon their current practice?
- Overall, how do they feel about their own pedagogical choices? Are they happy, sad, satisfied, irritated, etc?)

Note: These were some of the questions which stemmed from my Critical questions and which informed my planning of the narratives. Depending on the depth and richness of the responses generated with the participants, most of the narratives would structurally address the above questions.

Appendix 19

Narrative representations of pedagogical choices in the literature classroom: Instrumentalist Choices (Chapter Four): Additional Narratives

Appendix 19a - Additional Narrative: 4a: Vimla's Narrative

Vimla's Narrative: Am I teaching literature the right way?

Prologue to the Narrative

When Vimla was recommended to me by a common acquaintance, what interested me was the profile of the school in which she worked, which is under the management of a para-statal institution. Students from this school tend to perform quite well in Arts Side, and there even have been laureates in the past, at HSC[113] level on the Arts Side, which meant that English literature, at least, was being offered at upper secondary level. Vimla, in her mid-thirties, has been working as an English teacher for around thirteen years and has been teaching literature at upper secondary for the last eight years.

Vimla had proposed to meet me the first time at my workplace itself, since she had to attend a workshop in another institution nearby, and would be free after that. As we talked, I was surprised to learn that Vimla had not studied literature at upper secondary level but had taken subjects on the Science Side. Her journey into becoming an English teacher thus intrigued me, who had studied literature in every single year of secondary school. As we converse, Vimla becomes more comfortable and starts telling me about her teaching of English literature.

Her experience of learning literature

When Vimla reminisces about the past, she thinks about the time when she was a science student at secondary level. This meant that literature was a subject she had experienced at lower secondary only. Little did she know, back then, that she would subsequently venture into the field of English language and literature by going for a Bachelor's degree in English and teaching literature! The little she recalls from her experience of literature at school consists of mostly unsatisfactory lessons, where she ultimately felt bored, although she has fond memories of poetry classes. There had been one teacher who was so good at explaining that genre that she just fell in love with the poems they were being taught, when before, she really hated poetry. Since that time, that appreciation for poetry has remained with her, and she now enjoys introducing literature, especially poetry, to her students.

The attitude of others towards English literature as a subject

[113] Higher School Certificate, the qualification students receive as a result of successfully completing seven years of study at secondary level.

Vimla had opted for science subjects because her father had wanted her to study to become a doctor but then she had realised that science was not really what she wanted to do when she finished her secondary education. She realises that there are many students who are similarly guided by their parents towards subjects that they do not really like. The attitude of others towards English literature is something that Vimla finds challenging as an English teacher. She finds that people tend to look down upon literature, especially many parents who disparage their children's choice of subject and ask them, sometimes, even after the students have made their choice, the following question, which the students come to class and echo, "Literature? What are you going to do with that?" She understands, therefore, why some of the more academically performing students do not end up choosing literature, even if they do have an affinity for the subject and wanted to continue studying it. Instead, after having studied literature as their 8th subject at Grade 11 level, many will be dropping it since they are not planning to take Arts Side subject combinations. The challenge Vimla finds is to convince those 16-year olds what they can actually do after that. She sometimes tells them that they should study the subject they want to do, and decide about their career in due course. She then takes her own example, saying, "See, I was a science student, and I am teaching literature today!"

However, she is also aware that many students have a negative image of literature, thinking of it as boring and useless, and she finds that this is sometimes a deep-rooted impression which is hard for students to shake off. Vimla was surprised to note that some students thought of science subjects as being a domain reserved for intelligent people. What had shocked her even more was that one of Vimla's former rectors seemingly had had such an attitude as well, since he often praised science students for their academic performance and made sure that they lacked nothing in terms of resources. This, Vimla had felt at the time, had seemed unfair, especially since there had been laureates on the Arts Side at this school too, and that extra attention, coming from the head of school, would have boosted Arts Side students' confidence and interest in their subject.

Text selection

When it comes to selecting texts for study, Vimla's head of department calls the whole department for a meeting where everyone decides upon the texts to be set. Generally, teachers get to teach the genres with which they have more affinity or the texts which they are familiar with. Since Vimla likes to teach Shakespeare, her head of department will tell her to select from the list of Shakespearean texts on the CIE prescribed texts list for the coming year. Vimla loves teaching Shakespearean tragedies at upper secondary level; over the last three years, Vimla has taught ***Hamlet***, then ***As You Like It*****,** the previous year, and then this year, she is working on ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***. Following Shakespeare's suit, she cannot think of tragedies as consisting only of serious matters and she suspects that if she speaks about these only, then her students might actually get depressed. So, as far as possible, she tries to address difficult themes with occasional lighter moments where she tries to get her students to voice out.

Her own style of teaching literature

In Vimla's department, each teacher comes up with their own strategies to teach literature; once they have been allocated a text, it is up to them to see what can be done with that text. In a way, every teacher operates in isolation, so that even if she and another teacher are going to be teaching the same texts next year, she does not plan having discussions on how she will teach the text. Vimla did not have the opportunity to follow any professional course in pedagogy, so she is unsure whether this would have helped her in her teaching of literature. When she first started teaching literature, the entire process seemed completely new to her; she did not know how to start, given that she had never studied literature at upper secondary herself. Her studies at university presented her with texts and ways of interpreting texts but not necessarily with means of teaching literature as a subject to young people. She then decided not to opt for professional training since she was not really convinced it would help her at that time. Moreover, as a newly recruited educator, she did not have an induction course as newly-recruited state school educators often do, which meant that she had to learn by herself. She started by going according to what others were doing and by asking her seniors, such as her head of department. She had even wanted to do some peer observation with some colleagues but that, she knew, would have been too much to ask of them. It would always be construed as something else, such as judging the other teacher's teaching capabilities, rather than being seen as a learning opportunity.

So, Vimla ended up devising her own way of teaching literature, although she does not have access to other people's experiences of teaching literature to know what exactly is *different* about her own teaching style. Vimla does not have any preferred teaching strategy; sometimes she thinks she would have liked to carry out group work, or get the students to engage in role play but then she thinks of the little time at her disposal, which means that she has to rush to finish the text. Vimla has calculated how much time she has; with only two periods per week to cover one text, she has realised that out of perhaps twenty-one weeks, due to activities and other events, she might end up having only fifteen weeks, that is, thirty periods to cover a large text. To her, that is clearly not enough. Most of the time, she engages in explaining and going through the details to help the students understand the various aspects they need to know about the text.

Usually, Vimla prepares her texts much in advance; in fact, as soon as she gets to know which texts she will be teaching, she reads the text at least twice before she starts teaching it, even if she is familiar with the play. She also carries out some research on the background and context of the play and looks for the critics she can find so that she is well prepared before she goes to class. At her school, while some planning is expected, Vimla does not really write down elaborate lesson plans and she knows that her head of department implicitly trusts her choice of strategies in class. However, Vimla does keep track of what she wants to do in class or say to her students in a notebook, as she hates writing in her own copies of the books she teaches. Very often, Vimla finds that the plans she sets out to enact in class actually do not work out the way she had envisaged. Sometimes, two periods are needed to complete one scene but there have been moments when only a few lines have taken the same amount of time to discuss in class. Ultimately, Vimla realises that one can never really prepare for the teaching of literature.

Plans are ultimately going to fail because one never knows in which direction a particular lesson might go, especially if something crops up and stimulates a discussion. Sometimes, in the heat of the discussion, she even forgets the aim of the lesson until she remembers, much afterwards, that she had initially planned something else. However, she considers such sessions to be a success since she has managed to get her students involved in different aspects of the text.

"Am I teaching the right way?"

In terms of resources, Vimla knows she can rely on multimedia facilities at her school, which she can use to show students plays or film adaptations. She is confident that whatever she asks for, she will get, including access to a projector and the department laptop, which she uses whenever she can. Vimla believes that teachers can display a lot of creativity and innovation in their teaching, as long as they are clear about what and how they are teaching. Technology can be very helpful in her teaching of literature. She sometimes thinks that it would be a waste if students only read plays when the latter were meant to be watched. What she usually does, after going through the text, is to make her students watch the play or film adaptation, and she often finds that her students enjoy this experience. She also finds that if there are some aspects that she has not been able to cover, or that the students have not understood, sometimes watching the play, which she would then comment upon, allows them to remember it better. She recalls one of her students telling her, "You know, Ma'am, when we were working on the examination paper, we could hear your voice, as we thought of the text." She however takes great care not to expose them to films before they have read the text in class. Vimla does not always tell her students to prepare the text in advance as she is aware that they do not do the reading, despite telling them to do so. In fact, she even tells them not to read the text, and gets them to read the text in class, which she will then explain and discuss together with them.

Despite her years of teaching literature, however, she is still unsure whether she is doing the right thing or using the right method to teach her students. She knows that her students enjoy her classes and that they always get good marks; in fact, for the past five years, her school has been producing a laureate on the Arts Side, which means that some of those students have done at least one literature paper with her for their A' levels. However, she cannot take all the credit since she knows some of her other colleagues also have contributed. Despite these successes, there is a lingering doubt in her mind whether she is teaching the right way. This is something she would really like to find out.

One thing she would like to try out is to observe a colleague's class, and she has high hopes to observe her head of department's class, if she can muster the courage to ask him, "I want to attend your class, and see how you do things." For Vimla, this person is a role model, principally because he always seems so meticulous and knowledgeable about his subject and always has an answer when she discusses with him. Vimla never tries to compare herself to her colleagues; she does not ask her students how others are teaching, although she is aware that some teachers like to indulge in such talk with their students. However, when students come to her to tell her how much they have enjoyed his class, she cannot help being intrigued and

wishes that she, too, was a student once more. However, she hesitates to ask her colleagues, who are mostly in their 50s, and in whose company she sometimes feels like a newcomer herself.

Vimla and I are discussing the way she teaches literature. When I ask her if she has a particular style, she hesitates at first and then says, "I think I always try to bring out something in my class whenever I am teaching literature so that my students don't get bored like I used to get bored in class."

"Can you give me an example?" I ask.

"Well," she replies, "one thing I do before we venture too deep into the text is that I will ask them what they would have done if they had been the writer of this story, or sometimes I will ask them about their opinion on particular characters in the text."

"So, their personal opinion is important for you to find out?" I ask.

She replies, "Of course! I think they enjoy it this way; otherwise it's just going to be reading the text all the time."

The challenge of completing the syllabus

In today's class, Vimla is revising Act 4, scene 1 from Shakespeare's ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, with her Grade 12 students. When she thinks of the syllabus nowadays, she is glad that it has begun to include a more varied set of texts, which, according to her, call for a difference in treatment and teaching. Vimla finds some contemporary texts to be more directly accessible for students whereas some more traditional texts require much interpretation and textual study to derive meaning. Vimla is glad that there is such a wide choice of texts on the current literature syllabus, even though she only pays close attention to the Shakespeare texts that usually are included in the list. Currently, ***As You Like It*** and ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** are both offered, and she is teaching the latter. She would have preferred to see more tragedies on that list; in her mind, the best of Shakespeare's work is represented in the tragedies. Vimla thus would have preferred a different text from Shakespeare than ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, which she feels is not as challenging as a tragedy for her students; however, the prescribed list did not have any of those. Even then, she does not want just any tragedy; after teaching ***Hamlet*** for the last three years, she has grown tired of it, and even tells her colleagues jokingly that if ***Hamlet*** had been on the list once more, she would have lost her mind herself.

One main challenge she faces is in completing the syllabus. Unlike some other schools, where she is aware that teachers manage to complete the texts on the syllabus, Vimla sometimes has some difficulty in doing so since so many classes are missed due to the number of activities and meetings that take place during the year. So, Vimla finds that she can never really prepare

over the long run. Sometimes, she cannot even tell her students "Ok, next week, we're going to have a test" because the school timetable can be unpredictable. She always finds a way to finish her texts, though, even if she has to request for extra classes such as the Physical Education classes, library classes and so on, which requires arrangements with other teachers.

Despite her mixed feelings towards ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, she has to admit that her students are interested in it. Themes such as forbidden love, conflicted relationships, misunderstandings between lovers, and reciprocated and unrequited love are very much known to students and open up possibilities for getting her students engaged with the text. The language, however, is challenging but Vimla feels that the more they use it and hear it, the less this is going to be a barrier since they eventually learn to paraphrase the text, under her guidance. She recalls that it took her nearly the whole of the first school term to actually get them to be able to paraphrase the first Act. Things went considerably faster once they started understanding the language better. When she started teaching this class at the beginning of the year, there had only been 6 students in class. Later on, some of them decided that English at principal level was probably easy to score marks and the others had joined in after their results, which meant that they had already missed part of the lessons based on the text. What she finds pleasantly surprising is that by the time the students have reached Act 2 in their play, they can already read the original text with relative ease. She recalls how the initial reactions of some of her students had been bewilderment upon reading the first lines of Shakespeare, which had prompted one student to exclaim, "Miss, c'est quoi ca, Miss? Grec?[114]" Soon, however, they barely notice that reading a 16th century text has become so much easier over time. She finds a similar situation with Chaucer, which she finds presents an even more formidable obstacle, since the context being described in ***The Canterbury Tales*** is very much alien to her students' own background. All depends, she often reflects, upon the way one conducts her class. Tackling Chaucer, or Shakespeare, for that matter, only in seriousness is not likely to get much positive response from her students. She finds that it is important to relate the text to her students' lives and to make them enjoy the text. Once that students take a stand against a text, she finds it difficult to get them involved again.

The other challenge she has anticipated is the plot which is also set in a different context, that is, Athens a long time ago, even though most of the story takes place in the woods. That said, Vimla thinks that any setting beyond Mauritius is bound to seem exotic to most students in any case and so should not be too difficult to explain. She thus focuses on some of the aspects pertaining to Shakespeare's time, as well as the references to ancient Greece, and then focuses on the difference between the urban setting and the pastoral setting. With few places actually resembling genuinely pastoral environments in Mauritius, Vimla often resorts to a direct explanation what such an environment entails, evoking in the process the ideas of pasture lands, purity and peace.

Usually, she proceeds by reading the text together with her students, especially when she has to teach Shakespeare, since she knows they have problems with the genre as well as the

[114] Translated from French, "Miss, what is that? [Is that] Greek?"

language. So, at that point, she always focuses on her students' basic understanding of the text, and does not really go into detailed analysis. This process will take her and her class till the middle of the second term, and once they have finished with the reading of the play, she will make them go back to the text. That is when the more in-depth explanations and analysis will start, as from Act 1 onwards. Vimla reckons that by the time she has finished with the play, her students will have already become very familiar with Shakespeare's text and style.

Vimla considers that it is important to get students to be aware of what is happening around them and to get them to voice out. Vimla knows that some of her students do not really read the extracts she gives them to read and sometimes reminds them that it is not enough to read just a few pages at the beginning and end of the play. Confronting them on specific issues, she finds, can sometimes make her students think on the spot and respond. She will often challenge their statements to get them to react to a particular stance towards a character, theme or plot, and she will often let them discuss rather than telling them that they are right or wrong. She relies upon the classroom dynamics that she herself has helped to create to foster deeper understanding of the text under study.

Examination considerations

Although she had initially planned to start her class with a discussion of the new scene, she has now decided to carry out her class differently, by discussing the students' assigned homework, which she has marked during the week. Vimla had previously given a question for her students to work on, which was, "In which way is ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** a comedy with a difference?" Every few weeks, she gives one such question for the students to work out, in order to check their understanding of the text and to prepare them for the types of questions they are likely to get for the exams. However, when she corrected the work, she found out that most of them had misunderstood the question and, to the exception of four students, the others had been off-track. So, in today's lesson, even though she had planned to start Act IV, she feels that the performance of her students has been so worrying that she needs to take the question apart and explain how to proceed to answer it. Such a process, she indicates to her students, is going to be of assistance to them when they will be writing other such essays in the future.

Vimla believes it is very important, given her limited time frame, to prepare her students for exams. The one saving grace of working in a school like hers is that she finds that most students perform quite well, academically, and this does not always require much spoon-feeding on her part. She usually finishes her texts by the second term and then devotes the rest of the time to preparing her students for the exams by providing them with questions and model answers. She tries to prepare them for the different types of questions that usually come up in the examination paper but she usually gives them a choice rather than imposing a particular type of essay, as some teachers sometimes do, when they think a particular type of question is more scoring. While making sure they do practice all the types of questions that are likely to come out, she usually advises them to work out the question which they find the easiest to address.

"You know," she tells me with a knowing smile, "Students who say that literature is boring; this is a familiar scene to me. Even some of the lower grades are laidback in the literature class because they know they will not be doing this subject the next year."

Vimla clearly seems to be worried about this, despite her outward cheerfulness, so I invite her to tell me more about how this situation affects her.

She replies, "At upper secondary, this does not affect me much because most of them have chosen this subject. There are times, though, when I see their lack of interest, and I want to ask them what they are doing and why they are wasting my time if they are not interested."

Students' attitudes to English literature as a subject

Teaching English literature in a co-educational school can bring forth a number of interesting insights into the way different students react to the texts that they are exposed to and the way they answer questions. Vimla believes, without overly generalizing, that the girls in her class tend to be more emotional and sensitive to the elements of drama in the texts while the boys tend to rationalise and pick apart the information they gather from the texts. This means that, in the class, there is a variety in terms of responses that she has to contend with. While they already participate quite actively in class, Vimla finds that her students actually fight to be offered the chance to do some role playing in class and try out the role of one specific character. Sometimes she goes even beyond and gives them the opportunity to be the director, actors and prop makers, which Vimla thinks will lead to a more enjoyable lesson. She regrets that she does not get enough time to set such class activities as often as she would wish.

To her, the difference between teaching literature at lower secondary and teaching it at upper secondary lies in the fact that enjoyment of the text, as it is, is more important at lower secondary while deeper reading and analysis are given more importance at upper secondary. While most students do take some kind of interest in literature, there are many in her class who take the subject for granted, especially amongst the Grade 12 students. Since some of them have never done literature before, they do not really know what literary study entails and take it for granted that English, as one of the 'Main' subjects, is easy. So, already in the first sessions, some of the students come to class but do not want to study, and realise, quite late in the term, that the degree of engagement with the text is much deeper than what they had initially thought. However, Vimla does not appreciate it when other people automatically assume that those who have not studied literature at Grade 11 level are necessarily going to face problems. Whenever students come to her to ask about this, she tells them, "Look at me, I never did literature at school!" It then becomes something that interests them when she tells them that she was a science student who went on to study English.

Vimla almost feels grateful when she gets all her assignments back because some of them do not bother submitting all the tasks she sets. Usually, after having completed one Act in the play, she gives them some general questions out of which they can choose one to answer over

a period of two to three weeks. The problem lies in the fact that only ten percent of all those assignments actually count for the term grade, and the other tasks are given for practice and revision. The students soon become aware of this, resulting in fewer submissions over time. There are, of course, sanctions but Vimla has eventually realised that she should not fret over such matters and when students do not submit, she does not chase them but rather just notes down the non-submission, resulting in no marks. For Vimla, some of the apathy she has observed in her class results from those students who did not have a choice but to opt for literature. She has, for instance, students who had initially opted for science subjects but who eventually found out that science was not really made for them, or was too difficult. With no chance of turning towards the Economics Side, for those who have not done Accounting as subject at Grades 10 and 11, their only options are the subjects on the Arts Side, such as English or French. Vimla knows that much encouragement is sometimes needed to make those students feel valued but those efforts can lead to great success: one of the recent laureates from the Arts Side had not done literature at Grades 10 and 11 and yet he was able to excel at Grade 12 level. However, to give him his due, Vimla thinks that the young man had also worked very hard, which is not always the case with some of the students she gets.

Vimla finds it hard sometimes to maintain some optimism when it comes to students who refuse to make an effort. In fact, after so many years of teaching English literature at Grade 12 level, she has recently told her head of department that she might not teach the current batch of Grade 11 students if ever they opt for literature for the next year. What makes the situation more depressing is that, from an administrative point of view, literature, as well as other Arts and Humanities subjects, are often perceived as easy and accessible, and Vimla thinks that those subjects then become dumping grounds, where anyone can just join, irrespective of performance or affinity with the subject.

The personal growth model

However, beyond examination requirements, Vimla believes that her students also get to learn about life itself. Vimla believes that there is something else beyond looking at one text or at language, while studying literature. She also tries to relate to her students' lives and their personal experiences. She finds them to be active and enthusiastic most of the time, and despite their irregular attendance at school, they rarely miss a literature class. Over time, she has seen her students grow from the discussions they have had in the literature class. She recalls some of her students coming to class saying "Madam, we've been shocked, today! This book is really pornographic!" That had been one of their first encounters with ***The Wife of Bath***, which they were doing with another teacher. She saw them struggling in a similar way with Shakespeare when they started with the text at Grade 12. She had seen how immature their comments were at the beginning, but by the time they had reached the second or third term, they had already started to change their outlook on the text.

Vimla wants her students to understand the play as it is, and for them to do the talking. Aware of the generation gap between herself and her students, she is often surprised by the answers that they come up with since they think so differently from her. For instance, they have distinct

views about Hermia, and they indignantly tell her how she has the right not to obey her father as it is her life and she has the right to choose with whom she wants to get married. For them, the notion of the dutiful son or daughter does not even come to their mind, and she then has to explain how people were brought up a long time ago to respect and obey their parents in all things. When she asks them if Hermia has done anything wrong, some of them reply that she should have stayed in Athens, defied the laws and got married. In a way, Vimla is glad to be getting such responses in class. She knows she could just have told them how things were in 16th century England and that they should accept the reality presented within the text, but she also feels it is important for them to voice out and express their feelings about what they are reading. Living the text, or relating the text to one's life is what she perceives as the purpose of literature.

Working out the question together

What Vimla has thus planned for today's class is to look at the important elements that the students need to address in the question. She informs the students that they are going to start from scratch and that they should put what they had initially written aside for now. She starts this session by asking the whole class to brainstorm on an appropriate way to write the introduction to this essay. She points out to them that they will probably need to refer to the pastoral setting at some point as well as the main plot and subplots within the play. The other aspect she wants them to raise is the difference between the aristocrats and the *Mechanicals*, especially in terms of the language they use, which is also a source of humour in the text.

Vimla considers that most students out of her twenty Grade 12 students are actually interested in the subject, or at least interested in passing their exams, which brings her some degree of satisfaction. However, sometimes it does not take much in order to disrupt a well-planned lesson. There are some students whom she finds challenging to manage since they do not have much interest for the subject. So, even if she does take them into account while teaching and tries to get those few resistant students to participate in the discussions, read aloud or comment, sometimes they will give an indifferent answer. This troubles Vimla, since she has rarely had such issues before with students and she now wonders how to address them. Where there used to be 100% success rate in that subject, now because of some students, that percentage has gone down and she fears for their final results, which are also bound to lead to awkward questions about her own performance. She was surprised to see some of them turn up just two weeks before the exams to ask for the notes she had given in class, but since she had already mailed the whole class, she told them to check what she had sent and asked them to talk to their friends to see if they would be willing to share their notes. With such a casual attitude towards the subject and their studies in general, Vimla thinks that it would not be surprising if she saw some of them coming back the next year to repeat the subject.

Using the whiteboard, Vimla tries to break down the main elements of the questions so that the students can understand what components they need to address in their answer. She sometimes uses the board when she feels they get confused about one particular issue even though most of the time she resorts to reading, explanation and discussion in class. She first draws their attention to the main plot, where Shakespeare emphasizes on aristocratic people and their lives,

and then she moves on to discuss the subplot of the play, which addresses people from the lower strata of society, such as the Mechanicals, or working people. She then points out that their story roughly parodies the main plot. From time to time, she asks the students to add extra information as she draws a mind map representing the discussion. When they provide her with the right ideas, she praises their answers, since she is aware that her reaction to their responses has the potential to encourage or demotivate them.

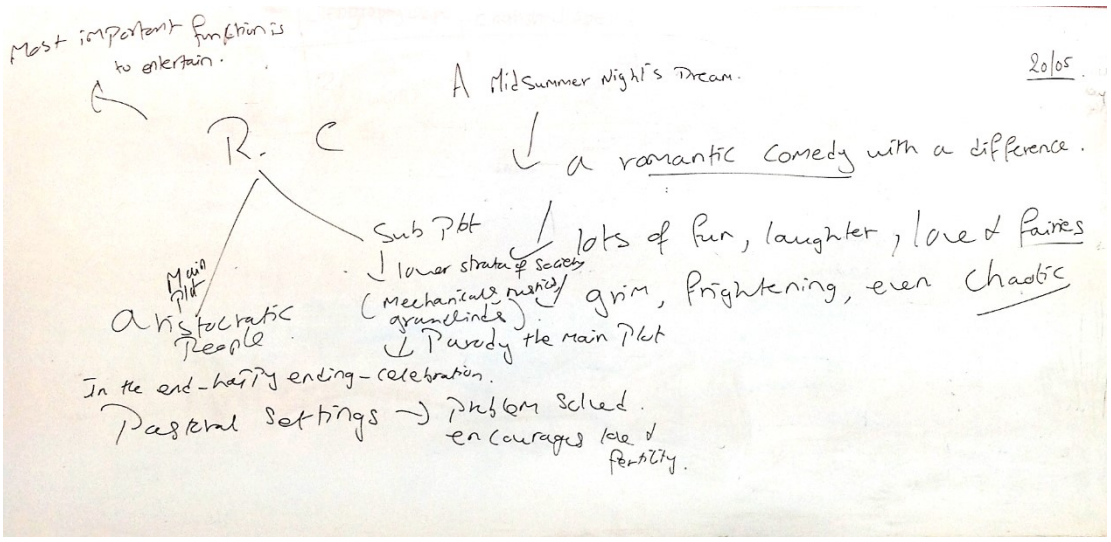


Figure 19.3: Using the whiteboard to break down the essay question

Since the discussion is about romantic comedy, Vimla quickly invites her students to brainstorm on the term itself, and after listening to them, she notes down on the board that its main function is to entertain. Referring to the question she had set, Vimla then writes down two different phrases about the play to state that the play consists of "lots of fun, laughter, love and fairies", while also being "grim, frightening, even chaotic." Turning towards her students, she then asks them in what ways these two phrases could be supported by evidence from the play. The students start providing examples from the play to support both statements. Since the students did not refer to the episode between Titania and Bottom, she mentions this as an example of a "light" event which induces laughter in the text. Finally, to wrap up, she then writes, in note form, "in the end - happy ending – celebration" to indicate how the play presents issues which eventually get resolved at the end.

Through questioning, she tries to elicit some more responses on the question. In the end, she asks them how they personally felt upon reading the text. Some of the students reply that the play did not really feel like a comedy, and that there were some very serious moments at various segments of the plot. Vimla then refers to the ending, asking them, "Don't you feel cheated here?" A few students nod and one of them says how they were expecting something terrible to happen to the protagonists when they would return to Athens, and to the fairy royal couple once the episode with Bottom was discovered. A few students start commenting about their surprise when everything seemingly started resolving themselves. Vimla uses those responses to discuss how the play arouses strong emotions which involve the audience with the plot and

characters but afterwards provide a sense of catharsis when all problems are solved. Following this discussion, Vimla continues to give some guidelines for the writing of the essay. She promises that she will address the issue of how to answer such types of essay questions again in the near future.

Developing different interpretations

Vimla believes that English literature is different from other subjects; in other subjects, she feels that there are factual things to learn from the teacher, the textbook or any other source, whereas with literature, it is important to develop different interpretations. She realises that everyone has his or her own way of thinking but this needs to be actively brought out. She thinks of her students who sometimes have very interesting insights, when she gives them questions to discuss, but are not able to express them correctly. She perceives the difference between literature and other subjects, especially since in the latter, the student is rarely expected or encouraged to voice out on the content they are exposed to. Things are already stated for the learner, who has to understand and then reproduce those facts. On the other hand, in literature study, Vimla feels that one can say what one wants as long as it can be supported by evidence from the text. This, in Vimla's view, is a great difference, since students are hence able to express their opinion and see things from different perspectives.

Vimla is sometimes herself pleasantly surprised when her students are able to come up with a different take on a text, which they are then able to support in a coherent manner, as she has taught them to do. With the Grade 10 students, to whom she is currently teaching ***The Merchant of Venice***, she was taken aback, during discussions of the antagonist, Shylock, by one student who set out to argue that Shylock had not been wrong at all and that he was only doing what was best for his business interests. If rules are not observed, he had argued, how can business ever be done? What had been interesting was that this exchange between teacher and student had also polarised the class, which remained divided on the matter till the end. Some believed that being humane was important while others claimed that feelings had no place in business. Vimla relishes such moments where the text really becomes alive for both her and the students and the motivations of a fictional character become the platform where moral issues are discussed. Vimla recalls, however, that she had felt a bit lost when this discussion had cropped up, since the student would not open herself up to viewpoints other than her own, and she ended up using her position as teacher to state that the last word on the matter would be hers.

Vimla finds that there are some topics that are challenging to address in class. Differences in interpretation, according to Vimla, depend on the maturity of the students; for instance, she sees a great difference between the Grade 10 students and the Grade 12 students who study literature. With her Grade 10 class, whatever she tells them gets accepted with barely any questioning. She also notices that girls tend to emotionally relate to characters while the boys were more likely to explore motivations and reasons behind a protagonist's actions. She has also noticed that those students who read books on their own have a completely different way of seeing things in the sense that they tend to be more mature. As soon as she starts speaking about sexuality in ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, for instance, she notices that some students

seem uncomfortable and do not really seem to want to listen to what she has to say. This, she thinks, can be attributed to the fact that they are around 17 years old in a co-educational setting, which might make some of them feel uneasy about someone openly discussing sexuality and other serious topics in class, especially since norms in Mauritius tend to be quite conservative. Vimla sometimes cannot help smiling when she thinks of the responses of her students when they encounter themes or events they did not expect to see in the texts they are studying. Perhaps, she thinks, they were expecting seriousness from literature; something with a moral, which resembles the type of literature they were exposed to, at lower secondary level. She then reminds them that such serious themes do exist in the texts that they are studying but that authors also included many other references to life in general. She also reminds them how they are probably exposed to much more provocative references from mainstream media. However, she understands that the teenagers in class might feel self-conscious when those issues crop up in texts, and this pushes her to be careful with what she says in class. To avoid any sensitive issue while reading and discussing texts, she makes sure to read the text a few times and to prepare carefully.

It is now time to address the new scene. Vimla is aware that some students are relatively familiar with the rest of the text, since some may have read on their own, while others have found information online or in books. Vimla looks for volunteers, who start reading out the different lines in the play. One of the strategies she uses in class is to get them to read the text aloud and to get them to enact the roles of different characters as they read. This serves to familiarise them with the language. She finds that those who have studied literature since Grade 10 can often perceive the shifts in mood and tone, as they read. However, there are also other students who have come to the school for their Grade 12[115] and who have not done literature before. Vimla hopes that reading aloud can be a way in helping them to catch up, and she often tries to involve those newcomers in such activities. Given that she has always worked in a co-educational setting, she is not sure whether boys or girls think and react differently to literary texts. At other times, she finds that hot-seating and empathic tasks, where students are expected to be in the shoes of specific characters, are very useful, especially when trying to gauge her students' understanding of characters' motivations. For instance, she would ask the boys, "If you were Hermia, what would you have done?", while the girls would be asked, "If you were Lysander, what would you have done in this scene?" She tries this out especially to get her students to see how the other gender would be experiencing things. This has sometimes led to interesting debates in class about differences in interpretation. Vimla is glad of that since she does not always get answers to her questions as her students do not often respond in class.

"Do they read on their own?" I ask.

[115] Some secondary schools do not offer specific subject combinations, due to low numbers, lack of staff or because they want to focus on specific domains of specialisation. Here Vimla faces a situation where students have transferred from their previous schools to be able to join her school where Arts side subject combinations are offered.

We have been discussing about her students' approach to the texts they study with Vimla and about the practice of giving notes in class..

"I always tell them to do that, but they don't! They are still very much dependent on me," she replies.

"What do you do, then?" I ask, curiously.

"I give them notes; good notes, actually. That's what I do!" she replies, laughing, "But I wouldn't call it spoon-feeding, but rather 'spade-feeding'!"

"It seems like you do not leave anything to chance!" I suggest.

"I give notes, yes, but it's up to you whether you want to follow those notes or not. I don't impose," says Vimla.

I then ask her what she thinks about critics, to whom teachers sometimes refer to when discussing a text.

She tells me, "Of course, it is very important to know about what critics have thought or written about certain texts so that they may compare how closely their ideas matched those of the critics."

Giving notes on the text

Following the reading of the scene, Vimla then explains what has just happened, with some occasional small questions to check their understanding. From time to time, one student will come up with a comment on the extract, upon which she will ask him or her to elaborate. She then proceeds to give some notes on the scene, focusing on the important speeches by the protagonists. Vimla prepares her own notes, which she synthesizes from various sources and presents in an accessible form for her students. She only gives them those notes after they have finished reading the text, and allows them to refer to these notes when she carries out discussion sessions on the deeper analysis of the texts, as she does not want to be the only one to speak in class. She hopes that those notes will assist her students in approaching the text from different angles. Vimla does not believe that all her students will carry out research on their own, or out of curiosity; she is aware therefore that the notes she gives them are very important and that they will have to go back to these notes if they want to do well for the examinations. Sometimes, she even tells them to read through the notes in class itself when they are not sure of an answer. As she usually tells them, "If you look at the notes, you will find the answers there." Indeed, she feels that she has provided most of the themes and references in those notes, so that when it comes to analysing the text afterwards, the students should already have an indication of the aspects that she will address in class.

For Vimla, notes complement the students' reading and subsequent discussion of the text; they also provide guidelines so that students have an indication of the way the text could be

addressed. Vimla often reminds her students that they should not be using her own notes in their essays and encourages them to use their own words in their responses to set questions. Since she has realised that many students do not read the set texts and often just read the summary, she endeavours to get them to read the book in class, first, then proceed to the analysis, which usually implies discussion and explanation in class, after which she will give them the notes. She reminds them that some texts cannot simply be understood from its summary; some texts derive meaning from the way they are written, and there is no shortcut to understand that aspect. With plays, especially, she makes sure to go line by line, and make them get the feel of it. She also gets her students to paraphrase the text, which she feels helps, especially when some have never done literature.

Since critics are often considered by teachers and students as learned persons, the critics can also be quoted if their views can help to construct an argument. However, as she usually tells her students, they do not need to share the same point of view as the critics. Very often, she reflects, one's appreciation for a text seems to be replaced by blind worship of critics, those people who supposedly know better than others, and their works. Literature, according to her, is life and about the reader's reactions to the content presented; everyone's point of view, therefore, should be different because ultimately no one is exactly the same. She sometimes jokingly tells her students that if there are twenty of them in class, then there should be twenty interpretations being shared.

As she explains again, Vimla refers to previous classes where she had covered similar themes. She does not want to face a situation where students, be it deliberately or not, keep forgetting issues already addressed. When it comes to explaining the unfairness of the treatment of Hermia, she not only refers to the law of Athens but also makes references to contemporary instances of the unfairness of society towards women so that they are able to relate the theme from the text to their own modern world. From time to time, her students ask her some questions since she has made it clear that they should ask questions whenever they feel uncertain about anything. Vimla then explains, pausing from time to time to explain a difficult word.

External challenges

More than once, Vimla has wondered what it would take to obtain more time to cover the texts that she is supposed to teach. However, as she ironically likes to share with her own colleagues, her school is famous for its extra-curricular activities that are spread out throughout the year. She smiles wryly as she thinks of how she might be in the only school where teachers actually want to work but do not have enough classes. With so much emphasis placed upon completing the syllabus, it is not surprising to find teachers bargaining with each other for two extra periods here and there to be able to do so. Moreover, Vimla finds that parental interference is a subtle but undeniable reality in whatever she sets out to do in class; she knows that if she ventures too much outside the beaten track in class, or if she does not give any notes at all, this might get reported. Eventually, her delivery of the subject is not so much about the students' actual needs but also about parental expectations. Sometimes it becomes difficult to teach according to one's desire, when one is held accountable for students' performance in their examinations.

As she wraps up this lesson, she asks them what they have retained from this scene and what problem has been resolved. Vimla then reflects on how she might do differently with the next batch of students. Perhaps getting the students to form groups and work on different activities might yield some interesting results, but she will have to make sure those who do not work get to contribute to the activity. She also reminds them to pay attention to new information that the scene provides on some characters in the play and tells them to keep on reading the next chapter, which they will discuss the next time. This has become a routine statement, as natural as saying hello or goodbye. She whimsically wonders whether a day will come when the entire class might actually surprise her by preparing the chapter they have to read. She then shakes her head, smiling ruefully. What she remains confident about is her sure knowledge that her students enjoy the classes they have with her, especially since most of them remain in class for most of the year.

Appendix 19b: Additional Narrative: 4b: Ravin's Narrative

Ravin's Narrative: Too many expectations placed on the teacher …

Prologue to the Narrative

It is the first time I am venturing in this private-aided[116] co-educational secondary school which is located in a rural region. After waiting for a while, Ravin, freshly liberated from administrative duties, comes to meet me.

Ravin, in his late 50s, has been teaching English and English literature for the last 32 years. We once met randomly in an English language workshop and after talking for a while, he accepted to share a bit of his life as an English literature teacher with me.

He tells me about the classes he currently teaches and what texts he is teaching. While another colleague is doing Arundhati Roy's ***The God of Small Things*** *and E.M. Forster's* ***A Passage to India****, he has just completed Harold Pinter's* ***The Birthday Party*** *and started Robert Bolt's* ***A Man For All Seasons*** with the Grade 13 students*. Generally, when it comes to specific papers for the Grade 12, Ravin asks his colleagues what they prefer to teach. In this instance, since his colleague preferred to do novels with the Grade 13, he has ended up doing drama instead. With the Grade 12, he is currently teaching prose, poetry and drama, namely poems from the poetry collection,* ***Songs of Ourselves****, Chaucer's* ***Wife of Bath****, Shakespeare's* ***As You Like It*** *and Forster's* ***A Passage to India****, which are texts that he has chosen himself, after some consultation with members of the English department.*

Ravin is initially quite reserved at our first meeting but in the course of our meetings, as we discuss, he seems more relaxed and open to share how he teaches his English literature classes.

After climbing the stairs, Ravin reaches his small yet packed classroom on the second floor. As he enters the room, the twenty Grade 13[117] students quickly shift from their slouched positions and sit at attention. It takes a few stern comments from Ravin before the noise they had been making now subsides to some hushed whispers. Ravin greets them and sets his file and books on his desk, which centrally faces the student desks set in traditional block style in the classroom. Out of habit, he glances at his diary, where the entry reads as follows:

Text: ***A Man For All Seasons***

[116] A private-aided secondary school is one which is under private management and which, while not state-run, still receives grants from the state.

[117] Students in their last year of secondary level schooling.

Topic: Reading and Class Discussion on Act 1, Scene 1

Today he has planned to continue teaching the play that he had introduced to the students the previous week, Robert Bolt's ***A Man For All Seasons***, which was written in the 1960s but deals with events that took place six hundred years ago, in England.

Teaching literature in one period

Since the students at A' level have to study around eight texts for the examinations, Ravin, as head of department for English, felt that it might be monotonous for both the students and the teacher if only only one teacher did all the texts. Different teachers are therefore allocated different papers for a particular year group and teach texts in the syllabus pertaining to those papers. One strategy that Ravin has devised is to allocate one period[118] per text. The more usual way is to have two consecutive periods per text, which provides time for discussion and elaboration, but Ravin often found that some students got distracted or bored. He then decided to propose one period per text, which, according to him, would get the students to focus more easily. This is the formula which has been running for a while now, with teachers intervening on their chosen texts in one-period slots during the week.

Text Selection

Usually, Ravin calls all the teachers for a departmental meeting during which he will introduce the various texts that are on the prescribed list[119] and ask them for their views as to which texts would be suitable for SC or HSC level. If a teacher prefers to teach a particular book, for instance, a short story collection rather than a novel, they are welcome to voice out their views and Ravin will finalise the list of texts. Of the three genres, Ravin prefers teaching Shakespeare; he has got so much used to teaching Shakespearean texts over the years that teaching them seems easy now, with little preparation involved. On the other hand, he finds ***A Passage to India*** to be quite a heavy book to teach and often finds that his students get lost in the plot. One way he tries to involve his students more is to give them preparation work on the chosen chapter a few days before; to prepare, for him, entails finding out the main points and themes, the plot development as well as the development in characters from the previous chapter to the next. Then, he would ask them generally about what they have read and understood about that chapter before discussing and giving notes. Ravin finds that it is essential to push the students into this habit of preparing work and he has often noted that his students will not read on their own if they are not given homework.

Pedagogical Training

[118] A class period lasts about 35 to 40 minutes. In the secondary schooling system, a school day consists of 8 to 9 periods and typically starts at 8 am and finishes at 2.30 pm.

[119] Cambridge International Examinations offers a selection of literary texts to be studied for the O' levels and A' levels. These texts will thus be part of the syllabus for those schools that have opted for such texts, and for the two years of study entailed in either O' or A' level, the teachers need to ensure that those texts are covered so that students may answer the questions set by Cambridge on those texts during the summative examinations.

Ravin has a Bachelor's degree in Education in which he specialised in the teaching of the English language. Most of this education course has prepared him in terms of classroom management, lesson planning and evaluation. Moreover, he has been exposed to educational theories and general teaching strategies which, he feels, have made him more focused in terms of lesson aims and objectives, which is particularly useful for his literature classes. When Ravin first started teaching, he had already completed his degree in English, and therefore felt confident he would be able to tackle anything that would crop up in his literature class. The one thing that unsettled him somewhat was the fact that students then were doing texts he had not read or studied himself. He had initially assumed that he would be teaching texts that he would be familiar with. However, as a new teacher, this had been a sharp reminder that a teacher should always be prepared. So, he found himself reading the text to prepare himself, then looking for criticism of the text because he wanted to know the text first before teaching it to the students.

Teachers are free to teach the way they want

Teachers in the department are free to teach the way they want and can choose the strategies they wish to use in class. Some informal consultation, however, does take place between colleagues who will be teaching the same text. Ravin, as head of department, does not insist on a rigid and standardised way of proceeding with teaching literature; he leaves it to the teacher to choose, depending on the situation, the text and the level of the students, which strategy fits best. As far as teaching style is concerned, Ravin likes to initiate discussions in the classroom. Usually, he would write a particular character's name of the board and ask different groups to write what they feel about this character and then present their point of view in front of the class, who would be invited to react to what they have heard. Ravin would then provide his point of view at the end of the discussion. What he appreciates with such a strategy is that it entails the contribution and participation of everyone in the class, whereas if only he were to be speaking, only half of the class at most, he assumes, would be following him. He also finds questioning to be a good technique to bring students who are lost in their own world back to the classroom. This means that he has to step away from what he has initially planned to be able to do so. Ravin finds most of his students to be quite reactive and they willingly respond to questions but there are some students who are more active than others in class. There are some who remain passive until he practically has to force them to speak by asking them a direct question. As the exams come nearer, he finds that most of the students become somewhat more involved in the class, which he attributes to the fact that students probably want to get useful tips for their examinations.

A change in strategy

Ravin believes that a lot depends on the teacher when it comes to developing an enjoyment of literature; a teacher can either make a class interesting and enjoyable or dull and boring. He considers himself to be good at teaching literature; he has come to the conclusion that he is on the right path, by basing himself on the number of years he has been teaching this subject as well as the positive response and academic performance of his students. Ravin attributes this to a change in strategy some years back. Formerly, he tended to lecture to his students mostly

and often found himself doing everything. With time, he has tried out a number of more innovative strategies, amongst which is the use of audio-visual materials to accompany his teaching. Ravin believes that technology can be beneficial to his students as well as to the teacher. What you read, he sometimes thinks, can be forgotten after some time, whereas what one can see remains in the mind. This is why he sometimes makes use of multimedia to reinforce students' understanding of a text. From time to time, he takes them to the audio-visual room where he can show them a particular scene from a text with a film or dramatic adaptation. Ravin believes that if they watch something on the screen, and look at the characters' behaviour and action, this will facilitate their understanding. He finds that his students tend to enjoy what they see since it consolidates the information and impressions they already had obtained from reading. This is a practice that Ravin has started a while back, and even when films were not available, he would ask friends and relatives overseas to send him films that he would then use in class. With one period per text, however, Ravin has had to think of other means to get his students involved in his classes.

Subject choice and reading culture

In Ravin's school, literature is compulsory till Grade 10 level. Like in other schools, subject choices are made right from Grade 9; however, even if students will not sit for literature examinations in Grade 11, all of them still have to do English literature as an additional subject for one more year. Ravin finds that many students decide to opt for literature as a subject for their Grade 11 since they have already done it for some years and are familiar with the subject. One challenge however is that students do not read much, and this has an impact upon how they perform in this subject. Developing a reading culture would, in Ravin's opinion, assist his students in developing their schema and understanding of things, which will be useful in answering the examination paper. One way he tries to encourage this is through the library class, which also is compulsory for every student. Since every class is attributed one period on the timetable for this, students are expected to go to the library and take a book.

The Cultural Model

Ravin believes that teaching English literature is different from teaching other subjects. He believes that beyond the academic knowledge that his students acquire, his students also go beyond the syllabus to learn about cultures and people. In fact, he believes that literature is life, and he often finds that his students' perspectives on life are influenced by the knowledge they have developed through their reading of literature. While he considers some subjects, like Business Education, to be much more practical, he thinks of English literature as a subject that is more implicit, and which also requires a bit of acting and role play so that students may enter the world being described by the writers. The important thing, according to him, is to create an impact in the mind of students by establishing a conducive environment for learning, where students are not passive receivers but also contribute and enjoy while learning. Empathy-building exercises to enable students to place themselves in the shoes of fictional characters are useful, therefore, to achieve this effect, especially since students like to engage with characters and themes in such a manner.

The difference between teaching lower secondary students and upper secondary students

A Man For All Seasons is, he admits to himself, not an easy text to teach, but he is glad that he is doing this class with the Grade 12. After 32 years of experience as an English literature teacher, at both lower secondary and upper secondary level, Ravin finds teaching at upper secondary level to be much more enjoyable. He finds it much more challenging to work with the lower secondary since they lack the maturity he would like to see for a genuine discussion of literature. He also finds the upper grades to be more responsive, which sometimes leads to more interesting interactions within his lessons. On the other hand, with the lower secondary, he finds that the teacher often ends up carrying out a teacher-centred lesson where only the teacher speaks since most of the young students, he feels, are seemingly not mature enough to respond to the situations in the textbook.

His experience of learning literature as a student

Ravin studied English literature till Grade 9 when he was at college and did not do literature at Grades 10 and 11. What he recalls of those classes at lower secondary level is that it was just like reading stories, which they very often tackled as comprehension passages. He has fond memories of being taught ***Julius Caesar*** at Grade 9 level by a teacher whose teaching methods, especially when it came to some of the main speeches in the text, he really admired. That teacher had combined a conventional lecturing style with a bit of acting and role playing, which captivated the students and made them forget the teacher-centred lesson. This impacted on his own notion of teaching and he has subsequently tried to use some role play or dramatic reading, especially when also teaching Shakespeare. Ravin believes that teaching should not just be about talking about the text and giving notes; the tone and voice have to change if one wants to create an impression on students. Doing this, he finds, interests his students who then become much more involved in the lesson. Although he usually starts such types of sessions himself, he often then involves his students as well to do it in turns to read out the extracts being studied. He then tells them to imagine themselves as one of the characters in the text and to show their reactions depending on the situation.

Teaching drama

In today's class, Ravin's aim is to develop the analytical and critical skills of his students. Prior to today's class, he had told his students to prepare Act 1, scene 1, lines 50 to 100 at home. He intends to get his students to understand the context of the play and to identify some of the main themes and characters that are already being introduced in this first scene. In the coming weeks, Ravin will lead the students to venture deeper into the text and into the analysis of the text, especially through classroom presentations, discussions and written assignments.

Sometimes, Ravin starts his class by asking the students some questions about their thoughts after reading a specific scene or chapter. He insists that they prepare before they come to class, otherwise his explanations will not make sense to them. He has very clear expectations when it comes to preparation, which entails reading the chapter or extract, finding out its main points or theme and to find out what it reveals in terms of character or situation. They are also expected, while reading, to work out the difficult vocabulary in the text. Ravin's students

generally do their homework especially when he expects them to present the next day. Giving regular tasks to his students ensures that they will take the class more seriously. He also wants to give them the opportunity to work on the texts on their own and interpret the text their way. Their participation in class is one expectation that Ravin takes into consideration when planning his lessons. On the rare occasions when a student has not been able to prepare, Ravin then spontaneously thinks of a question or series of short questions to ask that student on one of the characters or themes in the text. The important points in all the presentations will then be noted on the board. He finds it useful to do so since it provides some support for his students who can later on copy it for revision. Whenever Ravin has scheduled a class presentation, he will tell the students a few days before to prepare on one specific scene or character. On the day of the presentation, they will be expected to come in front of the class and present whatever they have noted about the item they have prepared. After each presentation, Ravin will invite the rest of the class to provide peer feedback.

In the case of the protagonist, Ravin will expect his students to carry out some research work on the character and go through the scene to find quotes by other characters which will yield more information about this protagonist. While he does not always have time for reading the whole text, he prefers when it comes to drama, to either read some key scenes entirely or have his students to read it out. One challenge he finds with this particular play is that he finds that his students' relatively weak language proficiency impacts upon their understanding of the text. Ravin often has to deal with academically-weak students whom he and his colleagues have had to push from Grade 7 till perhaps Grade 11 and above. A great many of them also find difficulty in deploying close, analytical reading of the literary texts to be able to derive literary meaning. While most, if not all of the students have studied literature till Grade 10, this does not necessarily mean that they have performed well in the subject. With such a profile of students in class, Ravin often finds himself doing most of the work. He would have enjoyed having a class where he would act as a facilitator for learning and encourage students to do independent study and research. This is seemingly not possible in the school he works in, where he has to prepare model answers, look at examiners' reports, and check what are the expectations regarding the quality of responses of the students. His class, eventually, is mostly a space dominated by his voice since only a few can actually independently discuss the text.

Ravin asks his students if they have prepared the scene, as he has told them to do a few days before. Then, as usual, he takes his seat at his desk in front of the class, where he will remain for the rest of the period. Without further ado, he takes his book and starts to read the scene himself. From time to time, he briefly pauses to point out to the students that certain lines he is reading are particularly significant and need to be underlined or highlighted in their own copies. He does not rush; his explanations will come soon after. After having read the scene, Ravin continues with his explanations, providing insights into the scene and the characters' motivations. The first scene sets the tone by revealing to the readers what sort of person Sir Thomas More is, in his own words and actions, as well as through the eyes of others. Ravin would like his students to understand how the interactions between More and the other characters in the first Act not only reveal his personality but also set the scene for his eventual downfall at the end of the play. With the presentation of the character of the Common Man,

followed by that of Sir Thomas More in the play, Ravin wants to discuss the themes that arise in this particular scene, namely, conscience and morality, or integrity.

At some point, Ravin tries to elicit a personal response from the students, "Would you be able to refuse to do something if someone offered you enough money?" This makes the students laugh, whereupon Ravin continues by describing the unimpeachable morals of Thomas More. He then links it to other instances of bribery in real life, asking the students why anyone would have recourse to this. Ravin does not always wait for this students to answer; from time to time, he makes use of some rhetorical questions just to drive home some significant points about the extract. At other moments, he directs some questions to the whole class or to specific students to check their understanding. Some students raise their hands while one or two just give out their answers. Ravin knows that he can count on them whenever he has a question since these few are always keen to participate and respond. Each time, more or less the same few students raise their hands or give their answers, sometimes in English and sometimes in French. Most of the other students do not answer, unless Ravin directly pinpoints them.

As Ravin wraps up this lesson, he provides a brief summary, highlighting the dramatic significance of Act 1, scene 1, where both protagonist and antagonist are introduced. This elicits a reaction from one of the students who raises a hand to ask what an antagonist is. Ravin then refers to the play, and tells the student who the antagonist is in the text. After he has discussed the scene, he asks the whole class a few questions about the events that have just taken place. With the school bell about to ring in a few minutes, he tells the students to prepare the next three pages in the text, which they will discuss the next time they will have this class.

I am once more with Ravin, in one of the meetings rooms in his school. We have been discussing some of the challenges that Ravin has faced when teaching literature, especially drama.

He says, "I do appreciate drama, but there are times when it really becomes difficult to teach!"

I am curious to know more.

He tells me, "Let's take ***The Birthday Party****, which I have just completed. It is a play that is inspired by the Theatre of the Absurd and contains language that is relatively difficult. This becomes challenging for my students to relate to and to understand what is happening. Imagine telling your students that suddenly the plot is fluid and non-linear and that the text is open to interpretation. They will not be able to frame the right arguments!"*

"I suppose the students need to know what an absurdist text is and in what context such texts were written," I suggest.

"Yes, I had to explain basic features of absurdist art, especially drama, before proceeding but not everyone understands those concepts. It is not the same as when

they study traditional novels, which mostly have a chronological plot progression and recognisable stages within the story," he replies. "

A few weeks later, Ravin is now working on Act 1, scene 6 from ***A Man For All Seasons***. He starts the class by explaining the aim of the lesson, which is to understand the major aspects of plot, theme and characterization in the scene. When it comes to studying the play, Ravin believes that it is important for them to understand the gist of the story. At the same time, he also wants them to explore the link between the fictional characters and the actual historical figures that they represent. Since the play is also based on historical events, he also wants his students to be well prepared, as far as the context is concerned. He often advises them to carry out their own research, especially since he assumes most of his students to have easy access to the internet. However, he finds that they do not take such assignments seriously and rarely carry out the expected research.

This time, he invites a few of the students to read out the different dialogues in the scene during which he sometimes intervenes to comment on the important segments and turning points in the plot. Then, he will invite them to comment or respond to some of his questions orally to see if they have been able to understand the concept, theme or character trait being raised in the lesson. He proceeds in such a way since he knows that he would not be able to complete the reading of the texts on the syllabus in class itself.

Ravin explains that King Henry VIII has come for supper at Thomas More's place, announcing this visit as a surprise; however, since he is the head of state, his visit was obviously known and prepared for by the More household much before, which results in double-entendres as both sides have to diplomatically comment on how gratifying this 'surprise' visit has been. Ravin asks his students what they have noticed about the presentation of the king in that scene. He is aware that the interactions between the different characters within the play might not be entirely clear for all students; however, given that he has explained the background story of the play, he hopes that they will be able to understand the motivations of the various characters.

At one point, Ravin asks, "Do you notice how the King changes his mind at different points the scene?" He then invites the students to comment on the reasons why King Henry VIII changes his behaviour during his visit to the More household. A few students volunteer to explain what they have understood from the scene, and after listening to them, Ravin comments on their explanations and provides some additional explanations about the characters and their motivations, focusing on the King's need for More's support, or King Henry quickly changing the subject of the conversation when he realizes that Margaret, More's daughter, is more proficient in Latin than himself, or the tension between More and his wife, Alice.

The students are again asked to read aloud and after a while, since the scene has moved on to the King's attempts at convincing Sir Thomas More on agreeing to his proposal, Ravin asks the students to pause in order to ask them what the main issue was with King Henry VIII's divorce. Since no one replies, he goes on to explain that divorces were very difficult to obtain

at that time given the religious and legal nature of marriage but then adds, "Etan done li enn lerwa…[120]" One student quips, "He gets what he wants!" while some others laugh. Ravin then tells them that much of the story is related to how King Henry VIII tries various means to get the law and religion to work for his interests.

After this explanation, Ravin asks the class, "So what can you conclude about the meeting between Sir Thomas More and the King?" He proceeds by explaining some of the key points pertaining to the ambiguous relationship between the two. He also highlights another tense relationship in the same scene between Roper (who has been courting More's daughter, Margaret) and More, again rhetorically asking, "Would a suitor speak like this to his prospective father-in-law? He will never get the daughter then!" The students laugh at this quip.

Ravin then proposes to read as one of the characters in the play while other students continue reading. This time, when they stop, he asks the class why Sir Thomas More does not want to employ Rich. The usual students comment about Rich's intentions and Ravin concurs, suggesting to his students to pay attention to what Rich will do in the following scenes. Upon this, as the bell rings to signal the end of the period, Ravin reminds his students that they have to keep reading on their own since they will not read the entire play together in class and he points out which scene will be the focus of their next class.

Ravin is telling me about his students and why they opt for English literature.

He turns to me and says, "I am sure you must have found that, over the years, the number of students choosing English at Principal level is going down everywhere. At my school, numbers have fluctuated. At one point, I had only 2 students taking this subject at HSC level! This year, I have seven students."

"So, that's a positive thing to happen, right? It must be good to have some more students opting for literature this year," I reply.

He sighs as he responds, "I guess some students have found that if they want to do a specific subject at Principal level, they need to have a credit in that subject or another subject. Take a student who wants to do Economics; he will find that he won't be able to do that subject at A' level if he has failed in Economics or Business Studies at Grade 11 level. Then they will look at all their results and say, 'Oh, let me do English literature.' It's like that. Out of the seven, I really wonder how many are interested or motivated!"

I ask him what he does to encourage them.

He replies, "I think we need to motivate them to do literature, right from Grade 7."

[120] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "Given that he is a king…"

"They do study literature as from Grade 7, don't they?" I ask.

"They might be doing it, but it doesn't mean that they are motivated to do so," he responds.

He then adds, "This is what I tell them: 'Do this subject because it will help your English as well. You're not just studying a text; this will prepare you for life'. I also tell them that if they pursue it till HSC level, then they can go further for a degree in English and they can have prospects such as becoming an English teacher or a journalist. Telling them about the advantages of studying this subject and what career they could choose helps some students understand the importance of studying literature."

Students' casual attitude towards literature

Ravin has covered some ground over the past few weeks. He is now planning to teach an important scene in ***A Man For All Seasons,*** namely the trial of Sir Thomas More, in Act 2, scene 8. However, as he enters the class, he discovers that only four students, out of the usual twenty, are present. One particular challenge that Ravin faces is that students take the subject very lightly, and often see it as a last resort when they do not have a good subject combination for their HSC. Ravin has no choice but to take them on board, especially since they have got a credit in English language[121] for their SC results. Moreover, the fact that they have done the subject till Grade 10 provides a slight advantage in the sense that the students are somewhat familiar with the terms and concepts that he will use in class. However, he does note a more casual attitude towards literature amongst some students, who have taken the subject without any real planning and who do not invest time and effort on the subject, especially in terms of research on their texts. Ravin thinks there are too many expectations placed on the teacher to do everything for the student, especially to get them to pass in this subject. He finds that his students rely too much upon the notes that he provides and do not do independent research, which affects the quality of their work. While there is the internet which his students can use as resource, he thinks that it is not always suitable for the students' needs. With the term nearly at an end, Ravin is not surprised at noting this decrease in attendance; however, he still has a text to complete, whether there are twenty or only one student, so he proceeds with what he has planned for the day.

Teaching the text as play

With ***A Man For All Seasons***, especially, Ravin notes that students do not necessarily understand the context in which the play is set and this makes the explanation of themes more challenging. Ravin also sometimes himself at a loss trying to make his students understand how the style of the writing and the way the text remains open to the reader or audience's

[121] Students who have passed in English language in their SC/O' level examinations at Grade 11 (and obtained a 'credit') are eligible to take English at Principal level at Grade 12 level, even if they have not studied English Literature at Grade 11 level.

interpretation are distinctive of a specific literary and artistic movement. Moreover, now that he is continuing with ***A Man For All Seasons***, the fact that the text is a play also brings an additional dimension to the text, and Ravin often finds himself having to discuss the performance elements in relation to the text they are reading so that the students can better visualise why the text is crafted the way it is. Although the text focuses on a society long time gone by, the author's perspective should not be ignored. The dramatist's focus on individualism and a personal sense of ethics in the play is something which belongs firmly in the 20th century and might easily be disregarded if students focus on 15th century England.

Explanation on his part is therefore necessary and usually, as soon as they have completed a major scene within the play, Ravin will then give them critical notes on various aspects of the text. One way he has found to get his students to relate to the text is by getting them to compare and contrast characters. By discussing the presentation of characters, their motivations and their development, Ravin tries to awaken some interest in the characters and their involvement in the plot. Since Ravin believes that interpretation of literature is subjective, he tries to teach his students to come up with their own understanding of the text before he provides his own notes. He often invites his students to speak out their mind on what they have just read without fear of being right or wrong.

With a protagonist like Sir Thomas More, however, who is a protagonist based on a real person, the character's motivation becomes more challenging to explain when politics and religion are involved. Not only is the context quite alien to his students, but Ravin finds that some of his students do not understand why Thomas More would be willing to sacrifice himself for his beliefs, when he stands to gain financially and politically if he sides with his king. This, Ravin, realises is more than a cultural gap; it also has to deal with the development of the person. To understand the development of More's position within the play, Ravin knows that he will have to describe what was happening in the period in which the play is set and to compare that situation with what is happening nowadays. It has sometimes happened that, even after Ravin has tried to explain the context of a story to his students, they still fail to understand what was happening at the time. He recalls facing such a situation when he was teaching R.K. Narayan's ***The English Teacher***, where he found that his students could not relate to the protagonist's attempt to reconnect with his deceased wife and his subsequent quest for the fulfilment. Even though the text was fairly modern, there was a degree of cultural shock for the students.

He briefly highlights the main points leading to Sir Thomas More being accused of receiving bribes since he wants to make sure that the students are aware of the chain of events that lead to this scene. In the play, Sir Thomas More has a significant role to play; he could be an obstacle to King Henry VIII's plans to set up a separate Church if the Pope does not accede to the King's request for the annulment of his previous wedding. Since there are religious and political undertones to the play, Ravin takes care to explain that also in detail, pointing out to how the decisions taken by some of the protagonists have an impact which go much beyond their own immediate surroundings. Ravin is not entirely sure that such intricacies make sense to his students, and while he does not go in too much depth into the context of the play, he tries to explain the outcomes of the decisions taken by the protagonists within the play. He then

explains to the students that this scene, which represents a trial, seems very formal and the language used in that scene brings forth that legal aspect. Referring to their prior knowledge, he asks them if they have seen court scenes in films, to which most students say that they have. "I would have liked to create a real court scene here", he tells his students, "but given we do not much space or time, let's read out the different dialogues!"

He then indicates to a few of the students to read the extract aloud and, once in a while, he stops them to comment on what they have just read. In this first instance, the main point he highlights is the fact that the protagonist, Sir Thomas More, is now accused of high treason and is standing for trial. Ravin also points out that one of More's friends and sympathisers, Bishop Fisher, has been executed on a similar charge in the morning of the present trial, and points out that this is an evidence of foreshadowing in the play, explaining that this is a device used by writers to hint to the reader or audience that something similar is about to happen. Although he has mentioned such devices before, Ravin makes it a point to highlight them in the text and to explain how they work. Ravin then asks his class to predict what is likely to happen to More. One girl suggests that More, too, will be executed. Ravin responds to this by stating that death comes to everybody, even to kings.

"Well, a classroom can't be quiet all the time!" Ravin says.

We have been talking about teaching strategies in the literature classroom.

Ravin adds, "Whether you are doing a classroom discussion, pair work or even group work, there must be some kind of noise."

"I suppose it can be quite hard to explain to colleagues that what you are doing is also a strategy to get your students to understand their literature text," I suggest.

He replies, "Well, I am not going outside the text nor am I doing something else. It is the same literature class and the same textbook. The only thing that is sometimes different is the way I carry out the class."

What makes an effective literature class?

An effective literature class, according to Ravin, is one where there is maximum student participation from students who are active and responsive. He tries to encourage interaction between himself and the students and at times between the pupils themselves through pair or group work. There have been times when, as head of department, he has noted students being passive or even sometimes sleeping, while he was carrying out lesson observations for some of the colleagues in the department. This has reinforced his view that something needs to be done to get students interested and has made him rethink his own way of teaching. One thing he has noticed is that students enjoy stories, but how to reconcile this with the study of literature, where the use of literary devices and stylistic aspects also form part of what needs to

be understood? The discussions, he finds, are a good point of entry into the text for many students, and also enable inroads into the more abstract aspects of literature.

Half of the period has now gone by. Ravin stops the students in their reading to point out the significance of Cromwell's statement in court in the extract. At this point in the plot, More is being pressurized in speaking out his opinion on the King's new proclamation making him the Head of the Church in England. However, so far, despite his views against this, More has not voiced out against his king. Cromwell wants to prove to the audience that silence is just as incriminating as committing a crime. Since the example is quite complex, Ravin wants to make sure that his students understand. Turning to the small group of students, he says, "Let's say I am about to kill someone in front of everyone else. No one is saying anything. What does that mean?"

One student replies, "They are scared, maybe."

Someone else adds, "They probably agree with the killing."

Ravin then adds that the same is happening in the scene, where Cromwell is using that example to show More's guilt, but ironically, there is the same complicit silence amongst those present at More's trial. One student then adds, "Everyone wants to him to be killed."

Ravin nods and says, "Here we have a silence that means something; that is pregnant with meaning. Do you know what that means?"

One student voices out, "Yes, it signifies something."

"That's right," replies Ravin, with approval. Despite the smaller number of students present, he is quite satisfied with the interest and response of today's class. The students resume their reading, after which Ravin summarises and explains while the students take notes in their exercise books. When they read about the witness, Ravin asks the students about their opinion, "The witness has spoken, but do you think he has spoken the truth?" After listening to them, Ravin adds that although the witness' testimony is weak, the play is moving towards the condemnation of Sir Thomas More and that it seems no one will be able to save him. Quoting More, Ravin then adds, "More knows that his case is done and that he is a dead man." He then explains to the students how More becomes angry upon seeing that Rich has been promoted because he has always looked after his own interests.

"See how he becomes sarcastic here? *Eta, tone al vann tomem*?[122] You can see how More feels revolted at how cheap Rich has turned out to be." Ravin comments. He then adds that if More had been a real culprit, they would not have given him the chance to publicly acknowledge his mistakes. Ravin points out that More is actually trapped by his own conscience and his adherence to the word of the law. He then concludes by commenting on the themes of

[122] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "Hey, you sold yourself?"

conscience and the law, pointing out how the protagonist's behaviour and actions as well as the representation of the other characters in the play actually reinforce those themes at various levels.

Our next conversation takes place on the roadside. Ravin is on his way to teach a class in another teaching block, which is situated on another road and requires a five-minute walk to reach. As we walk, we chat a bit about the class he has just carried out.

Showing me his diary, Ravin tells me, "All my lesson plans are in one book. The school gives all the teachers a planner like that. It's easy to fill up the sections."

He opens the diary and shows me the different lessons he has already planned, saying, "See here, you have all the different topics. I've written here, "Aim: to help students develop critical and analytical skills"; on this page, there are other learning objectives that guide how the lesson will be structured such as, "describe the scene with precision", "recognise the major and minor characters", "identify the main theme in the scene" and "analyse the main points". You will find that there is another column which describes the strategies. For this lesson, see, the strategy I have planned to adopt is questioning, lecture and discussion."

Holding the diary in hand, I ask, "This must take a lot of time to prepare, right?"

He smiles wryly as he replies, "Yes, it takes a lot of time. Most of the time, I end up working on this at night at home! But we keep a record of our lesson plans to show to the rector. We really do have to work!"

We were discussing some of the guidelines I had observed him giving to his students in class regarding an assessed piece of work when Ravin turns to me and says, "I make them work to fulfil the assessment criteria and to do what is expected of them."

He then adds, "To tell you the truth, my aim is to make them pass. That's the one thing, My main aim is to get them to pass in their subject. Of course, if they work and follow the guidelines and advice, they will pass."

Giving notes

Ravin believes that giving notes to students to take down is part of the schooling culture in Mauritius; if he stops doing it, it does not necessarily mean that other teachers in other subjects will do so as well. Shifting to a newer way of teaching could then be problematic in terms of ingrained learning habits. Ravin does feel, however, that the notes sometimes provide greater insight into the text and that some of his students sometimes go back to the poem after he has given some notes, to read it with new eyes. He finds a similar situation with literature itself; he considers that not everyone can be a poet, and not everyone may have experienced the feelings that a poet tries to convey when in contact with nature. The experiences presented in poetry,

which he considers as feelings distilled in words, for example, might not be accessible to the common reader or be part of that reader's experience until that person actually reads and understands the poem, even if they are not poets themselves. Ravin considers his notes to be the bridge between the meaning of the text and his students' understanding but he is aware that some of them can actually depend totally on those notes instead of trying to understand the text. Their main purpose is to get through the examinations, and whatever will help them score marks and pass the exams will be welcome. One limitation for the students, however, lies in the fact that Cambridge International Examinations expect students to provide a personal, informed opinion in their answers to questions. Despite his efforts in getting his students to voice out independently and to write personal pieces on the texts they are studying, Ravin is not very confident about his students' ability to write their own informed viewpoints.

Lesson planning and accountability

Ravin feels that teachers face a lot of administrative pressure to work and to ensure that students perform well academically. Moreover, there is a strict accounting of lesson planning which is regularly checked by the administration. Ravin, as all other teachers in his school, keeps track of his lessons in a planner, where the scheme of work for the term is subdivided into weekly and daily plans. Usually Ravin works according to a detailed scheme of work that he prepares at the beginning of the year and which maps out the texts and contents to be covered for classes he has to teach during the term, including the lessons carried out, the topics covered and areas where he needs to pay extra attention. These are subsequently checked by the rector of the school. Although Ravin works out lesson plans in advance, he does find that he deviates from his original plan quite often when students require additional explanation or some discussions take a little bit more time, which he considers to be natural in any normal lesson. Sometimes, if he has just corrected a test, and finds that there are aspects that his students have not understood, he will take that up in remedial lessons in class to address them. In his lesson plan, he will then write a note to explain why a specific lesson was not carried out as initially indicated in the term plan and why a remedial class was held instead. Fortunately, he is able to cover whatever he has missed in the following session and the fact that most students keep coming till the end of the term is also an advantage when in many other schools, students start absenting themselves halfway through the term. His daughter, who has recently started teaching English in a nearby state secondary school, tells him how some of her General Paper classes during this term remain vacant despite the fact that most of the students are in fact present. These students seem to think they can pass with the bare minimum and therefore do not need to be attend classes. Ravin is aware that soon, he too might face empty desks and chairs as the exams approach and students rush to their private tuitions as support, rather than attending their school classes.

Assessment in the literature class

Every week, he gives a written assignment on the text such as a critical appreciation of a specific character. While he usually gives context questions or short structured questions at

lower secondary level, at upper secondary level, he does give some context questions but prefers to give essay-type questions, which would, in a way, prepare them for similar types of questions they will get for the examinations. At the end of every month, he then sets a class test which evaluates what they have learnt and understood so far. He would give two questions, out of which the students would then have to choose one and answer in one hour. Marks allocated for such tasks are recorded in their report books and taken into account for the term grade. These class assessments are set by Ravin himself since he knows where they have reached and wants to check his students' understanding of the different aspects of the text.

Preparation for examinations

However, the summative assessment, namely the end-of-year examinations, is prepared separately, after consultation with other teachers teaching the same text. If there are four teachers working with the Grade 10, all of them will contribute to the examination paper by preparing questions and marking schemes which will then be forwarded to Ravin. This means that all the teachers have to make sure that they have completed their syllabus. Ravin will then select from the pool of submitted questions and send the finalized common paper to the administrative office to ensure that it does not leak. In some schools, individual teachers take the summative assessments that are set for their class home to correct but in Ravin's school, examination scripts are corrected and moderated by a panel consisting of teachers from the English department. Ravin usually distributes the examination papers that are set and corrected at school and then discusses with his colleagues on the way to proceed with the correction. They then correct the scripts on the spot, with teachers allocated specific questions to correct across all examination scripts. Besides correction, Ravin also goes around to monitor this process and ensure everyone adheres to the marking scheme.

What Ravin has recently proposed to the rector is that, rather than giving the students 100 marks for examinations, about 40% could be allocated to presentations, role play and any other type of activity. In his school, such tasks are given as a matter of course and are generally ungraded. Ravin believes allocating marks for these tasks that could add up to the term marks can generate greater motivation and involvement amongst the students, especially at upper secondary level.

Ravin believes that it is essential to prepare students for the examinations. One problem that he has noticed is that many students do not read instructions properly. For instance, some students actually answer more than one question on a set text just because they have revised one text more or are more familiar with a particular text, thus disregarding the instructions to answer one question per text. Although he tries his best to remind students about simple things such as these, there are still students who end up doing that on the day of the examinations. This year, for instance, Ravin has to prepare his Grade 11 students for a change in the literature examination paper[123]. Instead of only one paper of about 2 hours and 30 minutes, with four questions to be answered, now there will be two papers, each of 1 hour and 30 minutes. The first paper will addresses poetry and prose while the second addresses drama only. While this

[123] Cambridge International Examinations, 'Updated O' Level Syllabus', retrieved from www.cie.org.uk/olevel

might not impact directly onto his teaching of the texts in question, the fact that there is going to be a paper exclusively on drama means that he will have to focus more on these texts; however, he also anticipates that his students will have an easier time preparing for the exams since the two papers will be set on different days.

Ravin was not very happy at the removal of the empathic question from the Grade 11 literature paper, which according to him, provided students with different kinds of situations that not only tested the students' understanding of plot, theme and characterisation, but also enabled them to express themselves. However, it would seem that Cambridge International Examinations felt that many students did not fare so well in such types of questions or did not understand how to go about to effectively answer such questions. Ravin, however, believes that it is still a valid type of activity to carry out since it taps into what students know about the text. It thus depends on the teacher to properly introduce such types of tasks and explain to their students how to answer them. He does not hesitate to ask such types of questions to build up a better understanding of events happening in the texts he is teaching, although he often finds that only a few respond to such questions.

Very often, Ravin has found from students' exercise books that they need guidance on writing their assignments. The more important concern, for Ravin, is to show his students how to answer questions, that is, what should be the contents of the answer, the expected length for an answer, the use of quotations from the texts and so on. This is something that he focuses on right from the beginning of the year with any particular year group. Usually, after about two weeks of teaching, Ravin gives the students an assignment on a particular scene, which usually takes the form of an essay-type question. Once the students have come up with an answer, he usually checks and corrects it, notes the shortcomings and provides feedback on how to improve the work. Although this involves more time devoted to assessment, he feels this is required to provide them with adequate preparation for such types of questions. While answers, are expected to be usually around 500 words, what he has noted is that his students tend to write very little in their answers and tend to be narrative. Instead of writing arguments or making a critical analysis, they tend to just tell the story. To assist his students, Ravin also provides model answers so that they can see what types of answers the examiners expect of them. For instance, in poetry, if they have to write a critical appreciation of a poem, that model answer should demonstrate a good understanding of stylistic devices and how they function in the poem. After reading the poem, Ravin will explain the poem and then provide the model answer, which will also be discussed. That way, they can link the ideas discussed in class to the structure presented in the model essay to be better able to construct their own arguments. Specific aspects to be covered are pointed out in the model answer to show the flow of ideas. Subsequently, for the next poem, Ravin will ask his students to write a critical appreciation following this format.

As Ravin wraps up his class, he reminds them that they are about to complete the text and that they need to revise the various elements they have discussed so far. He gives out instructions for them to prepare the last scene in the play and informs them that they will also get a question to prepare on the last scenes. When the bell rings, Ravin picks up his books and heads out

towards another class. As he leaves, he wonders, “Have they understood this scene? Next week, I’ll know for sure.”

Appendix 20

Narrative representations of pedagogical choices in the literature classroom: Going Beyond the Academic (Chapter Five): Additional Narratives

Appendix 20a: Additional Narrative: 5a: Smita's Narrative

Smita's Narrative: I don't want my students to say I'm a bad teacher

Prologue to the Narrative

Smita has proposed to have our first discussion at her place, stating that it is quieter than having a conversation at school.

At 29 years of age, Smita has been working in her present school, which is a private-aided urban confessional girls' secondary school[124], for the past seven years. She was recommended to me by a former student who is a colleague of hers in a sister institution, and when I got in touch, Smita was keen to assist me in my study. Currently, Smita teaches Arthur Miller's ***All My Sons*** *at Grade 11 level, Arundhati Roy's* ***The God of Small Things*** *at Grade 12 level, and Harold Pinter's* ***The Birthday Party*** *at Grade 13 level.*

Needless to say, I am curious about all three upper secondary classes and I find that Smita is eager to discuss her work and her students.

Remembering her years as a student of literature

Smita recalls that she really started appreciating literature at Grade 10 level although she had a teacher who was, on the whole, quite uninspiring. After managing to get good results, she had realized that she had to shift to another school if she wanted to pursue English at principal level. Otherwise, she knew she would end with only one or two fellow students in class and the same teacher she had for her Grade 10. The latter, in fact, encouraged her to move to the other school, where there were many students interested in literature.

One memorable lesson she recalls in that new school as an A' level student herself was when she studied Shakespeare's ***Othello***. They had reached that scene where Desdemona was murdered and she recalls how everyone in class had been tense and quiet; although she and her friends had that habit of reading their texts in advance, they still felt the intensity of that scene, because the students and their teacher had both entered that world of fiction. Whenever she recalls this scene, Smita marvels at the ability of that teacher, who was able to create such an atmosphere in class through the reading, explanation and analysis. She also recalls how the discussions helped them, while analysing the character of Iago, for instance, to see the other side of the picture, or to develop empathy for Desdemona for the way she was not trusted and met with a violent end, or to understand the plight of the man of colour with the experiences of

[124] Confessional schools, and in this case here, a Catholic school, are private-aided schools under the management of a religious institution or body, and where usually the philosophy or guiding principles of that institution are integrated in the school culture.

Othello. That teacher also introduced them to a number of literary critics, which allowed the students to understand how other writers thought about ***Othello***. These had been dimensions they encountered under the guidance of their teacher. Smita, years after, still keeps this mental snapshot of that class as an example to follow in her own teaching of literature. She admits to herself that people do sometimes look up to their teachers, just as she admires this teacher who always reminded her to give her best, and she too would like to be remembered in this way.

Looking at me earnestly, Smita tells me, "You know, I don't want my students to say I'm a bad teacher. I do my best."

We had been discussing Smita's experiences of literature as a student, and she was telling me about some of her role models.

She then adds, "This is why I prefer working with the upper secondary rather than the lower secondary. There is a maturity in most of them which makes it so easier to discuss issues and react to ideas."

"But teaching doesn't always go as planned, right? Do you always get them to participate the way you want?" I ask.

"Of course," Smita tells me, "there are moments when you ask a question and there is no reaction. My Grade 13 class is like that. I have worked with them for the last three years and they are still fairly quiet. I know that won't change. Sometimes you do feel discouraged. What happens when you have a teacher who cares and students who don't? Many teachers say that students are lazy. That might be true for some students but if you manage to involve them in your lessons, and get them to do research, they will do it for you, because they appreciate you. I think if you love literature, anything is possible. I love my job!"

Her first experience of teaching English literature

Smita got into teaching as soon as she finished her postgraduate studies in 2007 but she did not get to teach literature at upper secondary level until she moved to her present school. At her first school, she taught Charlotte Bronte's ***Jane Eyre*** at Grade 9 level, and though the students had been academically weak and did not have a high level of proficiency in English, they had liked that class and she had enjoyed that first experience of teaching literature. When she joined her current school, she was immediately told to teach Chaucer to the Grade 13 students. She reckons that she performed satisfactorily but it had been tough to step into the shoes of someone who had gone on leave and who had left her with a class that was about to sit for their A' level examinations. She recalls that she had encouraged her students to buy textbooks that contained a transliteration in modern English, since Chaucer's language had proved to be very

challenging. Since then, she still recommends to her students to buy transliterations as these are helpful in understanding the text.

Teaching upper secondary students

Smita prefers to teach upper secondary students with whom she can discuss literary texts in depth. She finds them to be more reactive and mature in contrast to lower secondary students. She is often unable to connect with the latter at a deeper level because texts at lower secondary are often abridged prose versions of texts which mostly can be considered as comprehension passages and do not really, in her opinion, allow students deeper engagement with the texts. Smita gets to decide how many periods she will allocate for literature teaching at either Grade 7 or Grade 8, and since literature in her school is not examinable at those levels, she simply devotes one period of forty minutes for literature.

Preparing to teach at upper secondary level also meant that Smita had to become acquainted with the syllabus as well as the examination requirements to know what was expected to be taught. She used the internet to find out what sort of questions had come out in previous years and also went out to purchase study guides to the texts she was told to teach. Those guides, she has found, do not really enlighten her about ways to teach the texts but provide her with extra support. When she started teaching literature in her current school, some of her upper secondary students started asking her different questions on the text she was teaching, especially since many of them were already taking private tuitions and were aware of certain aspects to the text which she was still preparing. So she had been somewhat at a loss in the initial stages, especially when her students would come up with literary terms she was herself not familiar with. As a new teacher at that time, she just could not show them that she did not have an answer to their questions. One strategy she had used then was to tell the students to carry out extra research on the points they had raised and then they would discuss it the following week. This would then give her enough time to brush up on her own notes and be prepared for facing her class.

Lesson planning

Smita had to do lesson planning when she started teaching. However, in her current school, there is no necessity to keep formal records of lesson planning, which she finds a relief as she finds such planning to be very time consuming. For her, even if it does require some essential planning, teaching has to be more spontaneous and has to take into account the type of students she gets in her class. One aspect which influences her teaching is the Differential Teaching and Learning programme, elaborated by one educational expert working for the Bureau de l'Education Catholique[125], and implemented at her school, where teachers, taking into account the fact that their classes have mixed abilities, work on different ways of teaching these students. When this programme was introduced at school, some teachers had objected to what they perceived as a new orientation to pedagogy and a change to their routine, since many of

[125] The BEC (now renamed SeDEC, Service Diocesain de l'Education Catholique, or Diocesan Service of Catholic Education, in 2016).

them, especially some of the senior ones, had worked for years in that school or in the confessional schooling system. One colleague even had said that he was about to retire and would not be changing the way he taught just because of something new that cropped up as a result of someone's research. Smita thinks that such attitudes are defeatist and do not serve the interests of their students. While it might be true that they will be drawing their salaries at the end of the month, Smita is of the opinion that teaching is a thing of passion and that any teacher has to be passionate about what she does.

Smita's personal preferences in literature

Smita, since her years at university, has always appreciated Indian and African literature and also likes teaching such texts. She has a preference for prose texts rather than drama since she feels that prose is more accessible to A' level students. Smita personally appreciates ***The God of Small Things***, which she has been teaching for three years now; teaching this novel to a class of young people can be quite challenging, especially when themes such as casteism, religion and incest are evoked in the novel. However, Smita finds that her students are very much interested in this presentation of India, which is very far from the glamorous world of Bollywood they are so much used to. Moreover, when Smita shows them that casteism still exists, not only in India but also, to some extent, in Mauritius, the girls show interest in finding out more about this state of affairs. She thinks it is important to explain to them how the caste system has ruined the fabric of Indian society so that the tragedies unfolded in the novel are also grounded in a historical and social context. The fact that many of them have Asian backgrounds means that they also have heard or experienced some aspect of that, so they actually react to what Smita raises during the discussion sessions in class. For those who do not have such a background, she tells them to read about the caste system so that they may be able to discuss those issues in class. With ***The God of Small Things***, the narrative is not chronological since the plot involves a number of flashbacks. One way she tries to make things clear for her students is to draw a mind map around the two protagonists, Rahel and Estha. Afterwards she would link other characters to these two protagonists and show how they are related to them. Each time a new character is added to the mind map, she then explains how their actions impact on the plot and on those two characters. Once these relationships are clear, then she feels comfortable enough to go in depth with other aspects of the text. In the case of other texts, such as ***As You Like It***, she usually starts with background information on Shakespeare and his times before looking at characterization, themes and plot. Smita believes that such background information on the era in which the text is set is essential when analyzing certain texts. This would be helpful not only for their classes at the moment, but also for those who might choose English later on at the university. Smita finds that when she provides that background information, especially about the lives of the authors, her students like it as it makes the authors more approachable.

With poetry, Smita thinks that who the author is plays a determining role in her students' appreciation of the text. Whenever she has to teach poetry at upper secondary level, she makes sure to give background information on the poet and his context before she goes more deeply

into the writer's style. She does admit to herself that any student of literature should be exposed to at least some aspect of prose, poetry or drama. To make her teaching of drama more interesting, she often resorts to role play as well as dramatic reading of specific scenes, in which she also participates.

Reflecting over some of the texts that have been on the syllabus over the years, Smita thinks that she has mostly had authors and texts which she herself had studied when she was at university, such as Chaucer or Shakespeare. Texts usually get selected by the head of department, and while members of the department are free to voice out if they do not agree with certain text choices, this does not change the fact that they still have to teach whatever has been allocated to them. For instance, Smita would have preferred a different text from ***The Birthday Party*** but since she was not asked if she was comfortable with that text, she has to resign herself to teach it. While preparing for common papers, Smita and her colleagues sometimes check with one another on where they have reached in their teaching of a particular text but as far as sharing practices and collaboration are concerned, this does not happen in her department. When she has a particular text to teach, even if she has issues with that text, the onus is on her to make them pass and no one is around to help or provide advice, since the policy of the school guarantees each teacher a great degree of independence in their own classes. This year, when it comes to Miller's ***All My Sons***, or Pinter's ***A Birthday Party***, these two plays bring forth a new challenge, not only in terms of genre but also in terms of style. Both texts belong to very specific contexts which require explanation from the teacher but what is even more challenging is the difference in style. Both plays differ greatly from Shakespearean drama that the students may have been used to or have read about in some form or the other. They are structured differently and the plots also move in unpredictable ways, and these aspects, she perceives, could be challenging to explain.

Does professional training matter?

Smita has the feeling, from some of her own colleagues, that they go for professional training mostly for the sake of an increment in their salary, or to increase their chances of getting promoted later on. Although Smita has an Educator's Licence[126] from the Mauritius Institute of Education, she does not think this qualification has prominently helped her in her day-to-day teaching, especially since her school does not overtly lay emphasis on a formal record of lesson planning. Without the hassle of keeping official records of her lessons, Smita, like her colleagues, prepares and teaches her lessons in the way she wants, without much interference or supervision, and so far, she derives satisfaction from her own teaching and her relationship with her students.

While Smita finds some of the theories and approaches she was exposed to during her professional course to be helpful, when it comes to an actual classroom situation, however, lesson planning and pedagogy do not even come to her mind. Smita believes in being

[126] The Educator's Licence is a professional qualification granted after a one-semester (about 15 weeks) course in didactics (in one's subject area), pedagogy and psychology, dispensed by the Mauritius Institute of Education; it is generally equivalent to the first semester of a PGCE course.

spontaneous in class and decisions she takes depend on how the students are during the lesson and how they react in relation to the learning outcome she has set for her class. She however thinks that perhaps, in the light of the dwindling academic performance of students, she should look into how to plough back the knowledge and skills from professional training into her daily teaching. She thinks that, though literature, there is great potential for developing analytical and critical skills, and that knowing which strategies to use to bring out those skills could benefit her class greatly.

Smita would also have liked to interact with other English literature teachers from other schools since she more or less already knows how her colleagues think. This would have allowed her to find out about their own specific approaches to the subject. Her belief is that one can approach the teaching of literature in so many ways. She would have liked to see initiatives like what one senior Maths teacher at her school did when he gave a course on how to teach a specific item in the Maths syllabus. He had opened it up so that other teachers nearby could attend, and the turnout had been beyond his expectations. Smita would have this loved to have senior teachers come to the department or create such opportunities where she and her colleagues could benefit from those teachers who have had years of experience and seen generations of students.

Teaching drama to the Grade 11 students

In today's lesson, Smita is teaching ***All My Sons***, a play by Arthur Miller. In this scene, Chris is about to tell his father, Joe, about his intention to marry Ann; through this lesson, Smita also wants to highlight the tension between Kate and Ann as well as the reasons behind Joe's fear about talking about the past. This year is the first time she is teaching this text and she cannot help feeling apprehensive each time she starts a class on this text. Teaching drama is not her forte, and she wonders at times whether her students can feel that she does not like this genre. However, since she has to teach this text, she tries her best to find ways to get her students to learn as much as possible and get them to discuss the various issues that crop up. When they first started reading the play, no one wanted to speak as it was the first time they were doing this kind of play. The students were worried because they had never heard of themes and notions such as existentialism or Greek tragedy. Moreover, the idea that a 20th century play would also be taking stylistic cues from guidelines that were written more than two thousand years ago definitely baffled them, and to see Joe Keller as a heroic or tragic figure was initially a difficult thing to achieve. Smita prefers to go over these concepts as slowly as she can, since these are the key to understanding the progression of the plot. She also lays a bit more emphasis on the notes she gives as introduction to the text as she knows some of her students will not be able to retain the main aspects of what she is discussing with them.

While addressing the opening sections of the play, Smita thus prefers to focus on characterisation. She knows that she will eventually have to deal with other aspects of the text, such as language and style but she prefers keeping that for later on when, at this point, events themselves may seem complex to the students. Smita finds that getting her students to reflect upon characters can be quite challenging, when there is so much happening in the text.

Although she does give notes and discuss some of the themes that arise as they read, she knows it will only be in a few weeks that she will be able to have her students have a coherent picture of those themes and be able to discuss them in detail. She therefore makes the most of the actual lessons to build her students' understanding of the characters and their motivation. Moreover, since a play is meant to be staged, more than read, she also tries to tell them how to reflect upon how a contemporary audience would have reacted upon seeing that play.

Smita finds that teaching ***All My Sons*** allows her to discuss the various feelings and themes that are aroused in the plot, such as idealism and the American Dream. Smita starts her class with a recapitulation of her previous class, referring to an earlier scene from the play. She prefers to start her session that way so that this will jog her students' memory of what they learnt in the previous lesson. She then gives out a brief summary of that scene, which the students note down. In between giving out these notes, she also makes some casual comments on the characters and questions some of her students about what they understood from that scene. She also highlights connections between prior events and current actions and invites the girls to predict what will happen basing themselves on the information they have been able to gather so far from the few pages they have read together.

Before she moves on to the next scene, which they are about to read together in class, she takes one of the characters and invites some students to take up the other characters; the selected students, together with Smita then start to read the text aloud. After reading a few lines, Smita stops to comment on the dialogue and the characters. She then dictates some notes pertaining to the extract they have just read, after which she also comments on the emotions that are presented in the scene. Then, appealing to their personal experience, she asks them, "You bang the door when you are angry, don't you?" Some of the girls laugh at this while a few of them nod.

After this small discussion, they resume reading. After a while, she stops to ask them a question about the symbolism of the tree in Joe Keller's yard. A few students hesitantly point out what they think the tree means. After pointing out which answer seems to be more accurate, Smita directs her students to write down the reference from the scene as well as its symbolism in their exercise book. She tells them that the tree was planted in memory of Larry, who went missing during the war and the fact that it has been struck by lightning suggests that perhaps Kate's hope that her son might still be alive somewhere is just a delusion. Perhaps, she explains, this is why she is so angry with the casual way that everyone is treating the struck tree. Usually she asks them for their personal opinion, by referring to real life situations. For instance, here she would tactfully try to ask if they know of someone who has lost a loved one, in order to tap into the feelings of the protagonists. Thinking that this episode might be too abstract or sensitive to some, she decides to refer to a television serial that she has watched a while back, "You know, there's that serial where this guy has to think of remarrying after the death of his wife. Do you think it is an easy thing to do? Can he come to terms with that death? How long can you live with memories?" Generally, when it comes to literature, Smita finds that making allusions to real life events and personal experiences can draw the students more deeply into the text. She believes that such references also serve to bring her closer to her students, which

for her, is a necessary aspect of her literature classes. Literature, for Smita, also serves to bring people together and she prides herself in having a close relationship with her students.

Given that a number of characters intervene in this extract, once the students have finished reading, she provides some explanations so that her students are aware of the various characters and know how they are related to one another. One way she does that is by drawing attention to the stage directions which show how some characters interact with one another. Through such connections, she tries to get them to see things from Ann's point of view. It is not always easy for her to do so. When she asks them what they think of Kate Keller, one of them replies, in a tentative manner, "Elle est folle?[127]" Smita sighs as she thinks of what lies ahead for her to help her students understand different points of view. When she starts discussing Kate's behaviour, especially her insistence in telling people about her dream, she jokingly tells a student, "Don't you dream about your boyfriend?" The other girls burst out laughing. The girl immediately quips, "I don't dream about people who are dead!" Even Smita then laughs along at this response, before she proceeds with giving her students some notes on the scene.

Of Notes and Quotes

Smita does not always dictate notes out to her students but she is aware that, especially at Grade 11 level, if she does not specify which of comments are relevant, then her students might not note anything down. When it comes to important quotes, Smita often tells them to write some of the notes in their books on the margins after highlighting the relevant quote. When the notes are too long, then she advises them to note it in their exercise books. When she comments, she tries to talk in such a way that they can take down notes but she does not expect them to copy down every single word; she all too well knows the hassle involved in repeating words which students have not caught. Later on, she will then go through these notes and discuss them with the students. She sometimes also emails some notes to the students, which they appreciate as they can access and read it anytime. Notes are not everything; time is also needed for discussion, since literature helps one to reflect. Literature is also, in her view, about getting to learn about the past, to get to know new cultures and learn about how people react under different circumstances. Since many of the students have not had access to any philosophy course before, she also thinks that deep issues raised in literary texts also provide a good opportunity learn about this too.

Building empathy

Although many of her students rely on notes, Smita tries to get them to think independently; as she often points out to them, the questions set during the exam will not be the same, so the emphasis should be on how to address a question rather than learning convenient chunks of text or rote learning of model answers. Smita believes that changes in the literature paper do not always make sense to the lay teacher; for instance, she always thought of the empathic question in the Grade 11 paper to be a scoring question while more general questions seemed more challenging to her students. She recalls a particular group of students she had taught a few years back who had actually told her that, as far as possible, they would only do the

[127] Translated from French, "She's mad?"

empathic questions set for every text they had studied, because this was what they were more comfortable with. Her students in fact scored better in such types of questions and she wonders now if the removal of such questions will have an impact on their results. Smita also advises them to be careful when they answer as there is no right or wrong answer as long as they are able to sustain their arguments in their writing. While she has no worries about her students' understanding and capacity to reflect upon complex issues, she is sometimes worried about the type of answers they write down for the exams. Such problems, she finds, tend to occur more at Grade 11 level rather than at Grade 12 level.

From time to time, one of the students will raise her hand or call out to Smita to ask a question, which she willingly answers. She does not mind this; in fact, she often encourages them to voice out and ask questions, and the fact that she takes the time to answer them gives them some encouragement to participate. Smita has found that her students appreciate it when she asks them for their personal opinion; there is always someone who has something to say and then the others will chip in if they are interested. She believes that giving them space to voice out is essential, otherwise she would only be carrying out spoon-feeding. It is important for Smita to find out their opinions about the story, its realism and its characters.

Smita had been surprised to see that ***All My Sons*** has received a more positive response than ***The Tempest*** from her Grade 11 students. When she told them that the Shakespearean play was set on an enchanted island, some of her students had actually laughed and said that fairy tales were for children. Moreover, they found that Miranda's love story did not make sense: how could she fall in love with the first stranger she met? That discussion had been enlightening as the students had analysed Miranda's character and motivations to see if she truly was in love or not.

Which approach to adopt?

Although she graduated with a Masters in Linguistics, Smita so much enjoys literature that she wishes she had done further studies in that field. She feels that her knowledge of literature from her undergraduate degree has helped her considerably in her teaching of literature. She sometimes feels tempted to refer to some of the approaches she became familiar with at that time in her current teaching of texts that have, according to her, a strong postcolonial or feminist orientation. While it is possible to address those texts strictly through a narrative or thematic approach, she feels that some texts just call out for more than a discussion of plot or character depiction. With texts such as ***All My Sons***, where knowledge of the context makes the plot even more poignant, Smita finds that she has to go beyond the text. Smita feels that there could be better methods to teach this scene but she carries out her lessons based on her own understanding of how to achieve her teaching goals. She believes that her lessons work best when students contribute and give their personal opinion in class, and she often encourages them to contribute anytime they want. Since she also teaches the same group English language, she feels she has a better connection with the girls and is able to get them to work. Moreover, she senses that background knowledge is important for her students' preparation for examinations. Smita wants her students to be the best and to give them a chance at competing

for a state scholarship, or at being ranked on the Arts Side; providing them with as much information as possible would enable her to work towards this aim.

As she recapitulates this lesson, she also tells them that they can note down whatever they want if they so wish.

"One thing I and some colleagues have noted is that some of the texts that used to be on the A' level syllabus, a while back, are now featuring in the O' level syllabus. Nervous Conditions is one such example. This worries us a bit, when you think of the students' level," Smita confides to me.

"Does it make a difference, though?" I ask. "These are still literature texts, whatever be the level at which they are pitched by CIE."

She looks at me in surprise and replies, "I didn't think of it in that way. I suppose we tend to mentally categorise texts depending on the level at which we teach them. So if a text is usually taught to Grade 12 students, I might have assumed it would be more challenging for the Grade 11."

"But do you treat the text in the same way at these two levels?" I curiously ask.

"We do not go so much in depth at O' level, although most of the critical and analytical skills are built at that level. Other determining factors are the length of the text and the themes. If their interest is lost, then it's an uphill struggle," she replies.

Working with the Grade 12 students

The bell rings and Smita heads to another classroom where her Grade 13 students are waiting for her to teach them ***The Birthday Party***. What makes Pinter's play different to teach is that the writer has written some form of absurdist theatre which is often difficult to explain, just like that, to students. Smita herself had a very bad experience with learning Pinter's works when she was a student and she does not want her students to feel discouraged or left out if they do not understand the text from the start. One way to address this would then be to get the students to do research work on the author's background and to devote a few sessions to discuss Absurdism as an artistic and literary movement.

There are seven students present and in the small classroom, they sit behind tables set in a U-shape. This setup allows Smita to be able to see everyone and allow them to see each other as they speak or discuss in class. She also hopes that such a set up will also provide more lively interaction to counter the general lethargy she usually notes in some afternoon classes. Sometimes, the smallest details can make a big difference in the way a lesson goes. Smita, whose literature classes with the upper secondary students are mostly scheduled in the afternoons, feels that it makes a big difference when literature gets read and discussed in the

morning rather than in the afternoons. Students coming in after lunch time or activity period are not always inclined or able to sit and follow a class. They often end up feeling sleepy. She feels that she has to furnish a lot more effort to get and retain their attention in afternoon classes. This is something that she and her colleagues have discussed with their rector, to no avail, so far.

Students' reactions to the texts on syllabus

According to Smita, one important reason why students do not perform as expected in literature is the choice of texts. Very often, she finds that students do not relate to the texts that are on the syllabus and this lack of interest results in less effort on their part. The fact that literature is a compulsory subject in this school till Grade 11 means that students who do not like it are still compelled to do it. A lot therefore depends on the teacher to make the teaching of the text interesting. On the other hand, those who do not like the subject then do not opt for it at Grade 12 level, which leaves Smita and her colleagues with mostly those with an interest in the subject.

The uncertainties linked to subject choice

Yet another challenge that Smita faces is the fact that she can never plan work ahead from one year to another, since she is never sure who, amongst her current students, will be doing literature the next year, especially at Grade 12 level. Although students take literature as a compulsory subject till Grade 11, only a few take it up at Grade 12 level. While she knows what text will be on syllabus for the next year, she cannot tell her students to prepare early on, as most of them wait for their Grade 11 results before finalising their choices. Some of her students are not even sure of being promoted to Grade 12, which means that they do not bother reading the set texts beforehand until results come out a few weeks after the term has started. Only then will they decide whether they will take English at Principal level at Grade 12. Students, Smita finds, as well as their parents, are more likely these days to question the kind of job prospects that their subject choices are likely to lead to. Smita can relate to this as even she had to take a similar decision when she was at school. She does not regret where this had led her but she understands that if her classes are not overfull with students at upper secondary, this is due to certain expectations related to the students' subject choice.

The impact of poor language proficiency in the literature class

Smita considers some of her students, who will soon be sitting for the A' level English paper, to actually be lower performing students who sometimes even struggle with the English language. She sighs as she thinks of situations where her students do not manage to find correct words to express themselves either orally or in writing. In class, a few students are proficient in English but while some do their best to speak in English, others resort to French when responding to her questions or whenever they have a query. Although Smita uses English at all times in class, she does not always restrain them; if she does that, she knows that the little response she gets will die out as some of the students struggle to frame their ideas in English. At times, Smita finds that they write French words in their essays, and she tries her best to guide them towards more accurate usage of English, and in general, often tells them to watch

English television programmes more often. Smita rarely resorts to her native Kreol or to French in class as she firmly believes that her students need to use English as much as possible in the English class. Moreover, she believes that the school should be empowering students to be as fluent as possible in English because of its official status and its importance as the language of the future, as she often tells her students. She thus has to find ways to help them overcome some of their difficulties and she often finds, to her great satisfaction, that when they discuss, they do manage to react and participate in class. This is because there are those in class who are very motivated and try their best in order to get better grades. This is one small step in the right direction, in her opinion, although this does not necessarily translate into better performance during the examinations for the majority.

The real issue, she finds, is much larger in scope and has to do with language practices at the level of the whole school, where most students tend to speak either in Kreol or in French. The matter becomes even more complex when even members of the staff speak mostly in French with their students, even in class. At her previous school, members of the English department tried to use English with students and with each other as far as they could but here, Smita is sometimes bemused when English departmental meetings are carried out mostly in French. Even though she has been working for some years now in her current school, she still finds it an odd situation as she does not come from a background where French is used most of the time for daily social interactions and even teaching. While she does not directly consider these language practices as the main cause for the decline in performance in English and literature in English, they certainly do not help the students to step out of their comfort zone.

The use of discussion

Smita starts the session by inviting them to discuss what they had learnt in the previous session. With small groups at Grade 12 level, Smita often resorts to group work or classroom discussion as there is much more scope for students to work independently on assignments and projects, which they can later on present or discuss in front of their peers. With her Grade 11, this is not always possible, as they often are very much dependent upon the teacher for guidance and notes. However, with Grade 12 students not always being regular to classes during the second or third term, group work then becomes difficult to implement, so she then prefers to use whole class lectures. A few students answer and after listening to them, Smita summarises that so far, they have learnt that the text will deal with confusion, chaos, nostalgia and violence.

After discussing the previous scene, they now reach the current scene in ***The Birthday Party***, which they take turns at reading the different characters' lines. From time to time, Smita intervenes with a comment on the events that are happening so far, highlighting at the same time the motivations of the protagonists and the themes they are evoking in the text.

The discussion diverges from the play somewhat but this is allowed by the teacher, who is interested in finding out what the students think about the characters.

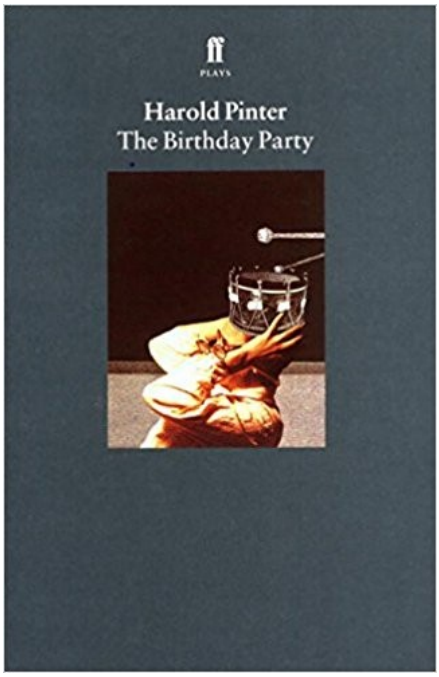


Figure 20.1: Smita discusses the cover illustration of the play

Referring to the cover of their books, Smita asks her students how the picture relates to the content. The girls discuss amongst themselves and some of them point out that it definitely has something to do with the scene where Stanley plays the drum in the play. However, Smita wants to know whether the picture is a literal description of what happens in the play. Another student then suggests that the picture on the cover does not make sense. Upon hearing this, Smita then asks the whole class if they agree with that statement and then turning towards that student, she asks her to explain to her friends why she made such a claim. "Well," the latter replies, "I do not understand why that person is holding a drum over his head and why someone else is beating it." One of her friends then adds, "It must not be very comfortable doing that. Your head or ears could get hurt." At this point, most of her students are involved and interested, confidently voicing out what they are thinking and discussing amongst themselves.

Smita refers to the last two comments to explain that some authors use metaphors to suggest or represent a deeper truth. She points out to the students that the author might not have chosen that cover himself but his publishers perhaps chose it to represent something about the text. Moving on to the scene, she then points out that new characters have been introduced in the play and she asks the class to compare those two sets of characters. "How does that cosy atmosphere suddenly change now?" she asks the whole class? Smita then gives the example of a party with close friends at which suddenly strangers turn up and refuse to leave. "Would you feel comfortable with such types of guests?" The girls reply in the negative. One girl then adds she would feel suffocated if people she did not know tried to take over her personal space. Smita refers to this comment to talk about the claustrophobic nature of the play. Referring to one critic, she then points out that the play could be considered as a comedy of menace. She writes the expression on the board as she explains what that means, relating it to what her students had used as example, just before. Indicating that she has some information to give

about the atmosphere and themes in the scene, she starts commenting while some of the students note down what she says.

The importance of literary critics

Smita believes that everyone has their own way or style of teaching literature. Literature, according to her, is not a scientific process to be always rationally explained but rather requires the input of emotions. However she finds that it is sometimes good to know what some critics have said about certain writers and their works. Smita knows that secondary school students in general do not know much about literature, so integrating critics' notes with their own understanding of the text might be challenging, unless they read a lot. Since many of her Grade 12 students studying English at Principal level are also studying French, Smita finds that quite a number of them are good readers. She is sometimes pleasantly surprised whenever she makes some intertextual references to find that they actually make those connections independently. This is not always the case with her Grade 11 students where sometimes she vainly tries to drive a point across, which surprises her when she notes such a large gap in those two years of difference.

Examinations

Examinations are a primary concern for Smita and she often feels worried because her students are not very confident with their English. Most of them, she is relieved to note, are able to confidently display their analytical skills in their answers. At Grade 10 level, Smita teaches two texts which she tries to complete in that first year itself. Then, at Grade 11 level, she has an equal number of periods as in Grade 10 to teach the last text and devote time for revision. So, she often uses the time she has at Grade 11 level to introduce and analyse a variety of practice questions, including examination papers, which could be useful for her students' preparation. The process is somewhat different at Grade 12 level, where she takes the year to cover a text but does not really go back in depth to it once it has been covered in class. She would then give some revision questions rather than hold revision sessions on the book. This is what her department recommends since it takes time to complete one text. Even though she would have preferred to hold revision sessions, she knows that she has to complete all her texts by the second term of Grade 13 as her students would probably not turn up in the third term. With only 3 periods per week at Grade 12 and Grade 13 level, Smita is thus under pressure to complete the syllabus and while she does fear for the quality of her teaching at times, she feels she has to rush to complete her work.

During her teaching as well, Smita usually points out which questions might come out and also gives indications as to the kind of language expected by the examiners. For instance, she recalls one of her students getting emotional about the presentation of one of the antagonists of the novel she was teaching, and she has to remind her students that biased and emotive language would not be allowed in examination questions. Smita is aware that some of her students might already be getting the support of their tuition teachers; just listening to some of their answers is an indication that there are getting notes from somewhere. She prefers having such students, who sometimes even challenge her in class rather than having someone who neither reads nor

reacts and instead, remains quiet in the literature class. Sometimes she even solicits those students to share the information that they have with the rest of the class, which, according to her, enriches the discussion. In fact, she is sometimes impressed with some of the answers she gets from some of her students. Smita would not want to be one of those teachers who becomes blasé or lazy in class. She feels that there is still something that she can contribute to their understanding of literature, whatever other support they might be getting elsewhere. At the end of the day, she would like to be remembered as having done her best in class for her students.

As she wraps up this lesson, she then tries to involve her students in a reflection over what they have learnt and to make connections with previous sections that they have studied. Not everyone participates in the discussion, but Smita does not force them as she is aware that they are paying attention and will perhaps show what they know in written answers rather than discussions. During that discussion, Smita gently redirects the flow of the conversation when she feels that there is a possibility of digression, from which it will be very hard to bring her class back to the initial discussion. However, when some of the students start discussing possible interpretations for the motivations of some of the characters, she cannot help but let them discuss. As the bell rings to mark the end of the period, Smita feels satisfied with the responses she obtained with her Grade 12. "If only my Grade 11 was like that…," she sighs.

We had been talking about the kind of discussions that take place in her literature class.

Smita tells me, "You know, sometimes we get so inspired or stimulated by what's in the text that we really digress while discussing."

"What do you then talk about, when you digress?" I ask.

She replies, "Oh, the discussion still remains on the issues raised by the text. One thing I want to say, though, is that we cannot be too serious or focused. With most of my classes in the afternoon, if I carry out the class in a way that is too serious or formal, this will take away their enjoyment of learning and discussing something new."

"What else do you do to get their interest?" I then ask.

"Well, in our school, we may choose any setting for our class if it is free and if it does not bother other people. I can carry out my lesson somewhere else if I feel like it. Some of my colleagues take their students to the yard; others can take their students to the hall. With smaller groups at upper secondary, it's easier to manage," she replies, smiling.

"Do you take them outside the class?" I ask.

"Sometimes, yes, but it is time consuming to look for a space that is free and you need to check if the hall is not booked already. So, sometimes it's preferable to stay in class itself."

Trying out different approaches

Smita finds that her focus differs as she shifts from teaching ***All My Sons*** in her Grade 11 class to ***The God of Small Things*** in her Grade 12 class. There is an inherent difference in the learners' profiles: most the Grade 11 students are doing literature because it is compulsory, and there are many who are bound to feel uncomfortable with the subject or with the texts. On the other hand, the Grade 12 students are doing literature because they like the subject and wanted to do it, and she finds that her small group of seven Grade 12 students is much more motivated to work and discuss than her larger group of Grade 11. She has to admit, though, that there are some who do appreciate the subject, and there are also those who have started liking the subject over time. With the Grade 11, teaching drama, for Smita, means more action, and she tries to get her students to be involved in the text by inviting them to read aloud. Another way to get her students to interact more is through role play. Activities, according to Smita, can range from small improvisations at the level of classroom to whole school activities such as the adaptation of a play, which she believes will make students understand who, for instance, is Shakespeare and to learn more about his period and works. They also learn how to assume different roles and represent characters with different temperaments. Even, then, despite the rapid action and the tense interaction between the various characters in the text, which fill the text with suspense, Smita finds that most of her students read the text in a flat manner, and do not connect so easily with the plot.

On the other hand, when she teaches the Grade 12, she finds that it is important for them to get into the mind of the characters, and that once they have been able to do so, they form their own opinion on events and characters and are ready to passionately discuss during the lesson. Generally, Smita tells her students to read and prepare the chapters or scenes in advance. This means that they have to read the extract or chapter, find some notes and reflect upon what they have learnt. They are also free to go online to find out more about aspects that interest them in the text so that they can discuss these in class. A few of them do that diligently and share what they find with their friends.

However, they often do not do the required preparation; for Smita, that is now normal, especially when she considers that some students in Grades 10 and 11 do not really like the subject. Even when there is no need to read the chapter in class, Smita cannot bear the idea of discussing or giving notes on an extract that she knows most have not read. However, even at that level, some of the students do not read the required chapters, and Smita finds herself reading key passages and giving detailed summaries to be make sure that they have understood the text. This has become her standard mode of operation in class, and she no longer even asks, on the day, if they have read or not, even though at the end of every class, she still feels it is her duty to tell them to read their texts before coming to class and to remind them of the importance of being prepared for the examinations. At least, with those notes, she can feel reassured that the students have something that they can refer to, because she is not always certain that whatever gets discussed in class also gets noted down. In the heat and excitement of the discussion, Smita finds it difficult to stop things in the middle to tell them, "This is

significant; note that down", although she tries to direct some of the conversations so that the students get the hint about what is important or not.

She believes that there are no tried and tested methods in literature. There is always plenty of scope to teach the subject. When she thinks of the texts she does not personally like, she then reminds herself that she is not going to be the one sitting for the examinations and thus has to think about her students; in such a case, what she likes or does not like in literature pales in contrast with the urgent necessity of getting her students to pass. Smita believes that technology can assist the teacher in making the literature class more interesting. For instance, she has often resorted to films based on literary texts during her teaching and has used the school projector in the school hall whenever she needed to show them something. In fact, her school already has many film adaptations of texts, such as ***The Tempest***, for instance. Smita believes that if students are shown film adaptations of a text, then they will understand it better. She has found this to be particularly useful whenever she had to show her students how people used to dress and live in the past. She finds that her students are very reactive towards such types of visual and auditory input. She recalls with much amusement how her students had been surprised upon seeing Ariel in the BBC version of ***The Tempest***, whom the girls had imagined much differently. This was an occasion for her to talk about adaptations and choices made by film or play directors. She believes that such occasions for discussion makes her students remember the text better. Smita believes that her students are much more skilled at finding websites and looking for information on the internet. She thus encourages them to bring the information they find to class so that they can discuss. She thinks that technology might help in reducing the amount of notes she gives in class but she also admits that she probably will need to upgrade herself for the sake of her students and her own career.

Over time, Smita can see a gradual growth in maturity and critical insight which she can only attribute to literature itself. She often tells her students that life is about taking decisions, and she believes that her classes, in some way, are contributing to develop their analytical skills. She sometimes gives them specific situations in the texts that they are studying to see how they react. In the case of ***Othello***, for instance, she recalls having asked her students to really think about the challenges of having a mixed marriage in Mauritius and how people would react if they themselves had been in such a situation. The kind of insights that she was able to arouse in her students makes her think that literature can never be useless; there is always a situation or someone to analyse and learn from.

Appendix 20b: Additional Narrative: 5b: Sam's Narrative

Sam's Narrative: Literature is life.

Prologue to the narrative

"You know, I feel, sometimes, that teaching literature is a waste!" Sam says emphatically.

I raise an eyebrow, and say, "What do you mean: a waste?"

Sam says, "Yes, a waste! Many of those students opt for literature because they don't have a choice. This makes it so much difficult to carry out the class when your students are neither interested nor willing to participate!"

It occurs to me, as I sit facing the man in his own yard, that I might not be the one steering this conversation. Holding some of my questions in one hand, Sam seems to hear my questions from a distance, and my interventions are initially mere punctuation marks in a long stream of words from him. Clearly he is passionate about the topic we are discussing, that is, the teaching of English literature, and he intends to give me his unadulterated views on the matter.

Sam has been teaching for the last 35 years and has mostly taught English literature at Principal level for a number of years. He has been teaching Grades 10 and 11 and has often moved on with them to Grade 13. As Head of Department in a girls-only state secondary school, he usually gets to teach Grades 11 and 12. While some of his colleagues prefer teaching the lower secondary classes, Sam prefers the upper secondary ones, which he finds more interesting and more enjoyable.

Sam stops briefly to answer a call and then resumes his account of how he teaches literature in his school.

Teaching the novel to Grade 11 students

There is some chatting amongst the Grade 11 students which gradually subsides as Sam enters the classroom and places his bag on the table. Sam greets his students and straight away tells them to take out their books. Today, they will be discussing chapters 6 and 7 in Tsitsi Dangarembga's ***Nervous Conditions***.

In today's lesson, Sam aims to assist his students to get the gist of the plot, and through the story, to understand the characters, their situation and events. As he begins his class, Sam is

not completely sure that all his students will reach a deeper understanding of the plot and characters, even after his efforts. He however wants to try to draw some parallels or comparisons between the Zimbabwean culture and Mauritian society. Given that the protagonist is a young woman who is getting an education, which in turn impacts upon her views on her world, Sam wants to show the relevance of Tambu's story to that of his students, and raise awareness about the situation of girls in other countries as well. Through this discussion, he also wants to deal with aspects such as patriarchy and power in the various events that crop up in the novel.

Selection of texts

This is currently the only text that they are doing with him. The students are doing ***Fasting, Feasting*** and ***The Tempest*** with another teacher. ***Nervous Conditions*** has been on the Cambridge list of prescribed texts for some years now but Sam did not choose it for any particular reason. Sam is also currently teaching ***As You Like It*** with a Grade 12 class. When it comes to choosing English literature texts for the school, Sam does not want it to be a one-man show and favours discussion with the rest of the English department. He makes sure the department goes for texts that members of the department feel comfortable to teach. For upper grades, each of them takes a particular paper to ensure that each is happy with their choice. Sam is quite satisfied with the syllabus, which he feels covers literature written in English but set in Africa, India, England and America. He thinks it could be possible to make the selection of texts more varied but he anticipates that teachers in his school will not want to deal with more modern literature due to limited resources and material to prepare. Sam, for instance, feels at a loss sometimes with more contemporary poems from the ***Songs of Ourselves*** anthology because there are few resources available. He is confident that he can interpret the poems in his own way but he would have preferred having access to notes. He is the first to admit that teachers usually go for traditional, canonical books as there is an abundance of notes and materials.

For his part, Sam loves poetry and in fact has written a number of poems, many of which he sometimes reads out to his daughter at home. He appreciates the language used to create visual effects and atmosphere, especially in the works of the Romantic poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats. He sees their poems as being infused with teachings about life and the beauty of nature. When it comes to poetry, Sam believes that students should go ahead and enjoy reading it and understanding it in their own way. He would first invite them for their personal response, and then help them through the notes which he would encourage them to apply to the poems studied.

Sam however prefers to teach drama, more specifically, Shakespeare's plays; he feels that there is a sense of universality to the themes presented in his texts, and he is able to relate these themes to real life. Whether they are comedies or tragedies, Shakespeare's plays seem to be full of life and reflect the same universal human passion, emotion and feelings. He finds it easier to explain the text as having universal themes, in the sense that what was true then, is true now, and will be true in the future. When it comes to drama, where Sam believes that it is essential for the students to understand that the essence of drama lies in the performance. This

discussion is possible only if the students have read the text. Role play can become an essential tool to help the student to better understand the text and get into the characters' motivations, which will lead to a better memory and appreciation of the text. Watching a play or film version of the text can only serve to develop a deeper understanding of the text.

He also likes African novels, particularly the works of Achebe, such as ***Things Fall Apart*** and ***No Longer At Ease***. In the case of ***Things Fall Apart***, he often gets his students to go back to W.B. Yeats' famous quote[128], which inspired the title of Achebe's novel. This allows his students to realise the significance of the title of the novel as to how society is really disintegrating and to discuss whether this is for the worse or the better. The influence of Christianity upon an indigenous African society is also something he wants his students to focus upon. Sam would like his students to compare the current Mauritian society to the society presented in ***Nervous Conditions***. Would they be able to recognise that Mauritius, itself also an African country, had had similar events taking place involving human exploitation? Will they also realise that Mauritians too have to struggle when it comes equal access to education?

Referring to real-life situations

Then, there are novels like ***Fasting, Feasting***, which also address women's place in society and the way they are treated. Sam often refers to Indian serials when talking about such issues, even though he is often told by colleagues that he is wasting his time. However, he finds a parallel in the way that these texts take up aspects of Indian culture, just as the books do, and he knows these references will be more suggestive to his students than any amount of notes. He often uses the contrast between American society and lifestyle, as portrayed in popular culture, and Indian or Asian culture in order to show the difference between fasting and feasting. His favourite novel, ***A Passage to India***, is not just about the British presence in India but more essentially about human relationships and the way people act based upon perceived differences. Whenever he thinks of this, he is reminded of feelings of chauvinism and superiority expressed by politicians in real life, such as Idi Amin Dada, which he refers in anecdotes to the students. He hopes that such references to real life incidents and events will enable them to develop a better understanding and respect for different cultures and ways of thinking. If he is teaching a novel, for instance Dickens' ***Oliver Twist***, he will also make sure to talk about Dickens' life, the conditions prevailing at that time as well as the social reforms. He would thus make his students realise that literature is not only about entertainment but can also pass on a moral message, or assist in sensitizing people to a serious issue.

While ***Nervous Conditions*** is more contemporaneous, he nevertheless finds that it is easier to discuss questions on human character, emotions and plot in ***As You Like It***. The ability to make comparisons is something that Sam wants to instil in his students. He believes that the beauty of literature does not lie in the text only but also beyond it, through comparison with real life situations. In the end, as he often thinks, literature is life. Everywhere there are the same issues

[128] W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming", "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold/ Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..."

and problems and the reality of yesterday which an author may write about could well be today's reality for the student in his class.

Literature is a mirror to life.

One of the first things that Sam says to his class whenever he starts a text is how literature is a mirror to life. Whatever gets written must then have been the experience of the writer or what he has seen or himself read about. The author may also be reflecting on the realities of life, while also infusing elements of the imagination. One example he likes to give is how Shakespeare takes his audience to the Forest of Arden through his imagination in ***As You Like It***. Sam likes to point out that even though literary texts are products of the imagination, there are still things which are true to life. Even while travelling to Arden as an imaginary escape, the realities of life, such as the pain and the cold are still there. However, unless he directly makes the link between the text and a context that is different from that of the students, most of his actual students do not necessarily distinguish that difference. Sometimes, Sam finds it really difficult to know if his students have understood what it means to be in a context other than that of Mauritius, in the 21st century. He however tries his best to explain those differences to them, especially through contemporary references and popular culture that may be read about, or researched, on the internet.

Language proficiency and understanding the text

His biggest challenge is to drive home the message of the book he is teaching to them. Indeed, getting his students to understand what the text is about can be quite challenging. While it is not difficult to *tell* the students what is in the book, it is harder for Sam to get them to make sense of what is *written*, despite the fact that the text is in modern English. He faces a similar situation with his other class which is studying ***As You Like It***. Language, especially Shakespeare's language, proves to be quite a barrier for those who have not encountered such literature in earlier years and who have opted to study it at that upper secondary level. Thus, more time has to be devoted to getting them to make sense of the language, first, before proceeding to other aspects of the text. He often takes a considerable amount of time to explain the meaning of words in the text. While some explanation is part of the process, especially when it comes to literature, still he often wonders, "Am I teaching vocabulary or literature?" When explanations are aimed at explaining the meaning of segments of the text, where is the time to go beyond the text to make connections? While past results have been quite satisfactory, Sam is a bit worried about the performance of this current batch of students, who have been highly irregular in attendance and have not done any preparation for the text.

In an attempt to check upon the prior knowledge of his students, Sam tries to draw their attention at first by inviting them to look closely at the person portrayed on the book cover[129]:

- [129] Dangarembga, T. (1 88). *Nervous conditions*. London: Women's Press.

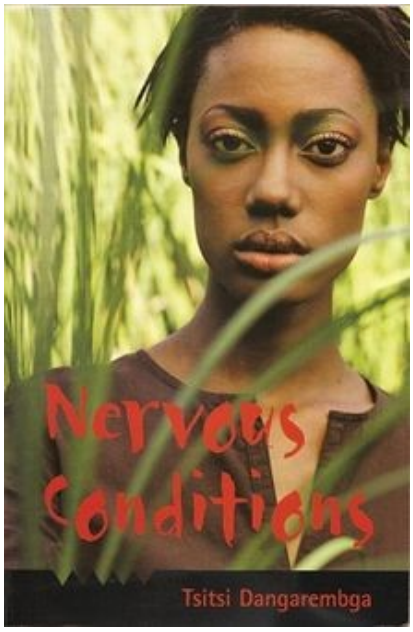


Figure 20.2: Sam discusses the cover of 'Nervous Conditions'

Using questioning to elicit responses from the students

He asks them short, open questions: "Who do you think is represented on the cover?", "Is it the author?", and "Why does she have that expression on her face?" Some students relate the person on the cover to the protagonist, Tambu. A few try to answer the second question but they seem to struggle to explain until Sam refers to the title of the book. He then adds, "Does she look nervous?", and then pursues with "What has happened so far to her to make her nervous?" Sam then proceeds to discuss Tambu and her cousin Nyasha's psychological struggles in the novel as instances of "nervous conditions."

Having established what they know, Sam uses questioning to be able to help them identify how and where 'nervousness', in various forms, can be present in the novel. This time, though, there are fewer responses. Sam refers to what they have just read in Chapter 6 about the two female protagonists and their own sense of nervousness, which are manifested in distinct ways. He invites them to state the difference and identify the reasons behind each character's feelings at this point in the text. The question he would like them to be able to answer is why Nyasha, who is a Londoner, would feel nervous at coming to her father's ancestral village for Christmas, and why Tambu who had grown up in that very same village until a year or so back, should feel uncertain about returning home to her family. After getting a couple of responses, Sam clarifies for those who perhaps do not really understand the Zimbabwean context by describing the village as a place that is deprived of amenities and lacking in amusement and entertainment for the supposedly more urbane visitors like Babamukuru and his family.

As he delves deeper into the discussion of Chapters 6 and 7 in ***Nervous Conditions***, Sam starts by talking about special occasions such as Christmas, which would be familiar to all his students, irrespective of their ethnic background or religious affiliation. He wants his students

to comment on the festive aspect of those occasions, especially in relation to the Mauritian context. One similarity that he wants to drive home is the fact that such festivities are characterized by the visit of parents and relatives and the preparation and consumption of food on such occasions. In the novel, however, Nyasha, who suffers from anorexia contrasts with the rest of the family where everyone is eating heartily. The chapters also highlight the heavy load of work which such an event usually entails.

Sam seizes this opportunity to discuss on the issues of anorexia and bulimia, which he assumes are going to trigger a response from the young girls in front of him. The concern with losing weight, he explains, is not principally an African cultural trait, but seems to be more characteristic of the English people. He would like his students to make the link between Nyasha's own 'nervous' condition with her upbringing in England, which has influenced her vision of herself and her body. He is aware that his students might not be aware of the cultural differences that exist between their own Mauritian realities and the Zimbabwean culture and society being depicted in the text. To bridge that gap, he tries to elicit some personal responses about concerns with body weight and appearance. He cracks a joke about Mauritians being able to lose weight easily if they dance the sega. This creates some laughter amongst the students. Sam also provides a number of practical examples such as extreme dieting and relative concepts of beauty across societies so that his students can understand the setting as well as the social conditions within the chapters under study. When he talks about Nyasha's situation, Sam does not hesitate to point out the difference between the cultural and religious habits of some Mauritians when they fast and the more internal motivations pushing people towards anorexia. Only a day before, Sam has read about a top model who passed away after extreme dieting. He thinks he can link this tragedy to the text as well to drive home the plight in which Nyasha finds herself. Sam is quite blunt in his way of expressing himself. He comments on the fact that it is a trend nowadays for young women to look like "porte-manteaux"[130], something that makes only some of the students laugh. Sam is not quite sure whether they feel embarrassed or whether they have actually understood him at this point. What matters to him is that he has been able to elicit one kind of reaction from his students.

I am surprised at his choice of the verb he uses, and lean forward to ask, "What do you mean exactly when you say you like to 'provoke' them?

He chuckles and nods as he replies, "Yes, I do provoke them! For instance, I will say to the girls, 'If I was the Prime Minister of this country, I'd sort out all problems overnight.' Of course, they'd look at me and wonder how I'd do that. This is where I'll say, 'So, the first thing, I'll tell all the girls to stay back home. Finished! No transport problems in the morning, no more unemployment problems for men, no problems at all in society!'

[130] Translated from French: "coat hangers"

He must have seen a deadpan look on my face as I try to process this vision of him saying this to his students. He grins at me as he says, "You can imagine their reactions upon hearing this! Immediately, some of them will be saying, 'Ah Sir, how can you say this?' and I'll be asking them, 'What do you want equality, emancipation, education for? Why do you want to work? Can't the husband provide for the wife? Why do you want independence?' That's the way I try to provoke them to get them to reflect before they answer."

He then adds, "I'll answer those questions myself, eventually, because I know deep inside that they do not know what to tell me. They want independence and emancipation but at every point, I still have to explain the word 'emancipation' or explain what 'independence' means. It's not that they cannot think, but rather find it difficult to formulate a coherent argument. So, depending on the level, they will understand. But you can guess that this makes the process more difficult."

"So, you think provocation is likely to produce reactions from the students?" I inquire.

Sam continues, "If you are not provocative, you will fail. The weakness of most teachers is that inability to provoke and make students think, to give them food for thought! You have to arouse in them thoughts that they would otherwise never think! And how does one go about doing that? Well, by provoking! And how to provoke them? By challenging them, so that they feel invested in the topic and react. Then you go back to the text."

"How do you make that link between the text and real life?" I ask.

"Well, I will tell them to look at Tambu and what she has been doing so far. I'll invite them to put themselves in her place. She's growing up and yet her brother gets everything. I will then ask them, 'How would you react if your brother acted like this, however much you love him?' I am sure they will say, 'Monsieur, pas d'accord![131]'

"So, the girls do not agree with the way women are treated in the text?" I ask.

He answers, "To them, a brother is a brother, and perhaps they actually may be living the same type of situation in their homes, but if I can bring them to understand how the relationship between brother and sister is affected by the privileges that one receives and the other is denied, then maybe they will be able to understand why Tambu is hardly affected by Nhamo's death. The brother's sense of superiority and male chauvinism towards his sister, where he thinks women are second-class citizens, is representative of the way women's reactions, feelings and opinions are relegated to the background. His death is a release and a new beginning for Tambu, and she ends up getting what she had been deprived of, due to her gender."

He pauses for a while and then adds, "I have girls in this class; I have to get them to react! I'll tell them behind the fall of a great man, there's the hand of a woman, and

[131] Translated from French, "Sir, we do not agree!"

I'll give them the example of Cleopatra and Anthony and show how Anthony lost it all because of Cleopatra. She is the serpent of the Nile, and women are the greatest serpents, aren't they? How can they not react when I say these things?"

Controversy and Provocation

Sam feels that the best way to elicit personal responses on themes, characters and plot is to sometimes make controversial comments to obtain some sort of response. He deplores, however, that such responses depend on the level of the pupils. He recalls a prestigious girls' state school where he previously had worked and where students readily responded to his statements. In that previous school, students were more forthcoming and the discussion went on more smoothly, whereas in his current school, he barely gets responses. This is something that Sam finds hard to forget, and he cannot help but compare the different sets of students he has had with the ones he has now in this current school. In fact, Sam often finds himself toning down the humour and irony in his comments, which might be misinterpreted. He still tries to provoke a reaction but now he does so to a lesser extent.

Sam continues by commenting on Nyasha's 'Englishness' as it is manifested in the text through the attitude and the way she dresses. He then asks them to imagine a typical, traditional African family, and tells them to imagine how the women would look like. He conjures up an image of voluptuous women who are comfortable with their bodies. In contrast to these women, Nyasha's own body seems to stand out, almost as in rejection of the lifestyle of the village. Sam does not want his students to just see the novel as a series of words on a page, but to actually visualise the people being depicted in the novel by using their own imagination.

Sam then proceeds with his explanation of the chapter. He highlights the parts which he thinks are important to remember in the text. One aspect that he stresses upon is the relationship between the father and the daughter, especially when the educated yet conservative Babamukuru shouts at his daughter Nyasha and calls her a "whore" for speaking to boys. He takes this opportunity to compare Nyasha's behaviour towards her father with the relationship between young people and parents in Mauritius. He tries to make them draw a connection between their own experiences as children and that of the characters in the text. Sam then asks them, "Is this how you talk to your parents?" A few of them react by smiling. Others shake their heads. Clearly Sam has touched upon something that speaks to the young people gathered in the class.

Sam moves on to Chapter 7 in ***Nervous Conditions*** where the protagonist returns to her native village. Sam wants to draw attention to the reactions of Tambu as she views her village from her now more "educated" outlook. How will she react to the customs and habits she grew up with and she left behind when she went to live with her uncle Babamukuru? While Sam is not sure if his students can notice the change occurring within Tambu, who lies between two

worlds, he tries to draw their attention to the more obvious aspects of the move back to the village. He draws a parallel between the events in the novel and Mauritians who live abroad and come back to Mauritius on holidays. He asks the girls whether it is really possible to forget one's native language, joking about some Mauritians who pretend to no longer being able to speak Kreol properly after only a few years spent abroad.

"Can you forget your culture? I do not think this is possible," Sam states to the class.

Sam's experiences of learning literature at school

When Sam was at college, he was taught in a mostly teacher-centred manner, but he feels that more people were studying literature at upper secondary level, then. There was a lot of reliance on the teacher, especially since many students did not have access to information. There were few facilities and tuition was also expensive, and therefore out of his reach. Sam sometimes cannot help thinking that teachers in his time were of a different calibre. Many of his teachers did everything then to make their students enjoy and understand the text. What was apparent to the young Sam was that these teachers had a love for the subject, and while many of them were not even graduates, they had a passion for teaching literature. They would read and explain at the same time and would link the content to life. From his experience as a student, Sam has come to the conclusion that literature is nothing but a reflection of life. His teachers, armed with their smile, their body language and their convincing arguments, could create that interest in literature in their students. Sam, however, makes a distinction between the type of student he was and his actual students. Sam admits that many people in his generation opted for literature because they liked the subject. He realizes that many of his own students do not approach the subject the same way and that some of them see this subject as an imposition or necessity, rather than a subject they can be really involved in.

Visiting an English literature class in England

One of Sam's proudest moments was when he was among the finalists for an essay competition about the status of English language and literature. This had led to a Fellowship in drama where he got to visit England and had an interview with the BBC. He recalls visiting a literature class in a school there, which he often compares to the Mauritian classrooms. While he was at that school, he found that the teachers there had a different way of teaching literature. What interested him during that visit was that the teacher had a maximum of twenty students and he had used group work during that lesson. The students in their groups were discussing Shakespeare's ***Julius Caesar*** and the teacher would walk around, monitor the work and invite the group leaders to present the views of their respective groups. Upon noting spelling mistakes in a student's exercise book, he recalls having been quite surprised. The student's embarrassment that resulted at having a mistake pointed out by a "black" man, or so Sam viewed himself, in a class consisting of white British students, was also an eye-opener. This had made Sam review his assumptions about the proficiency of first language English learners.

On the other hand, the way that the students talked and interacted had pleasantly surprised him. The openness and freedom he has observed in that English literature class had been

destabilizing as it clashed with his own experience and practice of teaching and learning literature in Mauritius. Sam recalls that when he was interviewed by the BBC in 1995, one of the questions they had asked had been about the teaching of literature. He had then responded by saying that "our teaching of literature in Mauritius is too pedagogical and too pedantic." Whatever the teacher says is accepted and taken down by the students, with very little effort on the part of the latter to develop a critical appreciation of the text. Their knowledge of the text, for the majority of the students, would consist of only what the teacher has told them or got them to note down. Model answers end up becoming prescribed answers instead of teaching them how to think before answering. Thus, literary critique is often seen by less discerning students as actual 'criticism' of a text or author. For Sam, teaching English literature is different from teaching other subjects. Sam likes to point out that, unlike science, there is neither experiment nor hypothesis. Although one may reach certain conclusions, it is often a case of using one's brain to interpret and appreciate things. Sam is convinced that, at the core, literature is not factual. Often, however, Sam finds that teachers try too hard at developing a systematic way to teach literature. With a teacher very often in a leading and authoritative position in the classroom, the student, according to Sam, has little scope to voice out and are sometimes afraid of interpreting things their own way. Sam recognises that there has been a longstanding culture in Mauritius to listen to the teacher and acknowledge everything he or she says, in the belief that "the teacher knows all, and knows best" without getting a chance at interpreting the text their own way. He believes that literature is about subjectivity and that one can interpret in any way as long as evidence can be found in the text to justify the argument. Sam likes to point out that the very existence of hundreds of critics, who may all have written on the same poem or same author, shows that all these interpretations are just as valid.

Literature is about emotions, feelings and life

Sam's view of literature is that it is about emotions, feelings and life, and that it cannot be compared to things that are dry. Therefore, any strategy he can think of should not be dull but rather seek to engage the class. If he could decide, Sam would opt for making English literature a compulsory subject as at Grade 7 itself, instead of doing it as part of the English language syllabus. Sam himself has often had to 'steal' from his own literature periods to cover aspects of language that he has not been able to cover during the term. He believes that it would mean a lot to actually have it as a subject in its own right, as some colleges do, at lower secondary level. That way, it would have its own identity and place within the schooling system and would not be hijacked by more pressing issues in the language curriculum. As far as texts would then be concerned, Sam would prefer to prescribe two or three abridged versions of texts like some plays by Shakespeare or ***Tales from Mauritius***.

Sam had however left that British class feeling impressed with the effectiveness of the strategy when it came to discussing literature, but at the same time, he left with many questions in his mind as he pondered on the practical aspects of implementing such strategy in his own context. After 35 years of teaching experience, Sam is not very convinced he could have benefitted from professional training, even though the short fellowship he attended challenged many of his pedagogical assumptions. He started teaching at a time when a PGCE was a rare thing. As a

head of department, he is often disappointed that some of the people who possess a teaching qualification actually demonstrate limited understanding of pedagogy. He remains sceptical whether a professional qualification would have benefited him, having acquired much of his pedagogical knowledge from his experience in the field of education. With classes ranging from thirty to sometimes nearly fifty students, Sam finds it difficult to consider implementing group work. He also questions the motivation of his students, as he feels that if he ever gives group work, his students will gossip and joke around instead of doing the work, in spite of the teacher's presence. Already, Sam knows that out of his twenty Grade 11 students present today, only *one* is sure at this point that she will opt for either English Main or Subsidiary for Grade 12. The rest have not thought of their future subjects yet. He knows that this number will vary over time and that perhaps, some more will join in, but not because they have a choice, but because they need English as one of their subject combinations. Recently, Sam has addressed the rector upon this issue, saying, "Why waste their time? They don't even have the book, nor want to read it. There's no personal preparation, and little involvement, so how can you expect them to pass in English Main?" Sam would have preferred that they go for two main and two subsidiary subjects, instead of the usual three main and two subsidiary, because he feels sure some would fail if they had those three Main subjects. However, this would mean new administrative procedures from the rector and the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate and Sam feels doubtful that the school would go out of its way to request for such a change.

Literature, human values and social issues

Sam tries to do things a bit differently; even though he does read and explain, his aim is to show his students what literature is, whatever be the text. He considers literature to be the ideal platform to instil human values through what the authors have been trying to convey through their works. He sometimes tells his students that literature is about life and values, and that sharing his love and appreciation for literature is also a way of understand his own dreams and values. Ultimately, Sam believes it is all about talking, and if there is no talk, there is also no class. With the older students, Sam likes to motivate, inspire and sometimes even provoke them, depending on the text he is currently teaching. In the case of ***Nervous Conditions***, the novel provides him with the platform to discuss the exploitation of, and discrimination against women, especially when it comes to education. One particular strategy he adopts is to make comparisons between Mauritius and other countries. He tries to show his students that Tambu's fictional quest for education and independence in Zimbabwe can be compared, to some extent, to real-life Malala Yousafzai's struggle for access to education for girls in Pakistan. Talk of discrimination also allows him to refer to the situation of girls in other countries where they might be discriminated against. Sam places a lot of importance on those spontaneous moments in class that lead to deeper exploration of the text being studied. As Sam has often found, such a strategy is ultimately time-consuming, as such moments needs elaboration once initiated. The downside is that the text is not completed, and then who would be after Sam? The parents! Sam often finds himself handling a one-man show when his students do not prepare the text as advised and thus barely participate in class. Interpretation, Sam finds, does not come easy to his students, who often end up responding 'yes' or 'no' to his questions. Sam sometimes ends up reverting to notes-giving as a last resort.

Accountability

Sam would personally like to show a film based on the texts he is teaching but he is always conscious of the need to complete the syllabus. Quality Assurance officers from the Ministry of Education often visit schools and monitor the planning of the work across subjects. They observe lessons and check whether lesson plans are duly completed. One question they often ask educators is whether they have completed the syllabus. Ever since these visits have started becoming common across schools, Sam, who never used to prepare elaborate lesson plans, now feels compelled to prepare something to present to the inspector. Even then, he starts preparing on paper only when he knows such visits are imminent. Sam is not very convinced about the expertise of those officers, some of whom had only been educators at school a while back but who insist on telling him what to do. This, according to him, goes against his own ideas of how he should be working. Sam believes that the teaching of literature should be very spontaneous. He has often found that whenever he plans a lesson, it does not turn out to be the same in practice. Someone in class can say something, which will make him react, and the class can go in a different direction, following the course of the discussion. He finds it a pity to have to write down something just for the sake of paperwork, which eventually does not represent what he actually does in class. He often likes to say bluntly "I'm used to a system; I'm not going to change!"

Trying to overcome students' psychological barriers and lack of interest in literature

Sam believes that preparation is important but he also believes teachers should acknowledge their limitations. There is an assumption that teachers should know all the texts that are on the syllabus but Sam knows this is not the case for many teachers, including himself. He once was asked for help to answer a literature question by a friend's daughter and to his surprise, he could not even understand the question! Whenever he has to teach Chaucer's texts, with which he is not very familiar, this becomes a problem, not only for the students, who are going to tell him, "Monsieur, pa konpran[132]", but for himself as well. He has to resort to modern translations to be able to understand the text. Therefore, if he is facing such issues with understanding the text, he assumes it will be much worse for his students, especially when it comes to the language. He knows it will be a much more challenging journey for his students to even get into the text. That would present a psychological barrier right from the start which, as a teacher, Sam would find very difficult to overcome, however interactive the session might be.

The question that Sam often asks himself is how to teach literature when his students have no interest and when most do not read the prescribed texts. He finds it practically impossible to go through the text, line by line, especially when he has class with this group only on Thursdays and when he has already missed a number of classes due to school events and holidays. One way he tries to go around this problem is to provide his students with a critical summary of the different chapters in ***Nervous Conditions***. Sam feels that teachers are, in a way, compelled to become more authoritative and are in most cases accountable for the results their students will bring in. If they ask their students to comment, or discuss, they will feel too shy or simply not

[132] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "Sir, we do not understand."

know what to say. Usually, he is able to complete most texts in class. However, with this particular text, he is actually racing against time. Soon, many of the students will stop coming in the third term of the school year. He absolutely has to wrap up the text and the only way he can do so now is to provide critical commentaries and discuss those in class. This relies upon the trust that the students will do their share of the work by reading the text on their own.

Giving notes and handouts

Many teachers, like Sam, end up resorting to handouts and extensive notes on the texts they are teaching. He makes photocopies of notes from his own books, and hopes that they will be able to read them and connect to the text, bearing in mind how he has approached sections of the text that they have covered in class together and the way he has explained so far. Sam does not like the idea of systematically giving notes unless it is absolutely necessary but when he does give handouts, he does not like to see them go to waste. Sam is aware that providing notes just like that does more harm to the student at times. Sam believes that these notes should be aids to learning, helping them to comment upon, criticize, and review what they have read. Notes, according to him, are not a shortcut to the text, although they provide insights into other people's work and literary criticism. Both have to be read, and he often reminds his students that even the notes need to time and space to be assimilated, just as time and space needs to be found to actually read and prepare a chapter from the book they are studying. He is aware that summaries are not literature and that the key to understanding the texts is to relate them to realities of today that his students can understand. When he gives them notes, he expects them to be able to comment on them. When they read with his comments and his appreciation of the text in mind, Sam thinks they may be able to grasp something and formulate something in return.

Sam is worried about the excessive downloading of notes which can prove to be distracting and hard to filter when it comes to studying. He suspects much of these notes is kept for the sake of examinations. If these notes were to give them food for thought and help them develop their own thinking skills, perhaps it would have been acceptable but Sam's experience tells him otherwise. It is the same as in some of the other subjects; they are trying to learn something by heart, and if it comes out in the examinations, they'll use it there. He sometimes warns his students about the danger of losing originality when relying on the ideas of others. What he tries to awaken in his students is the ability to think and react independently to what they read. One of the handouts he has recently given the girls is about the significance of the title. He knows he has talked about this already with his students but he also hopes to get them to read and reflect upon the notes to identify the various instances of "nervous conditions" in the text. The notes, in a way, will act as a guide, but the students will also have to go back to the text to identify those elements and quotes that reflect the arguments made in the article. As Sam explains, he invites the students to highlight certain quotes and elements in the text, which they diligently do. From time to time, Sam reads from the handouts and the students highlight those notes as well.

Sam has told me so much about his class that I can already foresee the fate of those handouts.

"Will they read those notes?" I wonder. "And more importantly, what if they study the notes, rather than read the actual book?"

Sam shrugs as he says, "They will still have to read them. Reading is nothing, unless you read with purpose, you underline the relevant information and then you make your own notes."

"So, they still need to relate what is in the notes to what they are reading in the text," I suggest.

Sam nods as he replies, "If you give them bulky notes just to reassure others that 'I've got notes for the students', as many teachers do, then this is not the way. You have to take the notes, read them yourself, discuss with the students and explain to them so that even if they have the same notes or found notes elsewhere, they can get started. But if you don't explain it to them, it does not help them."

Sam recalls that there was a teacher who had recently been transferred from another college and had been given a Grade 13 class to teach English literature. It finally was discovered that this teacher had not taught literature for more than ten years and could barely explain to the students, who were about to take their final examinations, how to approach revision of their texts. The problem, as Sam sometimes reflects, can also lie in the choice of teachers who are drafted in to fill a vacancy at school. Just because someone has been hired to teach English, there is an assumption that they can also teach English literature. However, there are many teachers who have taught mostly English language or who have taught literature only at the lower grades. Sam does not think this is applicable to all teachers; he has met really good teachers, who have also had experience working in some of the top colleges, such as QEC, DMC[133], Droopnath Ramphul SSS and the like, who do a lot in terms of preparation.

Trying to find a strategy that works with the students' learning profiles

For today's lesson, Sam has not felt the need to prepare a lot. If he had been at the top 'star' colleges, perhaps he would not have been so complacent. He perhaps would have to read extensively and prepare more in depth because there may be a challenging question to be answered. He however thinks that the students that he currently has are not stimulated enough, despite the efforts he makes. The students content themselves with whatever he tells them, and even when he tries some sort of provocation to get responses, there is very little reaction. Sam thinks the attitude of students is a determining influence upon the proper teaching of English literature in the classroom. For instance, he knows that if he sets a group work, his students will lose track of the set task and chat instead. One possible way to garner the participation of

[133] Queen Elizabeth College, Dr Maurice Cure State Secondary School

students, in Sam's opinion, would be to revive interest in literature by getting students to enjoy the text rather than imposing it upon them. Sam would like to see students who opt for literature voluntarily. He also thinks that introducing literature at lower secondary level is a must but he is convinced that addressing those texts merely as comprehension texts does not really assist learners in developing a taste for literature.

Sam realizes that many of his students differ with some of the more active students he has encountered while working in other colleges. He often recalls one such class where students were not only following his every word but were also interested enough to question and challenge him. Moreover, most of these students had been well prepared and had read their texts, which meant that he could dive into the discussion straight away. Since many of them were also competing for a state scholarship, Sam did not expect them to just get by with model answers and notes only. They were expected to independently read, and prepare their texts and to participate actively in class. Sam recalls a class he used to have at Royal College Curepipe. He has once given the top student in that class 22 out of 25 for an essay, which was already the first time he was awarding such a high mark to anyone. To his surprise, the boy, who subsequently became a laureate, approached Sam and requested him to tell him where he had lost the 3 marks. Sam recalls having felt uncomfortable but he had managed to explain by stating the first plausible thing that came to his mind, even if it was not true: "You could have said it like this; you could have added this point here." The thing was that the boy had really been outstanding but Sam could not bring himself to give 25 out of 25. In his mind, that meant something close to perfection, and it just was not done to give top marks, even for an exceptional work. Sam remembers this story: how he was giving what he thought to be the top possible mark and how he ended up being questioned by the student himself. For him, there is something to be learnt from these students. They might put you in a tight spot but the intellectual challenge is there.

He does not feel the same way towards the students in his current college. As he continues discussing those two chapters, Sam cannot help but think how different his situation now is. Sam sometimes suspects that he is on the verge of forgetting the little he knows about teaching English literature. There is also the realization that there is currently no fun in teaching literature with mostly unresponsive students. He would have appreciated making his students enjoy and joke, even if this remains at a surface level. However, the effort invested in getting his students to reflect and respond does not always pay off, especially when many students opt for literature for the sake of having a good subject combination. Only very few respond to his own way of stimulating or provoking them amongst the Grade 11 although he believes his method has greater success with his students in Grade 13.

Literary texts as conduit

If pressed to identify what skills his students acquire in his literature class, Sam would calmly state that they learn everything. There are the skills pertaining to deeper understanding of text, plot, character, theme and language. The texts under study become the conduit via which the students, to the extent of nearly forgetting they are studying literature, learn about different things, including life lessons and values, which according to Sam, are essential when

considering the decadence prevailing in contemporary society. Perhaps, as Sam hopes, his students will learn to make the difference between right and wrong when encountering specific themes and characters in the texts.

One instance he hopes his students will understand is discrimination. He often tells his students that if they are reading ***Fasting, Feasting*** and ***Nervous Conditions***, then, as girls, they do not have to experience the pain that the female protagonists have undergone. By relating to the protagonist, the students can experience what it means to grow up as a girl on a farm in rural Zimbabwe and to understand what it means when education seems to be the only way out of poverty. There is, especially in this scene, a great discrepancy between men and women, even though the author shows the inherent strength and decision-making power of women behind closed doors. Sam hopes that reading and discussing the novel closely will have the positive impact upon his students' approach to people, their critical thinking, their way of interpreting information and perhaps even the way they live. Sam believes that the way you teach these students has a determining role in what they can take away from such a class. As Sam says to himself, if there is no change in one's life and outlook after studying literature, then, one might as well be a robot. Of course, Sam does not expect extraordinary changes, but he does hope that his students may learn to listen and care.

In conversations with the rector, Sam sometimes discusses the performance of his students as well as the teaching of English literature. To some extent, the rector shares Sam's views on the way literature is taught and one regret that he has is that the structures governing the production of knowledge in schools can be rigid and restrictive, almost like a kind of corset that can stifle creativity. With students who do not like poetry, whose first choice would never have been literature, the rector has advised Sam that the same thing that works in other schools might not work here. In their discussion, the two also discuss the difficulty of overcoming the barrier of Shakespeare's language, or any use of elaborate literary language. Sam however retains one statement from his head of school, who musingly said to him, "How has life changed, between 500 years ago and now? We're still the same kind of narrative beings; we still like to tell stories. Basically we're the same beings but in different circumstances. It's just that the rules which used to make sense no longer make sense now." Sam agrees with his rector on that matter; literature thus becomes a way of understanding people and exploring what makes people human.

We are in one empty office room in Sam's school and have been discussing a class he has just carried out with the Grade 11. He then tells me bluntly, "I'm computer illiterate, to start with. I do not know how to use technology beyond a few simple things."

I had just been asking him whether he finds technology to be of relevance to his teaching.

Sam then continues to say, "I'm old. I am my own resource and my own teacher. I could use the computer to look for notes here and there but I still will have to rack my brains to read, understand and interpret them.

"Do your students take the time to do that?" I am curious to know.

He smiles and replies, "There lies the danger. With all that technology, you can download everything. I often say to my students, 'That's beautiful; you've been able to find so much but you cannot be happy with just bringing notes to class. You have to read and highlight what is relevant to you!' Otherwise, there is just a tendency to accumulate notes and do nothing about them!"

Using discussion as main pedagogical move

Sam's principal strategy with the upper grades is to discuss and talk about the text. He uses the board to only highlight some important points as and when they arise, but most of the time prefers addressing his students from his desk in class. Sam does not reject technology outright but he has worked for three decades without overly relying on technology for his teaching and has grown comfortable with this way of doing things. Sam is not greatly convinced with the pairing of literature and technology. For him, they are opposites; literature, because it is about life, is definitely spontaneous and lively, while he sees technology as being dry, lifeless and an unnecessary hassle. Although digital tablets have been introduced by the State in all secondary schools in Mauritius, Sam thinks this was an unwise decision and he questions the use that the students will make of such a tool, especially in a literature class. He suspects that the majority will perceive it as a sort of "zouzou". Knowing the ease with which young people handle technology, he thinks it is only a question of time before they manage to find a way around the restrictions set in the tablets. Thinking of his own self, he also feels doubtful that most teachers will be able to make the most of the tablet in terms of pedagogy and thinks it will lead to a lot of distraction, in the long run.

The importance of developing creativity

Sam often asks himself how he can get his students to use their imagination and be more creative. He sometimes thinks it might require trained people with special skills who could use role-playing, storytelling and other methods to involve young people in literature and develop empathy in them. He believes that such resource persons could have slots earmarked for them in the school timetable, where they could come and work on a specific programme aiming at this development. Sam believes that important thing is to get the students to be spontaneous, and to work with them over time to enable them to become better learners. The only thing, as he often likes to say, is to let them learn. Sam believes that it is a big challenge to make young people leave their mobiles and computers to go for more social activities such as drama. If that interest could be revived not only at school but also outside through community centres, libraries and literary and drama clubs, then Sam believes great progress can be made in terms of recognising the value of literature. He recalls his teacher having taught him ***Julius Caesar***

and how he had learnt the famous "Friends, Romans, Countrymen" speech by trying to work on his delivery and tone and trying to think like the character. This is something which he thinks he can try out with his own students, followed by activities such as "Make as if you are Aneerood Jugnauth, or Paul Berenger[134], and then read out that speech in their own manner." Who knows, perhaps that student could be one of the future leaders of this country!

The importance of developing love and interest in literature

Sam tries to convince as many people as he can about starting with literature as a subject as early as possible. He thinks the gap that exists when students opt for this subject choice at Grade 11 and Grade 12 levels can be lessened. However, Sam believes that the teacher has to create love for this subject. If there is neither love nor interest, then the students will have difficulty in studying literature. Sam is often aware that some of his colleagues go and tell students "pa bizin fer literatir, lakoz ena problem[135]"; instead he tells his students to ahead and enjoy it. In fact, he attributes the fact that his current Grade 12 class has around 20 students due to his own efforts. In a way, Sam is glad as he benefits from the interest and engagement of his students with this subject. He does see a difference between a class of 20 and a class of 4 to 5 students. It might be easier for a teacher to manage a group of five students but for Sam, teaching is more than just teaching; one should also enjoy what one is doing, and smaller groups, especially with the profile of students he currently has, do not add much to the discussion.

If teachers just read out the text, without talking about it, or referring to real life situations or trying to get the students to identify with the characters, then there is something lost. However, Sam is also confronted with the realities of completing the syllabus, which make such endeavours more challenging. Moreover, coming up with a gamut of activities can be time consuming, as Sam has experienced a number of times. Sam casts a critical glance at his own practice as well as that of his peers. He admits that many of his classes are finally like whole class lectures, which however have worked so far. He finds value in the idea of giving group work but is of the view that this should start much earlier than Grade 11. At this point in time, the Grade 11 students have other pressing, examination-related concerns whereas there is often excessive pressure upon teachers to complete the syllabus. Indeed, Sam has, on occasion, had mixed feelings of chagrin and relief at stating to his peers or superiors that the work has been completed, 'mem menti'[136]. The fact remains that he never gets to complete the reading and discussion of the set texts to his satisfaction and ends up complementing his lessons with notes and readings.

The need for teacher preparation

While giving tuitions to students from other schools, Sam has discovered that some of them do not even know which text they are supposed to be studying at school. This is because their teacher perhaps closely explains the vocabulary or the content but the appraisal and criticism

[134] Two prominent Mauritian politicians
[135] Translated from Kreol Morisien: "Don't go for literature, it's a problematic (or tricky) subject."
[136] Translated from Kreol Morisien: "even if it's not true."

is, in his opinion, lacking. He believes that at very least a teacher should explain literary terms at the beginning so that the students may recognize them when they stumble upon those terms while reading and avoid mistakes when writing about them. The one thing that he would stress upon would be that any teacher should ensure that they love the subject; that they are not teaching it as a burden. He has in mind those teachers who look for easy texts and teach just for the sake of doing it, which he thinks is becoming a more common trend and mindset amongst teachers these days. What he believes is that the teacher should take the initiative to prepare their own critical comments and appreciation of the text. He wonders sometimes if the newer generation is more committed to the subject and deep inside, he sometimes suspects that many young people studying for a degree in English themselves barely read but rather download notes for themselves. He can feel that the love is not there. The least that teachers can do also is to ensure that they show to their students what research means, which is to go through the different books, to understand the different interpretations by various critics, and to make sure that they help students understand how to make sense of that information. A teacher, in Sam's opinion, needs to know what he or she is talking about. He notices that it is all too common these days for teachers to be handling texts that they have not read themselves but which they have to teach.

Sam often thinks about his own teaching practices as well as those of his peers. He often tells some of his colleagues that they cannot just take a text and translate it. A lot of background work needs to be done so that the text is grounded and becomes meaningful. Then the universality of particular themes can be pointed out, especially with the use of the present and present continuous tenses while talking about text, characters and themes. Sam however knows that some of his colleagues will just take the content, explain superficially and then leave. Young teachers who join the profession, according to Sam, are not always making the effort to go in depth. Since they have a syllabus to complete, many of them are quite happy to just read the text. This, as Sam often muses, will become a comfortable way of operating, as the educator will move from college to college until they become senior educator in the long run. The problem, according to Sam, is that these teachers do not really teach, since learning is not happening.

With five other ladies in the department, Sam is sometimes sad to find that his fellow colleagues are not as willing to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities, which would involve more hours outside the normal scheme of duty of the educator. Sam believes that some of his colleagues in the department are there just to do the strict minimum and are always ready to rush home after work. He thinks that some of them tend to use their other commitments as justifications for not giving their all to their job. He, on the other hand, stays back and tries to involve the students in other activities and monitor their progress. As Head of Department, Sam also feels compelled to go through every single word in every examination paper, irrespective of the level, for the department. He has noted many mistakes left by teachers in their own examination papers in the past and refuses to take a chance with the people in his department.

Sam cannot digest the fact that a colleague of his was able to "complete" ***A Passage to India***, a text which he had so much trouble completing, in only a few weeks. Another student from a different school once approached him for help for a similar reason: her teacher had completed ***As You Like It*** in two weeks, while he had himself taken a whole year to do the same text! He asked that student why she and her friends did not protest at school, but she had replied that they did not dare do so; they could not antagonize their own teacher when they had examinations looming in the near future. When he thinks about those situations, he wonders whether teaching really took place there. Sam is worried about this attitude, where teachers state "I've got a work to do; I've got a text to teach". They will do it whatever way they choose, and at the end, they will complete it, even if it means just downloading notes and dumping them wholesale on students, who are ultimately happy because they are getting notes of some kind.

Sam however admits to himself that he has not been able to 'complete' the text he is currently teaching, as he would have liked to, despite months spent on the book. To him, his colleague's students probably have only a faint notion of the plot of ***A Passage to India*** but it would be difficult for them to really have interpreted the text deeply in such a short while. This is something that he usually tackles in a first meeting with his department when the year starts, where he gives his views about how to start and continue with a text over the year. He only recently had to point out to a teacher, with whom Sam had been carrying out a peer observation in class, that she could have approached her teaching of ***The Tempest***, with a background on Shakespeare and the time period, as well as brushing up on some of the major themes covered by Shakespeare so that the students could apply some of those concepts to the text. He rues the fact that he may well tell them how do things as a head of department, but this does not necessarily result in compliance at their end, nor can he directly intervene in a colleague's class. They usually have their own way, Sam sadly thinks, but he is also cheered up by the fact that there are colleagues who do approach him for advice, not only for literature but also for English.

Aspects to focus on in literature study

As a Head of Department, Sam discusses with new members of staff and recommends to them that they should not start the text right away. What is important, according to him, is to convey to the students the essence of literature, to show them that literature is a reflection of life, and to talk about how authors over the centuries have tried to depict aspects of life in their work. Character study is also deepened with the development of empathy and understand to learn more about values and feelings. Students are not necessarily aware of an author's philosophy or worldview, and Sam firmly believes that the teacher should assist students in understanding what an author's style and tone are like. The teacher should be able to explain, basing himself upon the passage being studied. If the language is metaphorical, then the teacher should be able to explain what a metaphor is, which also presupposes that one should have taught about similes as well. If Shakespeare is hinting at danger in a particular passage, the teacher should be able to highlight what words convey this theme or atmosphere to the reader, so that the students can later on identify the themes by themselves. For instance, Sam sometimes quotes P.B. Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind', "I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed!" as an example

to show how metaphorical language can be used by the poet to convey a very deep message. Another example he likes to think about is the poet John Keats who wrote about his selfless love[137] for Fanny Brawne. He uses this as example of the poetic nature of language in something as commonplace as a simple letter and asks his students, "Imagine you were the one this letter was addressed to; how would you react?" Cultivating a habit of using such quotes and references is one way of getting students to appreciate the literary quality of language and also stimulate students to find out more about those texts.

Going beyond the text is as important for Sam as studying the text itself. When it comes to the A' levels, Sam knows that one does not score marks just by knowing the plot by heart. For instance, when referring to ***A Midsummer Night's Dream***, Sam uses the story of Egeus bringing his daughter to court where he knows she is likely to face a death sentence because she disobeyed her father. Sam makes reference to the notion of honour-killing which still exists in some parts of the world. Although his students might think of the injustice of a law set down hundreds of years ago, the fact that many young women could face harm in today's world can show them that literature is not about fiction all the time, but a presentation of reality through fiction. Today, as he discusses the presentation of women in ***Nervous Conditions***, the same can be said about the fate of women. Sometimes even education does not free a woman from the shackles of patriarchy, as Babamukuru's family experience. Sophisticated Maiguru and her educated daughter Nyasha have to repress their own sense of self to satisfy the father, and it is Nyasha's inability and refusal to conform to those norms which result in the conflict in these two chapters. Teaching literature, therefore, is more than just teaching the text. Sam wants his students to understand that there is a difference between the one who reads for pleasure and entertainment and the one who studies literature as a subject.

When it comes to making students appreciate the text, Sam knows that it would have been very easy if the students he had were genuinely interested in literature. He would only need to rely on the fact that they will do their own reading and thinking about the text before discussion. When it comes to interpretation, he tells them that it is very subjective and that they are entitled to their personal opinon. If, for instance, they do not like Babamukuru in ***Nervous Conditions***, Sam tells them that he cannot tell them that they are wrong. Any villain might still have some interesting features or aspects of character which might endear us to him or her. So, from Sam's perspective, students need to be given ample time to discover those aspects as well as the liberty to interpret. Texts also are likely to be "read" differently over time. Sam likes to take the example of ***Lady Chatterley's Lover***, which had been banned at some point and which now is read as literature. Then, the teacher's role in guiding them towards this literary appreciation becomes essential. When teaching literature, such as D.H. Lawrence's ***Sons and Lovers***, Sam believes that it is essential that they learn about D.H. Lawrence's background, his personal life, his relationship with his mother, amongst other things. Then, he would go into the notion of Oedipus complex as one way of interpreting this relationship, with emphasis on the importance

[137] John Keats, "I have been astonished that Men could die Martyrs for religion - I have shudder'd at it - I shudder no more - I could be martyr'd for my Religion - Love is my religion - I could die for that - I could die for you."

of finding evidence to support their arguments. This is something that he feels some of the younger teachers in his school do not yet master.

The problem with some teachers, as Sam has found is that some do not master their subject content knowledge. For instance, Sam had a colleague who, after working for 6 years in another school, had been transferred to Sam's school and was allocated a literature class at both Grade 12 and Grade 13. That person had not said anything to Sam and had quietly gone to class. She then told the students that she had not taught literature for a number of years, and those students, who are about to finish school and are seriously thinking of examinations, suddenly find themselves asking what they will be learning in that class. It was only much later that the colleague came to see Sam to tell him that she had been cut off from the teaching of literature for more than ten years. Sam is quite pessimistic about the type of support that the students have been having during that the time they started their class. Possibly the girls will get notes from somewhere, but this, in his opinion, is not the way literature should be taught.

Teacher and student input in the literature class

For a subject that requires a lot of investment of time and effort from the students, Sam has to admit that the bulk of the work gets done by the teacher, who has to do the preparation, the teaching and the explaining. While Sam does not give model answers, as he discusses, he tries to point out to his students how to writing convincing arguments. Sam often laments the fact that if he did not do the bulk of the work, his students' chances at passing would be very remote. This means also that he has to direct them more pointedly towards examination-related questions. Sam is sometimes at a loss when it comes to convincing students of the necessity of studying literature. He recalls his years as a young student, when he used to listen to accomplished educators and writers such as Frank Richard, who would intervene on radio and television. He would avidly listen and try to get the gist of the discussion, and this proved to be very enlightening to him. He is sad to note that amongst his students, there is no longer that motivation to learn via the English language, despite the fact that English has such a heavy official presence. Sam would have liked to have students of a certain standard, which would have guaranteed that he would derive pleasure from teaching them. He might question his current class but obtain only a few answers from those who took the time to prepare. He wonders whether it has to do with teaching only or whether ways to appreciate and love literature should be devised, so that the students may develop a taste for it much earlier, not only when they actually do the subject at Grade 10 or Grade 12.

When there is someone like Sam in front of you, who does not mince his words, one can sense something on his mind when he speaks of his classes. So, I try to probe a little bit further to find out what troubles him.

"We are deceiving them." He replies, staring in the distance.

"What do you mean?" I ask.

He replies, "We all know that their results are not good. Yet, we let them think they are doing well. We let them continue with their choice of subject, even though we know the results will not be very good."

I ask him how he can be so sure so many of them will not be doing well in this subject.

"You know what the problem is? You keep telling them how important it is to read the text, but they don't! There is no reading prior to the class explanation!" he replies indignantly.

"I can guess this does not sit down well with your plans for the lesson, right?" I tentatively ask.

"Of course! How can I teach literature itself when I have to stop each time to explain a sentence we have just read? This is a serious handicap for my teaching when I have to teach A,B,C when I should be talking about themes, characters and plot! You mention something in class as you explain, and you think there is a way to connect the text to something that the students might know, but then I need to tell them the story now, because they have no idea, or have forgotten!"

A sense of fatalism

Sam cannot help but thinking that the majority of his students might obtain average results but he does not expect brilliant responses from them. At the back of his mind lies the thought that only some "brilliant ones", who attend the so-called "star" colleges, will have the type of approach that he would ideally see in a student of literature. There is this sense of fatalism as he thinks of his students, who will just read the text, "konpran zistwar la, fini[138]". Most of them would not, in his opinion, be able to decipher the author's intention, read between the lines, or interpret unless strongly assisted by Sam. Sometimes, though, Sam is surprised at finding students getting good credits for this paper when he was least expecting it. However, he is not as optimistic for his current group, many of whom have opted for this subject because they could not find another subject for their combination. Beyond the fact that some of them do not have a choice, there are some who also do not even have a credit in English and who yet have been able to select English as a Principal subject at Grade 12. When there are such loopholes in the system, Sam is quite despondent about the quality of students entering this subject, which makes him sometimes think of his efforts in the classroom to be mostly in vain.

Some of these students are worried, and rightly so, according to Sam. They keep asking him, "Monsieur, komie bizin ekrir?[139]" Sam responds that they can write as much as they want, provided they write something relevant. Most of their answers tend to be short and general, because they cannot bring forth relevant arguments supported by evidence from the text and cannot compare or interpret extensively. Despite his mostly fatalistic outlook, though, Sam

[138] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "knowing only the story, nothing more."
[139] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "Sir, how much do we need to write?"

does not give up that easily. He still thinks that motivation can be a strong influence in how students react to a particular subject. In his view, if a teacher comes to class with the notion that "sa, sa banla pe dormi[140]" about his students and not do much, then that person cannot blame the students for their poor results eventually. Once more, Sam believes that motivation cannot start just at upper secondary level but rather much earlier, as from Grade 7. According to him, means and ways should be devised to get students to be interested in literature so that they start reading and appreciating from an earlier stage. If the school administration, along with the teachers work on developing this reading culture, students will enhance their vocabulary and enjoy the English language more, which will influence the way they write. Sam believes that the teacher can then consolidate this interest in literacy and literature through the way that he or she carries out the class.

Sam recalls an incident where a student still had no text with her, three months after the start of the year. This meant that she had not read anything so far. Even then, Sam had made her follow from a friend's book in class but he soon realised that this would not be practical, especially since he often gets them to write notes in the margin and to underline or highlight key passages. He had managed to obtain a copy of the book from someone who had studied the text the previous year. She quietly took the book and a week after, came with a letter from her father, which stated that the subject was difficult and that his daughter could not understand the class. Sam wonders what students sometimes tell their parents; perhaps the girl had found a way not to follow the class. Who is to blame in such situations? Sam knows that there are students who have second thoughts when they start following the literature class, because clearly, it was not what they had anticipated. It is not the easy-going, scoring subject they had *thought* it would be, based on their past experiences of literature classes at lower secondary level. Some end up changing subjects soon enough but others find themselves bound with it because they have no choice. Sam envies those few colleges where he assumes students choose to do literature and they know why they have chosen it. It is always challenging to be discussing something serious when some students just sit at the back, talking and laughing, not bothering what the teacher thinks. This sometimes discourages Sam but as he often tells himself, as long as he does the work, and has a clear conscience, he will be happy with the efforts he is furnishing in class. He knows that some of his colleagues are equally as discouraged but he cannot impose upon them. What he does recommend, though, is that even if the majority of them are not interested, one should go and help the minority that are making an effort.

To choose to study literature at Grade 12 when one has not really studied literature at Grade 10, and in some cases, not at all, shows, as Sam usually thinks to himself, and shares with his colleagues, a considerable lack of common sense. He has, on many occasions, invited the rector to come and sit in class and observe the type of class he has in order to make it clear what a difficult position he finds himself in with students trying to cope with a subject they know they might not fare well in. For Sam, doing three subjects at principal level is a waste of time, especially for those who will not do so well in literature. Sam is intimately convinced that there will be casualties amongst the 20 students who will sit for examinations the following year.

[140] Translated from Kreol Morisien, "Those people? They just sleep [in class]."

Already, with his current 8 students who are going to sit for their HSC examinations this year, only two or three have been regular to classes and most did not turn up during the last term. With the couple of students who are very regular, Sam tries his best to support them and often advises them not to bother about their friends who have stopped coming to school. He helps them, knowing that some of them are also not so well-off and do need to think about their academic future. However, it is not a surprise that Sam has not completed his texts, with the absences and other interruptions that occur in the year. He then has to scramble to find time for revision and for examination question practice.

As Sam goes on with his explanation of the chapters, he highlights the fact that while the event being discussed is a festive one, there are subtle differences in terms of power and privilege that exist in even simple family events. For instance, it is the women in the household who have to do the domestic work related to the feast while the men are mostly shown to be enjoying the food and the company. Yet another incident in the chapter is when some of the meat starts getting spoilt and the women decide to keep the rotting meat for their own consumption while the men are given the good meat instead. Sam uses this episode to ask his students if they would have accepted such type of treatment for themselves, and whether they would have made similar choices as the women do in the chapter. He points out the fate of those women who have stayed in the village all their lives and who now are practically slaves for everybody. Sam also refers to the term "male superiority" while describing the attitudes of the men in this episode, with Tambu's own father Jeremiah's lazy and idle nature exemplifying the exploitation of women by the men in that society. Sam then uses that episode to bring it back to Tambu's uneasiness. ***Nervous Conditions***, he points out, is not only about the lives of people but also about those who want to radically change their lives, especially through education.

Sam looks up from his book and takes a moment to survey the class in front of him. "Do you see what Tambu has to go through?" he asks the girls. He then adds, "Do not just sit there and enjoy in class; try to understand how education makes a difference in the life of girls. Your friend might end up becoming a doctor, but if *you* don't do well, what will happen of you? Will you just be a housewife? It's so sad that many people still think that raising a girl is like watering your neighbour's garden. Look at a girl like Malala; see what difference she has made to the world, just by stepping up to fight for what she believes in: access to education."

Referring to the Mauritian context

Sam continues to discuss education by relating it to the Mauritian context. Education might now be accessible to everyone, but that was not the case, decades back. He invites the students to realise how education has helped people move upwards in society and better their living conditions in Mauritius. He then goes back to the text to point out how education has opened up Tambu's eyes to certain realities. She now can perceive the difference between life at the Mission and village life. At that point, Sam also makes a reference to the film, ***Slumdog Millionaire***, to describe how people live in wretched conditions. This leads him to refer to some of the Indian and Brazilian soap operas that are commonly broadcast on national television and which sometimes highlight the squalid conditions in which people live as well

as the complicated relationships between the characters. He uses this reference to highlight the improper relationship between Lucia and her own brother in law Jeremiah. Lucia is pregnant at this point in the novel, and Sam points out that if she had been educated, she and her husband would have known about the importance of contraception.

As he reads segments from the chapter, Sam keeps commenting and making references. From time to time, he asks questions to the class but there are not many answers. This does not bother Sam too much, since he has a lot to say. When mention is made of witchcraft in the novel, Sam alludes to local equivalents that exist in our Mauritian society, the so-called "longanistes" or witch doctors. He jokingly refers to them as "dokter san soulie[141]", a colloquial expression that makes the girls laugh. When Jeremiah suggests bringing in one of those witch doctors to remove the bad luck over his house, Babamukuru is incredulous. After asking the students why Babamukuru would react in that way, Sam adds that the main reason is because he is educated and simply cannot believe that a member of his own family would wish to have such a ceremony performed at home. He then asks the students if they are aware of such situations where people have had resort to those quacks, and asks them what that suggests about those people.

Before he wraps up the session, Sam gives his students a question to work on, based on the two chapters just covered. He briefly explains the question and directs them to use the notes that he has given them. The students start working on the question quietly. Although most of the class has not actively participated during the discussion time, this was something Sam had expected. Even then, Sam still feels satisfied with his own efforts and believes that they will be able to use his notes as well as his explanations to answer his set question. More importantly, he hopes that at least a few amongst the group have seen where he was talking them through his comments and references, so that they too can have their own independent thoughts on the text.

[141] Translated from Kreol Morisien, literally, "doctors without shoes", meaning "charlatan or quack doctors"

Appendix 21: Elaborating the thesis: initial models

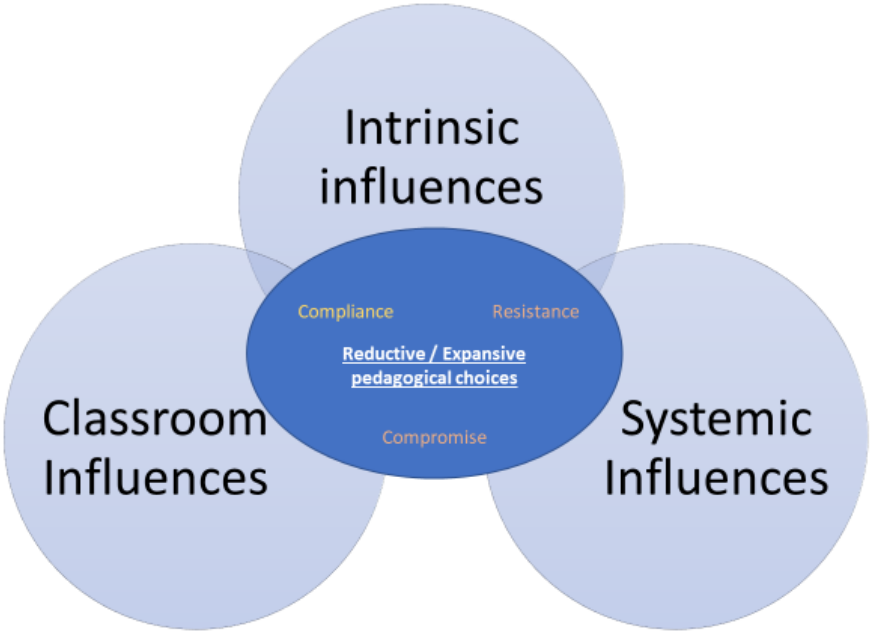


Figure 21.4: Mapping out the influences on pedagogical choice

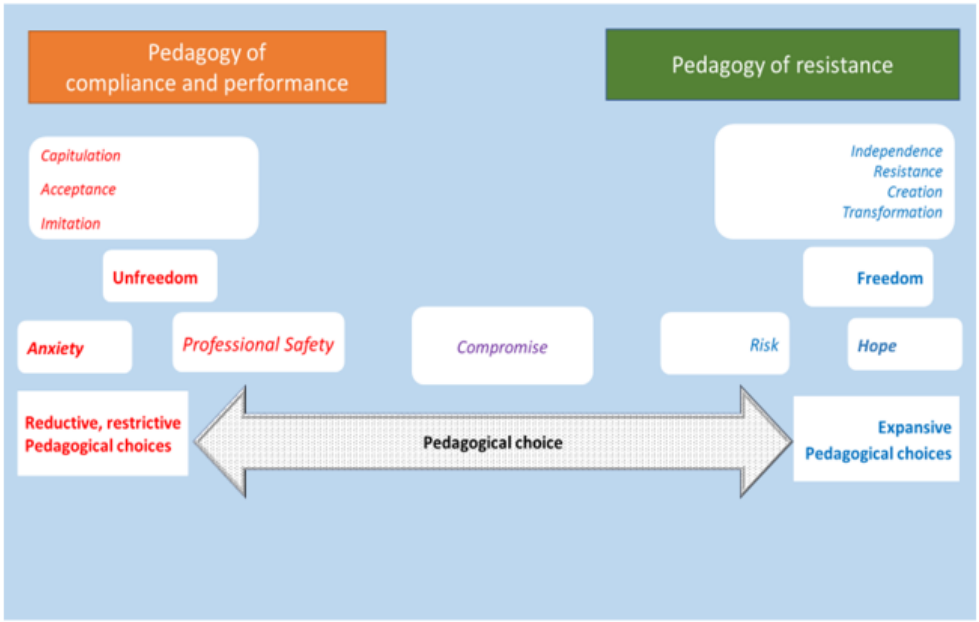


Figure 51.2: an initial version of the continuum of choices

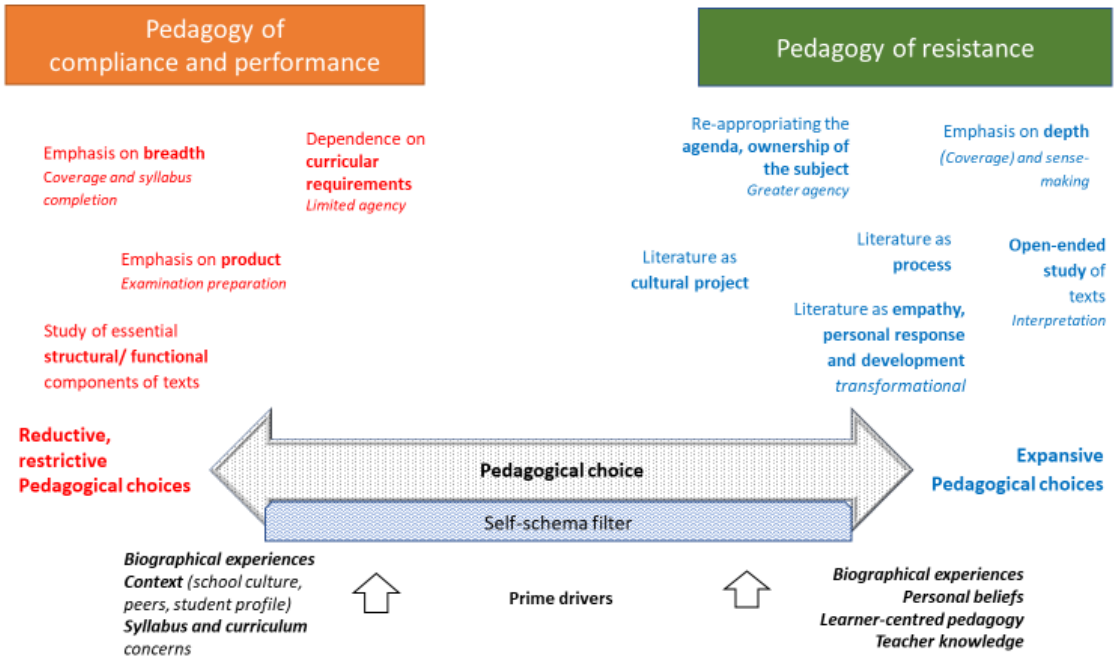


Figure 21.3: A second version of the continuum of pedagogical choices

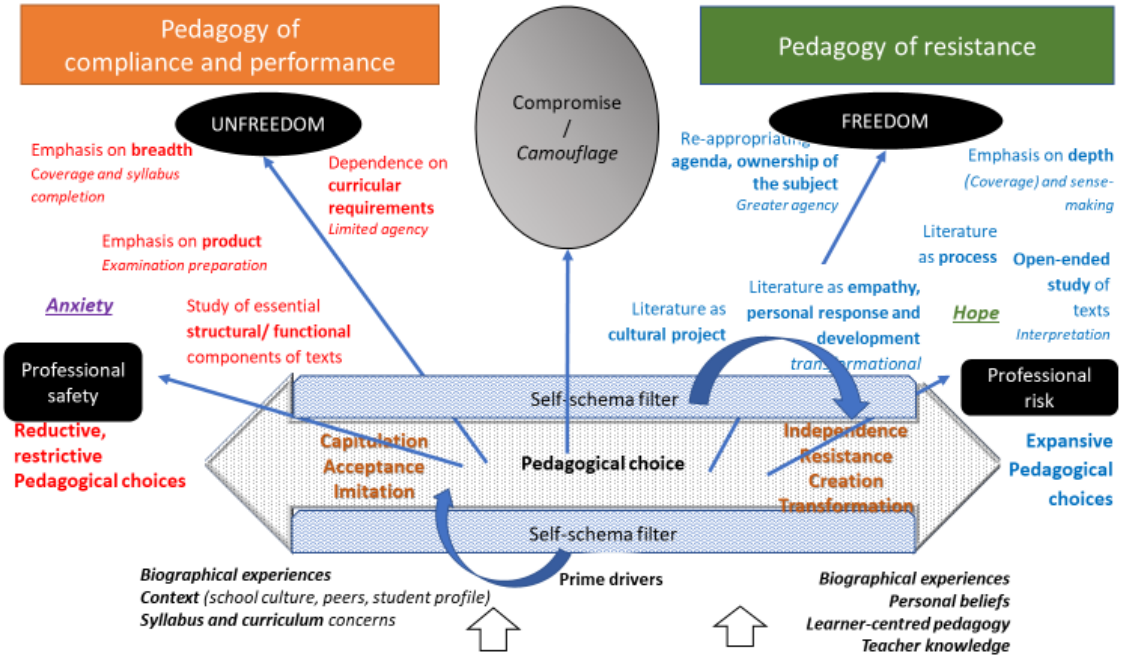


Figure 21.4: A third version of the continuum of pedagogical choices

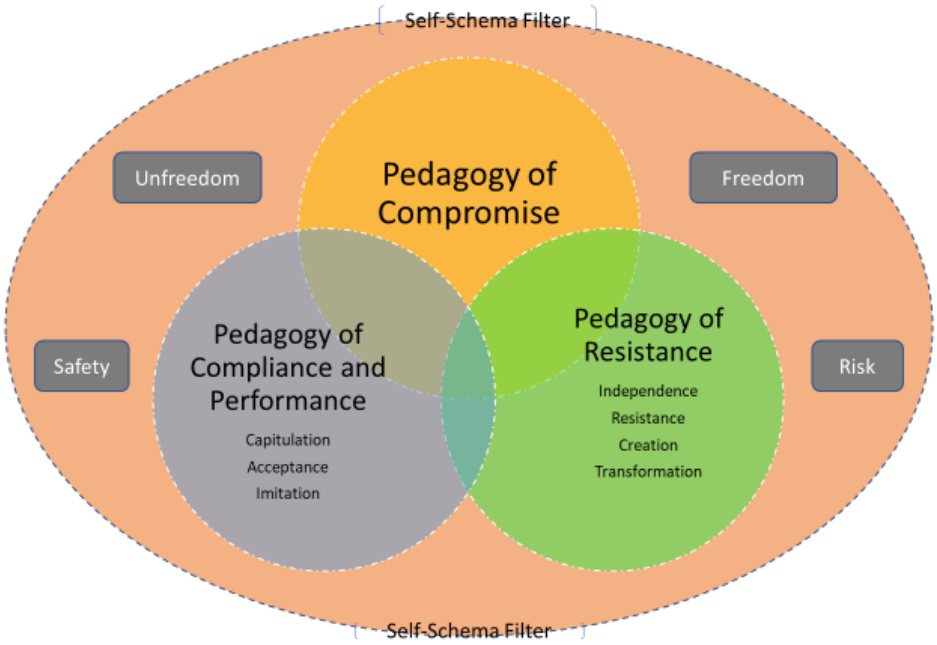


Figure 21.5: Simplifying the model of pedagogical choice

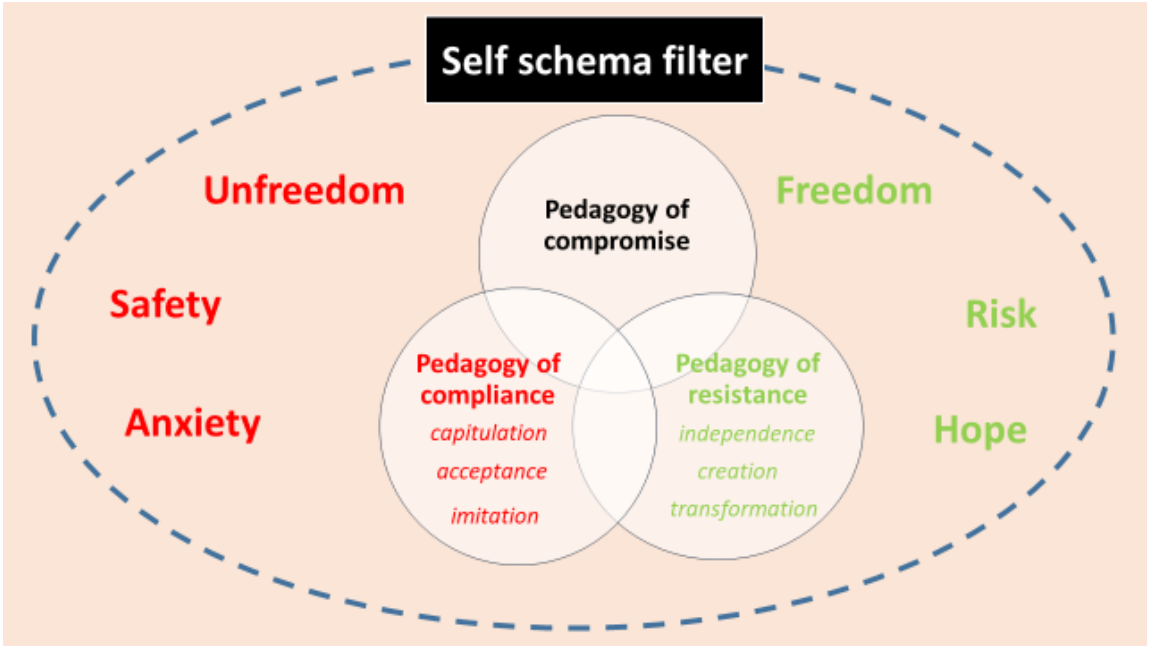


Figure 21.6: Finalising the model of pedagogical choice

Appendix 22: Corroboration of narratives by participants

Corroboration of Narratives by Participants

Dear Participant,

Thank you once again for having shared your experiences with me. Kindly find attached a *draft narrative* that has been inspired by the information gathered during our interviews and observations on your teaching of English literature at upper secondary level. Do note that your name as well as the name of your school have been modified to keep your personal information confidential. I would be grateful if you could read through the narrative and answer the following questions.

Thank you for your participation.

R.Korlapu-Bungaree

1. How accurate and comprehensive is the narrative in terms of (i) your depiction in the narrative and (ii) your experience of teaching English literature?

2. Is there anything you would like to **add**, **modify** or **delete** from the narrative? (Kindly indicate on the draft provided, or state the page number and section, if need be)

3. Are there any new insights or experiences that you would like to share since our last interview?

4. Has participating in this research brought about any change in the way you perceive yourself and your practice as English literature teacher? If **Yes**, please provide some details.

I, _____, **am/am not** satisfied that the information that I have provided to the researcher has been authentically synthesized and reproduced, without distortion on the part of the researcher in the narrative draft provided, and that the narrative is a reliable account of my experiences in the English literature classroom.

I **am/am no**t also satisfied that the narrative does not contain any element that could potentially reveal my identity as well as that of my school.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 23a: Letter from Language Editor (i)

MIE Tower

Mauritius Institute of Education

Reduit

Tel: 23059168063

Email: y.doorgakant@mieonline.org

18 November 2019

This serves to confirm that I have edited Chapters 1-6 of the PhD thesis, "English Literature teachers' pedagogical choices at upper secondary level: Narratives of Mauritian teachers", by Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree, student number: 212557528.

DISCLAIMER: The editor cannot be held responsible for any errors introduced due to changes being made to the document after the editing is complete.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Yesha Devi Mahadeo Doorgakant

English Department

Appendix 23b: Letter from Language Editor (ii)

62 Ferguson Road
Glenwood
DURBAN 4001
Tel: 072 442 7896
Email: deanne.collins30@gmail.com
Income tax number: 0526066204

5 November 2019

This serves to confirm that I have edited Chapters 6, 7 (in part), 8 and 9 of the PhD thesis, "English literature teachers' pedagogical choices at upper secondary level: Narratives of Mauritian teachers", by Rajendra Korlapu-Bungaree, student number: 212557528.

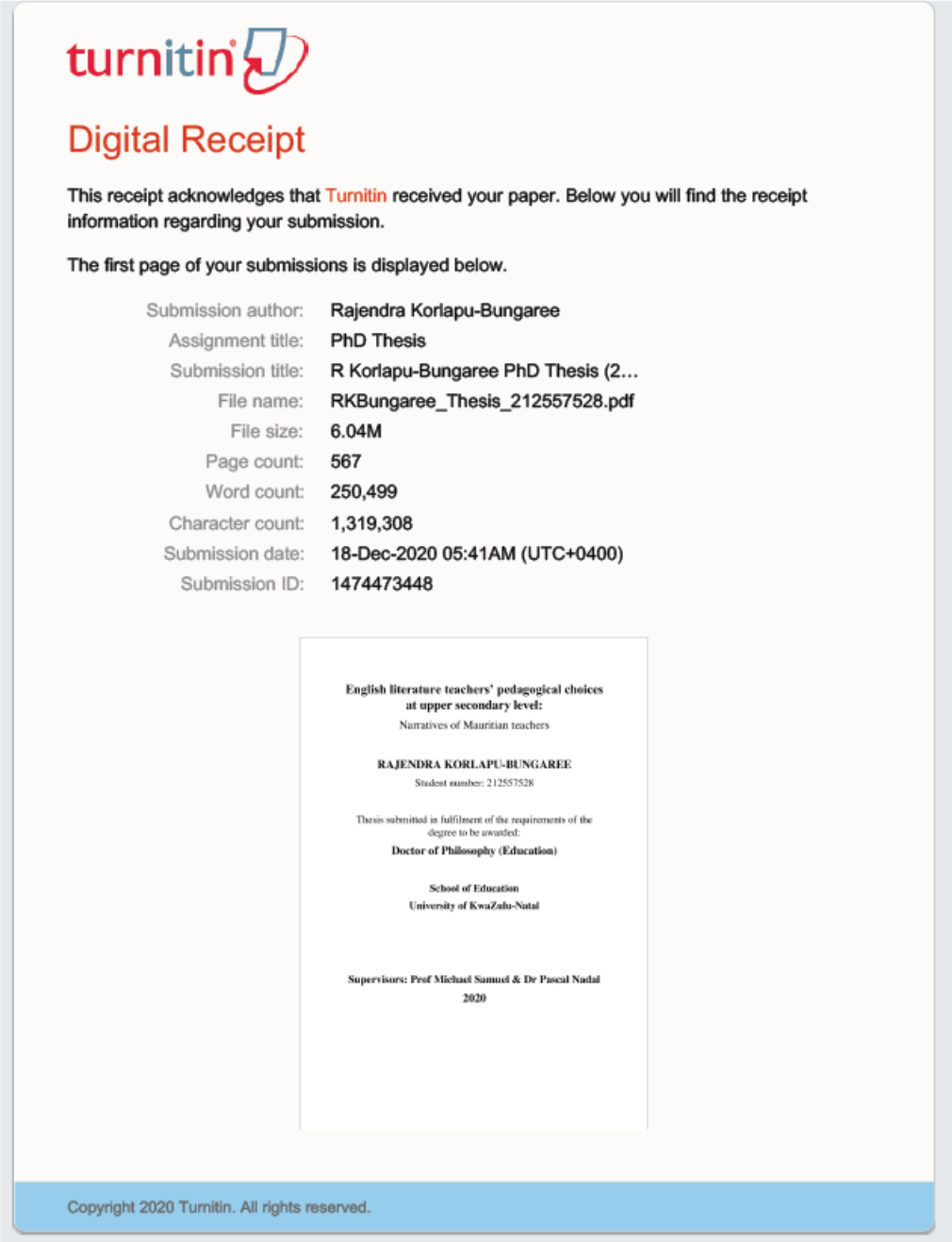
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Yours sincerely,

(Ms) Deanne Collins (MA)

Appendix 24: Turnitin Receipt and Report

(1) Receipt



turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

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File size:	6.04M
Page count:	567
Word count:	250,499
Character count:	1,319,308
Submission date:	18-Dec-2020 05:41AM (UTC+0400)
Submission ID:	1474473448

English literature teachers' pedagogical choices at upper secondary level:
Narratives of Mauritian teachers

RAJENDRA KORLAPU-BUNGAREE
Student number: 212557528

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree to be awarded:
Doctor of Philosophy (Education)

School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Supervisors: Prof Michael Samuel & Dr Pascal Nadal
2020

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(2) Turnitin Report/Similarity Index

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