

**INFLUENCES ON,
AND POSSIBILITIES FOR,
MY ENGLISH PEDAGOGY:
A NARRATIVE
SELF-STUDY**

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Specialisation: Teacher Development Studies

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Date: January 2017

DECLARATION

I, Bridget Campbell declare that

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a narrative self-study through which I explore the influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy. Throughout the 32 years of my working life, I have been in the field of English education and have always felt that the pedagogy which I enact is quite ordinary. Over the years, I have taught English as a first language and as a second language in secondary schools in South Africa. I have also been actively involved in other phases of education and have taught in the field of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). I lectured Communication at a University of Technology and am currently employed on a permanent basis as an English teacher educator at a university in Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa. I aspire to model purposeful pedagogy that will inspire my students. In an attempt to make my enacted pedagogy congruent with that to which I aspire, my starting point was to write my personal history narrative in an attempt to understand my current practice and to identify possibilities for future practice. I was the main participant in the study and the other participants were my sister, my critical friends, my pre-service undergraduate students who volunteered, and my 2015 and 2016 honors students. My research text was my personal narrative and my reflective diary, conversations with my sister, peers and students as well as critical friend feedback served as my field texts. Additional field texts were student emails, assignments and lecture reflections. In the analysis of my personal history narrative, I used my disciplinary knowledge as I juxtaposed my personal narrative with literature and film. In the first layer of the analysis, my personal history narrative was analysed in the same way as I would analyse any other literary text and what was revealed was that more depth was required. This led to a second layer of analysis wherein I juxtaposed my personal history narrative with literature. The second layer of analysis revealed twenty-eight themes which I collapsed into three major dimensions of my pedagogy. A third layer of analysis followed and in this, there was juxtaposition of my personal narrative and film. My original methodological contribution is that of two creative analytic practices. The first being my layered literary analysis. After the layered analysis, I examined my undergraduate and post graduate pedagogy in an attempt to use the influences that had been expose to identify possibilities for current and future pedagogy. In doing so, I used a method of multi-layered pedagogic reflection which is my second creative analytic contribution.

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CHAPTER ONE: OPENING: HOW WILL I KNOW?

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I explore influences on my pedagogy and out of these influences, I identify possibilities for my current and future pedagogic practices as an English teacher educator. This chapter serves as an opening to my thesis. I begin by introducing myself and explaining the development of my research topic and the related questions. I go on to explain the historical backdrop of the study before locating it within the Bachelor of Education and Honours programmes in a School of Education at a South African university. This is followed by a brief introduction to my narrative self-study methodological approach. From there I examine the concepts of *Pedagogy*, *Critical Pedagogy*, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and *Constructivism*, *Purposeful Pedagogies* and *Reflection and Reflexivity*, which form a “theoretical bricolage.... to situate and determine the purposes, meanings, and uses of the research act” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 335). Theoretical bricolage (Kincheloe, 2005) is an apt description of my choice to draw from a range of complementary concepts to inform my study.. Finally, an outline of the structure of the thesis is presented.

The opening chapter has been titled “How will I know?” because at my doctoral research proposal defence, a panel member asked the following question: “How will you know when you know?” This perplexed me at the time. As I bumbled along trying to respond, she interrupted me, stating that she did not want a response from me, but rather she wanted me to think about the question. I have continued to think about her question throughout my research process, asking myself, “*How will I know?*” This question therefore prompted a self-questioning that has persisted from the beginning of my research process.

1.2 What Did I Want To Know?

Throughout the 32 years of my working life, I have been in the field of English education. Over the years, I have taught English as a first language and as a second language in secondary schools in South Africa. I have also been actively involved in the field of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), both as a facilitator and as a facilitator trainer. In addition, I have owned a literacy company, managed a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) teaching people with disabilities, and have lectured Communication at a University of Technology. I am currently employed on a permanent basis as an English teacher educator at a university in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa.

As much as I love teaching and being in the classroom interacting with students,¹ I have always felt inadequate and unsure of myself in spite of favourable reviews from peers, students and management over the years. According to Beijaard, Verloop and Vermund (2000) many teachers have a tendency to be less motivated and committed as they grow older; but this is certainly not true in my case. In my role as a teacher educator, I wanted to prepare competent teachers who would practice pedagogy that is relevant to the South African context, as I wanted to be responsive to the needs of my students and their learners. I did not think that it would be easy to do this. As Ball (2016) stated, to prepare teachers to teach in schools that are linguistically and culturally complex is a global challenge.

I have never felt entirely confident that the pedagogy which I enact is anything but ordinary and have often felt that there is tension between my vision of what I am striving for, which is to adequately prepare teachers for the complexities of their chosen profession, and my current reality. When I looked at my current role as an English teacher educator, I was aware of the added challenge of knowing that the outcome of every lecture should be two-fold, because the students should leave the lecture with content knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge. This awareness increased the tension between my enacted pedagogy and that to which I aspired.

At the end of 2012, which was ten years after obtaining my Master of Education (MEd) degree, I registered for a PhD and spent a year going backwards and forwards as I grappled with the focus and purpose of my research. In choosing a topic, I was sure of two things: I wanted to conduct a study that would enhance my pedagogy as a teacher educator and I wanted my students to benefit in some way. With this in mind, it followed that I should study my pedagogy. I was aware that I was influenced by my past experiences and I thus decided that I would need to reflect on past pedagogic experiences in an attempt to understand significant influences on my pedagogy.

However, I felt that to identify such influences was not enough, and that I would need to use my awareness of them as a springboard to recognise possibilities for my pedagogy that would be relevant to what I teach and to my students' contexts. I understood that this would require me to work closely with my students. All of this musing led me to my research topic: *Influences on, and possibilities for, my pedagogy: A narrative self-study*.

¹ Students: refers to those studying in Higher Education Institutions in South Africa.

Learners: refers to those who are still at school. Learners also makes reference to adults who attend adult basic education classes.

In order to address my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* the starting point was to reconstruct and re-examine my pedagogic experiences through the writing and analysis of a personal history narrative (Nash, 2004; Samaras, Hicks & Berger, 2004). In writing my personal history narrative, I was using writing as a tool to facilitate awareness of influences on my pedagogy (Ball, 2016). As my writing unfolded and I recalled on the influences on my pedagogy I was constantly reflecting not only on my past pedagogic experiences but also on my current practice and I was working in the space between the past and the present in an attempt to bridge the two. In working within this space, I was responding to my second research question: *How can awareness of these influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?*

1.2.1 Historical Backdrop of the Study

Twenty-one years after the dawn of a democratic South Africa, the legacy of apartheid (1948-1994) continues to have an impact within the educational arena. South African apartheid laws and governance systematically discriminated against all who were not white, and particularly against those who were African² (Harley, Aichison, Lyster, & Land, 1996). This study is rooted within the context of education in South Africa that still bears the mark of the apartheid regime under which:

Education was now meant to assert ideological control over an increasingly, unruly black³ population while at the same time spilling out the necessary skills for a changing economy. Education was to be part of the array of apartheid laws. (Bloch, 2009, p. 44)

The past cannot be eradicated and, with the dawn of a democratic South Africa, the legacy of apartheid laws are still evident in post-apartheid South Africa. The effects of the past persist (Bloch, 2009) and to understand the complexities within the education arena needs historical background.

What follows is a brief history of South African education from 1948, which is when the Nationalist Party came into power. In 1953, the Bantu Education Act was passed and by 1959 almost all of the South African black schools, many of which had previously been run by churches, were under the authority of the government in an effort to control them. One way of

² During the apartheid era in South Africa (1948-1994), African referred to those people who were believed to be indigenous to Africa.

³ Black was another term for those who were not white and refers to Africans, Indians and Coloureds. Indians referred to people whose ancestral heritage was from India. Coloured refers to people who were of "mixed race." White referred to those whose ancestral heritage was believed to be from Europe.

exerting apartheid domination within South Africa was to tribalise secondary education and to have schools in the homelands⁴ where possible. By 1964, coloured⁵ and Indian Education were also separate and in 1967 the white education act was passed (Bloch, 2009). In 1976, the Soweto uprising⁶ “signified and symbolised the school as a major site of struggle against apartheid” (Suransky-Dekker, 1998, p. 291). However, as Suransky-Dekker (1998) explained, in spite of slogans such as “Education for liberation”, alternative education projects “failed to permeate the solid walls of official curriculum in apartheid schools” (p. 292).

The discriminatory education laws that governed schooling also extended to the universities and in 1959, the University Education Act barred Africans from attending Cape Town University, the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS) and Natal University, which were reserved mainly for white students. By the early 1970s, teacher training institutions were racially and ethnically separated, with each of the institutions training teachers for particular schools. In addition to separate education and educational opportunities for blacks being limited, the curriculum for blacks in the teacher training institutions was mainly restricted to humanities subjects (Sayed, 2002). This curriculum restriction, in turn, affected the competence with which the teachers taught maths and science in the schools. There was no standardisation across teacher training institutions and this influenced the quality of education within the schools.

The correlation between education, wealth and social class means that, although South Africa has been a democracy for 21 years, the schools that were attended by whites during apartheid are today usually better equipped, have more effective teachers, have greater opportunities and are still more functional than those that served – and continue to serve – blacks (Spaull, 2013; van Der Berg, 2008). South African democracy did not eradicate the atrocities of apartheid laws and:

While we are never victims of the past, we cannot simply shrug off the way the society we have inherited has influenced the institutions and culture of the present. Institutions

⁴ Under apartheid rule in South Africa the majority of blacks were moved to what were referred to as homelands in order to prevent them from living in urban areas.
(<http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands>)

⁵ The 1950 Population Registration Act defined a coloured person as a person who is not a white person or a native.

⁶ A series of protests that started in Soweto against the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in many schools became known as the Soweto uprising.

and attitudes from the past channel the perceptions and shape the possibilities of today.
(Bloch, 2009, p. 30)

The black people who have the means to attend the schools that were historically white fall into the group who, as explained by Soudien (2006) can be seen to have taken on the persona of the dominant group at the expense of their own social and cultural heritage. Before embarking on my doctoral study I had never given much thought to the circumstances that had shaped my students, and therefore had not made an effort to get to know anything about their prior knowledge or socio-cultural contexts. In developing my study, I realised that an understanding of this should be beneficial to me as I considered possibilities for my pedagogy.

1.2.2 Locating the Study within the University Setting

At the university where I am employed, the statistics on the university school management system indicate that the demographic breakdown of students is as follows (Figure 1.1), with the School of Education where this study is situated making up 12.82% of the total university student population.

African	33137	71.57%
Indian	10155	21.93%
White	1857	4.01%
Coloured	961	2.08%
Other	190	0.41%
Total	46300	100.00%

Figure 1.1: University Demographic Statistics

Many of the Bachelor of Education students are from outlying areas and did not attend previously white schools in urban areas. It thus follows that a large percentage of these students experienced schooling that continues to be influenced by the policies and practices of the apartheid government. In addition to this, many students come from disadvantaged communities wherein stressors such as poverty, crime, violence and HIV and AIDS are prevalent (Mckenna, 2004).

1.2.3 Locating the Study in the Bachelor of Education Degree and Honours Degree

The undergraduate students who participated in the study are the 2014, 2015 and 2016 pre-service teachers of English in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degrees. English education starts during the second year of the degree and all of the students pass through the cluster⁷ in which I work which is the Cluster of Languages, Arts and Media. Students who will be teaching in the senior phase (grades 7-9) and Further Education and Training phase (FET: grades 10-12) take English for three years if they have selected English as one of their teaching specialisations.⁸ My participants selected English as one of their teaching specialisations. These English specialisation students are initially exposed to applied linguistics, narrative studies and various literary texts. They are then prepared for what will be encountered in the classroom and their critical thinking skills and appreciation and insight into English literature is developed as is the teaching of literary texts. Critical approaches to reading and research skills, as well as film study and sociolinguistic understanding are also part of the curriculum.

The method modules run concurrently with the English major modules and Method 1 deals with the principles of the school English curriculum and how to teach using the four modes of communication – reading, writing, listening and speaking – effectively in the classroom. Method 2 deals with all aspects of the teaching of reading as well as comprehension skills and assessment. By the final year, when Method 3 is studied, students are engaging with how to teach and assess writing and language. Each year spans two semesters, which includes a practice block of teaching when the students enter the schools for practical experience.

The 2015 and 2016 Language in Education Honours students were the participant post-graduate students in the study. For students registered for an honours degree in Language and Media studies, there are compulsory and elective modules. I lecture and coordinate the Language in Education module, which is a compulsory module for students who have registered in the Language and Arts Education. There are students who have registered for honours degrees in other clusters who choose Language in Education as one of their elective⁹ modules.

⁷ Previously known as Departments.

⁸ English is selected as a major for students wanting to become teachers of English

⁹ Honours students have the option of choosing two out of three modules which are referred to as electives

1.3 Methodological Approach

The methodological approach that I adopted was narrative self-study. I wanted to improve my pedagogy and I anticipated that a narrative inquiry self-study could enable me to do this as: “work that uses autobiography, restructured field experiences, situated pedagogies and returning to the classrooms of experts can provide new opportunities for improving teaching” (Ladson-Billings, as cited in Darder et al., 2009, p. 463). The term self-study indicates to me that one is drawing directly from personal experience and it must therefore be applicable to what one does and can inform and transform practice, as noted by Samaras (2011) who argued that teacher educators’ self-study research is primarily conducted for reasons of personal professional accountability. Samaras (2011) stressed the importance of a self-study inquiry being manageable, purposeful and mattering to the students and the self. She advised that in doing so, it is important to draw on data that is readily available to you as a teacher or teacher educator and to realise that at the end of one’s inquiry there will not necessarily be a definitive answer.

The point of departure for me in becoming accountable was to investigate my personal and professional history and to this end, I wrote my personal history narrative because “to know the past is to know oneself as an individual” (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger 2007). The writing of my personal history narrative was a step toward recognising significant influences on my pedagogy, as I looked backwards, forwards, inwards and outwards in what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described as a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of temporality, sociality and space. Uncovering the influences on my pedagogy involved others and enabled me to identify possibilities for my pedagogy. When these possibilities were enacted in practice, I relied on conversations with critical friends and students to study my pedagogy.

As the study progressed, I was aiming to improve my learning as well as that of the students. I employed a combination of field and research text generation strategies (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in what Kincheloe (2005) referred to as a methodological bricolage. I kept a reflective journal throughout the study and this, along with my record keeping, was aimed at making the process transparent and systematic as I generated knowledge and the study was made public (Samaras, 2011). I give a detailed account of my narrative self-study research process in Chapter Two of this thesis.

1.4 How do I Know? Concepts that Informed the Study

1.4.1 Pedagogy

The key concept at the centre of this study was pedagogy as I wanted to understand the concept as well as to create self-awareness as to the influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy. Murphy (2009) observed that the term pedagogy is used widely and often loosely and that its meaning is often assumed to be self-evident. Van Manen (1990) maintained that the meaning of the notion of pedagogy is elusive and that pedagogy is not something that can be possessed – rather it is an embodied practice for which it is not possible to find an unambiguous definition. Loughran (2007) argued that pedagogy is not merely the action of teaching but is the association between teaching and learning.

In searching for a definition of pedagogy, what became clear to me is that pedagogy and teaching are often used synonymously. Van Manen (1990) stated that the term pedagogy has “roughly equated with the act of teaching, instructional methodology, curriculum approach or education in general” (p. 142). It is his view that the notion of pedagogy is “elusive and ineffable” (p. 143) as it is not possible to find the space in which it resides. He argued that pedagogy is neither the theory of teaching nor the application thereof and explained that it is the questioning and doubting that we have and that we need to “listen to pedagogy so as to be able to act in a better way pedagogically tomorrow” (p.149). Van Manen maintained that pedagogy is not really any “thing” and it cannot be the intentions or the actions of teaching because it is a view that takes investigating experience as it is and then views behaviour as driven by the phenomena of experience. Alexander (2009) noted that whilst the terms teaching and pedagogy are often used interchangeably, the fundamental difference is that teaching is what is done in the classroom whilst pedagogy is discourse in addition to the act. This suggests that the term pedagogy is inclusive of the act of teaching as well as incorporating theories, opinions, policies and contentious issues.

As described in Chapter Three, in my teacher education diploma, the focus was on teaching rather than pedagogy as I recall practical, administrative tasks of teaching being part of the curriculum. Lesson planning and the execution thereof in the stipulated period, filling in of a daily forecast and keeping a class register were emphasised. An afternoon a week was set aside in order to practice how to write on a chalkboard and this continued until a tutor deemed us competent. The focus was on the act of teaching which is much narrower than pedagogy and

we did not concern ourselves with what was happening outside of the classroom, which would have brought us into the realm of pedagogy. The problems with an approach such as this were noted by Dewey who stated that teacher training institutions that emphasise only technical competence do a disservice to the nature of teaching and to the students. Education students who are taught in this manner are not encouraged to think critically (Giroux, 1988). Beijaard et al. (2000) are in agreement with the claim that:

Teaching cannot be reduced to a technical or instrumental action that results in learning gains with students. This didactical side of the teaching profession must be related to a pedagogical side with ethical and moral features. One such feature, for example, concerns a teacher's involvement in or engagement with students. This encompasses, among other things, what is going on in students' minds, ways of communicating with and speaking about other people, and personal or private problems students have. (p. 751)

The above reminds me that teaching is about interacting with human beings who are negotiating their way through life every day in particular contexts. As Tochoon and Murphy (1993) emphasised, whilst pedagogy is about teaching and about the learner/teacher/subject relationship, an important dimension of the discourse surrounding pedagogy is the environment and the wider educational context. Thus in developing an understanding of pedagogy in teacher education, there is a need to look beyond the ability to perform a skill and to recognise and analyse the pedagogy of both teacher educators and student teachers. If teacher educators do not see pedagogy as a complex and contested concept, if there is not commitment to confront assumptions to align actions and beliefs, and if possibilities for understanding derived from experience are not sought and grasped, then teacher education can be no more than transmission about practice and the pursuit of technical competency (Loughran, 2007).

Sternberg and Lee (2002) noted that the term “pedagogy” is becoming increasingly important in English studies and “scholars in English studies have begun to draw on this notion of pedagogy, addressing questions of how our engagement of the field might change if we take seriously the social nature and political potential of pedagogy” (p. 328). They argued that teachers of English should critically read our pedagogy and develop methods of reading our pedagogical interaction and pedagogical development in the same way that we study literary

texts, which is what I aimed to achieve in my doctoral study. Significantly, these scholars observed that there are not many teachers of English conducting this type of research.

1.4.2 Critical Pedagogy

Freire (1970), who likened teaching in a traditional manner to depositing knowledge in students which he referred to as the banking model of education, is regarded by many as the most significant educational theorist in the development of critical pedagogical philosophy, theory and praxis (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres 2009). As early as the 1970s, Freire moved beyond discussions about methodology into the domain of emancipatory education and critical pedagogy wherein the relationships between education, society and the world are explored. Critical pedagogy, which is an approach to language teaching, concerns itself with reconstructing oppressive relations of power which lead to the oppression of power (Kincheloe, 2005).

From a critical pedagogy perspective, what often happens in a classroom is that the cultural wherewithal of the teacher is emphasised and those learners whose cultural backgrounds do not coincide with that of the teacher are at a disadvantage because their views and lived experiences are negated (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), children start school believing that the classroom is a democratic space but they soon learn that this is not the case as teachers model and use values, performance expectations, actions and manners to preserve the interests of those in power and learners must conform in order to succeed. hooks (as cited in Darder et al., 2009) made the point that in confronting class issues in the classroom, critical teachers must reject the notion that learners must deny their own experiences. Similarly, Giroux (1988) argued for critical teachers to embrace “the notion that students come from different histories and embody different experiences, linguistic practices, cultures and talents” (p. 125). In my understanding, this means that in my classroom everybody should be heard and their presence recognised and valued.

In reading about critical pedagogy, I came to see that education should be understood in its socio-historical and political context, and that I should pledge to making pedagogic changes that could lead towards justice, equality, democracy and freedom (Giroux 1983; Giroux, as cited in Darder et al., 2009). Critical pedagogy espouses this and is a set of diverse principles with the possibility of transformation. The premise behind critical pedagogy is that of a critical

nature and it has a liberating function. Thus, teachers should work toward empowering their students by posing problems for learners to solve and through generating knowledge shifts from the teacher to the learners who are encouraged to think critically so as to take their place in the conduct of democratic life (Giroux, 1988).

According to critical pedagogy, the cultural differences that are often ignored in a traditional classroom should be viewed as strengths rather than deficiencies. Giroux (1988) argued that in the classroom the relationship between culture and power should be acknowledged. The histories, experiences and knowledge that all of the students bring to the class should be acknowledged rather than treated as if they do not exist. Learners should be empowered within and outside of the schools and a way of doing this is to understand how what is taught at school is intertwined with home life and street culture.

Giroux (1988) went on to argue that teachers should undertake to work as professionals and intellectuals and that teacher education should be linked to the transformation of the school system which could lead to transforming the wider social setting in which schools are situated. Thus, any attempts at reforming education in schools should also address teacher education (Giroux 1988).

To subscribe to critical pedagogy is not to be given guidelines for the implementation thereof and all assumptions and claims of truth associated with the concept are open to review (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres 2009). In my view, what I as an English teacher educator should be doing is working toward understanding the relationship between power and knowledge and between language and power. It is also important that I understand history and how it connects to language and reading, as well as understanding the links between culture and power. I should aim to validate the experiences of all students, not to please them but to empower them (Giroux 1988). In reading about critical pedagogy, I became aware that in order to validate the experiences of my students I needed to firstly find out more about these experiences from the students themselves. This I attempted to do through our conversations about my students' pedagogic experiences and their personal histories (as described in Chapters Five and Six).

1.4.3 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Constructivism

Gay and Kirkland (2003) noted that teachers who are culturally responsive monitor their own beliefs pertaining to the cultural differences in their classrooms. Gay and Kirkland (2003) advised that to do this would require deep introspection. In addition, they emphasised that

teachers need to educate themselves about the cultural contexts of those who are in their classrooms and to then adapt their pedagogy accordingly.

In thinking about my practice, I struggled to realise that in order to engage in pedagogy that was responsive to the students, I needed self-awareness as well as awareness of my students' life experiences, which is a cornerstone of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is not about lowering high expectations, but rather about providing strong support by approaching effective instruction through a cultural lens. This was part of what I wanted to achieve in this study and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy was thus a key concept that I identified to underpin the study.

Soudien (2008) argued that a major challenge in South African higher education is that of epistemological change and that the focus of transforming higher education should not be on skills and competencies, but rather on developing students' understanding of the South African socio-political context. In my view, this is especially important within teacher education as teacher educators need to understand the socio-economic contexts of their students as well as to impress upon them the need to understand the contexts in which they will be working so as to respond to the needs of their learners. Classrooms in South Africa are very diverse and thus, as Gaye and Kirkland (2003) suggested, an important component of South African teacher education should be to develop within students awareness as to the racial, cultural and ethnic differences that they will encounter in their classrooms. Gay and Kirkland (2003) proposed that one way that teacher educators could create such awareness amongst student teachers is through modelling what it is to be conscious of classroom diversity. In addition, constant reference should be made to the environments in which the students will one day be teaching.

From my reading on culturally responsive teaching, I became conscious that it should be stressed in teacher education programmes and that the cultures, experiences and views of the students should be used as a lens through which I taught. I wanted the students to become responsible for their own learning and for every individual to construct knowledge differently and actively as they negotiated ways of choosing, gathering, understanding and ordering the knowledge in ways that fitted their socio-cultural settings (Adams, 2006). I realised that I needed to take care to state explicitly why I was doing what I did in lectures if I wanted the students to become culturally responsive in their pedagogy. In doing so, I would be teaching in a constructivist manner and ensuring that I was building on the known (Vygotsky, 1978).

According to Woolfolk (1993), “As the creation of knowledge cannot be separated from the social environment in which it is formed, learning is viewed as a process of active knowledge construction” (p. 246). In my understanding, social constructivists are of the belief that learner construction of knowledge is the product of social interaction, interpretation and understanding. Vygotsky (1962) defined constructivism according to four principles. The first of these is that learning is dependent on what is already known, with the second being that new learning occurs as existing ideas are adapted. Vygotsky (1978) advocated that teaching should be pitched a little beyond what is known and understood. He referred to this as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and it is within this space that existing ideas would be adapted. Vygotsky’s (1978) third and fourth principles are that ideas are invented and not simply a case of accumulating facts and that learning happens when old ideas are reconsidered and new conclusions reached.

The variable nature of constructivism means that learners will construct knowledge differently as they acquire and organise information in making sense of it (Adams, 2006). What became clear to me in my reading about constructivism is that learning is a process wherein sense is made of the world as knowledge is constructed (Adams, 2003; 2006) and that there is not one way of knowledge construction. As learning is happening in the classroom it is not done in isolation and there are both personal and interpersonal components in constructing knowledge. Whilst individuals construct knowledge using their own learning styles and what is already known, they should engage in discussion as interaction is important in the development of understanding (von Glasersfeld, 1995).

In my view, this does not mean that the learners are left to their own devices but rather that the teacher must guide them by providing opportunities to construct knowledge and that during this process the learners must be encouraged to explain what they think and why. The teacher is mediating knowledge into existing socio-cultural frameworks (Adams 2006). In doing so, a constructivist does not simply follow a simple, uncontested set of rules for pedagogical practice. General agreement is that students need interaction with the physical world and with their peers to stimulate meaning making and thus as every learner constructs knowledge using their own learning styles it is with peers and the teacher and not in isolation (von Glasersfeld, 1995).

Adams (2006) noted that in a constructivist classroom, the focus is on learning rather than performance; the learners actively construct knowledge as the teacher guides the learners and the tasks given to learners are ends in themselves. During the knowledge construction process, the students need support from the teacher as well as from peers. This is referred to as scaffolding, which is a term coined by Bruner (1966). I view scaffolding and constructivism as working in tandem because as learning is happening with others, new knowledge is being scaffolded onto what is already known.

1.4.4 Purposeful Pedagogies

According to Samaras (2011) “pedagogical strategies generated from your noticing” in a self-study project can be understood as “purposeful pedagogies” (p. 137). She advised that when practicing purposeful pedagogies, a clear rationale should be evident but what one must realise is that this is not binding and may change as learning progresses. This is because pedagogy is not linear process but is fluid and constantly changing and teachers need to reflect and be open to effecting changes in order to be responsive to what is happening inside and outside the classroom. This concept of purposeful pedagogies guided my thinking about enacting possibilities in response to my second research question (as illustrated in Chapters Five and Six).

1.4.5 Reflection and Reflexivity

Samaras (2011) emphasised that reflection is an important aspect in planning and enacting purposeful pedagogies. As Loughran (2002) noted:

For some, [reflection] simply means thinking about something, whereas for others, it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action one element of reflection that is common to many is the notion of a *problem* (a puzzling, curious, or perplexing situation). What that problem is, the way it is framed and (hopefully) reframed, is an important aspect of understanding the nature of reflection and the value of reflective practice. It is also a crucial (but sometimes too easily overlooked) aspect of learning about teaching. (p. 33)

From this, I understand that to engage in reflection is much more than writing down thoughts about how successful or unsuccessful a lecture was. Loughran’s thoughts on reflection make it clear to me that in reflective practice one is constantly going back and forth and making changes to pedagogy that is fluid and wherein there is not a rigid structure. To reflect on the purposeful

pedagogies is “to consider the implications of your pedagogies on an interpretive level and a critical level” (Samaras, 2011, p. 128). In reflecting, it is important to consider questions such as how your pedagogy is contributing to a social justice agenda as well as how it is improving student learning (Samaras, 2011).

Reflective practice has roots in Dewey’s (1933) work and he stated that to think reflectively is an active attempt to resolve the doubt and settle the hesitation and mental difficulty that occurs when we think. In writing about reflective practice, Schon (1987) made the distinction between “knowing-in-action”, “reflection-on-action” and “reflection-in-action” with reflection-on-action being what happens when one thinks about action, talks about it and then makes changes. This, together with reflection-in-action, which involves awareness of, and changes to, one’s actions during teaching, must benefit the learners as the motivation behind reflection is to improve practice. Reflection has been acknowledged as a tool for learning that can result in changes in teaching (Brookfield, 1995; Van Manen, 1990). Reflection is, however, not limited to individual internal exploration but includes the social aspect of interaction, which is referred to as collaborative reflection (Mede, 2010; Farrell, 1999).

In this study, I chose to collaborate with colleagues and students, because I was aware that to collaborate with others allows for the opportunity to critically examine one’s own practice and provides opportunities for professional and personal growth (as shown in Chapters Five and Six). For example, in Mede’s (2010) study that examined whether collaborative reflection aids one’s practice, it was concluded that collaborative reflection encouraged participants to look for ways of improving practice and that in the sharing of knowledge and experience, solutions were found to problems.

I realised that in critically reading my teaching, I would need to be reflective and I was inspired by Dinkelman’s (2003, p. 57) argument that “self-study is not the whole of teaching but that it mirrors and systemizes that part of pedagogy that is reflection”. Reflection was key to this study as I was aiming to reflect on my past in order to uncover influences on my pedagogy, as well as to contemplate my current pedagogy and make changes based on the possibilities that were envisaged. My personal history narrative (presented in Chapter Three) was self-reflective as I was recalling past pedagogic experiences and reflecting on people and events that influenced my pedagogy. The reflections proved beneficial early on in my study as I started to interrogate my current pedagogy and to link what I was doing in my classes with the influences that I was uncovering. As the study progressed, I spent more and more time reflecting after

every lecture. In returning to my personal history narrative during the analysis phase (see Chapter Four), it became clear to me that reflective practice did not appear to have been practiced by my former teachers and lecturers and that while I had thought about my pedagogy over the years, I had never actively engaged in reflective practice.

Throughout the study I was also reflecting on what I was doing in my lectures and asking that students reflect on their experiences of my pedagogy and give me feedback (see chapters Five and Six). As possibilities that had been identified were enacted, reflection continued as I sought ways in which to be more purposeful in my pedagogy (Samaras, 2011). Dinkelman (2003) noted that the reflective findings of self-study research assist educators to deal with issues as they gain a deeper understanding of their contexts and practice.

Throughout the study I was asking questions not only about myself but also to myself. Likewise, Rogers (as cited in White, 2012) cautioned against reflection becoming an exercise solely about the self when it should rather be about the self, the students and the subject content. In my self-study research into my pedagogy I need to be mindful that the study was as much about the students as about me. I was also aiming to enact reflexivity through my research practice as I became aware of how my interaction with the research process and with others influenced what I was producing (Pithouse-Morgan, Mitchell, & Pillay, 2014). Kirk (2005) wrote that to be reflexive is the starting point of self-study in which relationships between the self and other are examined. In explaining reflexivity, Pithouse-Morgan, Mitchell, and Pillay (2014) stated that it “requires researchers to pose challenging question to themselves” (p. 2).

I reflected on my pedagogic influences with the intention of changing and improving my current pedagogy (as shown in Chapters Three and Four). Following the reflective phase, I planned to make changes to my pedagogy and it is during this phase that I anticipated that my pedagogy would become reflexive. Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2014) explained that “reflexivity is not only a certain stance that we take as researchers, but it is something that we can or should enact through our research practice” (p. 1). Chapters Five and Six of this thesis, can be viewed as demonstrating the reflexive stage of my pedagogy wherein changes were effected as I considered what had emerged during the reflective process and enacted what I was learning.

1.5 Outline of the Structure of my Thesis

This opening chapter introduced my topic and the reasons why I chose to undertake this study. In the chapter, I gave a brief background to the study and its the setting. This was followed by a section that introduced the methodological approach to the study. Key concepts that informed the study were then explained.

In Chapter Two, I explain my choice of a narrative self-study research methodology to examine my own pedagogic experiences and practices. I explain that I chose this approach because, as Samaras and Freese (2006) noted: “Improving one’s practice [through self-study] benefits the larger broader purpose of the advancement of knowledge about teaching and the educational system” (p. 14). It was my wish that, through this study not only I, but also my students would benefit from my learning about my pedagogy. After discussing narrative self-study and the reasons for my choice of methodology, I then go on to describe the context in which the study is set and to introduce the research participants and my critical friends. As described by Samaras (2011), the role of my critical friends was to “encourage and solicit respectful questioning and divergent views to gain alternative perspectives” (p. 72). In the data generation and representation section of this chapter, I explain how I went about composing field texts and research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

What follows in Chapter Two is an explanation of the layered analysis of my personal history narrative. Because I am a teacher of English, I treated the first layer of analysis as I would the analysis of a literary text such as a fictional short story. I deepened and extended this through juxtaposition with the novel, *Hard Times* (Dickens 1854/1973). The second layer of analysis was to use a method of coding as I identified the themes, people and places that were predominant in my personal history narrative (Annexure One). Three main themes emerged as major influences on my pedagogy and I then returned to my personal narrative and turned my focus to how awareness of these influences could empower me as I examined possibilities for my practice as a teacher educator. This discussion was conducted through the juxtaposition of events themes and characters from two films: *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007), which shifted the analysis into a third level. The ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness and research challenges are dealt with in the next three sections of Chapter Two and the conclusion then follows.

In keeping with the juxtaposition of my personal history narrative with *Hard Times*, *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers*, the titles of Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six as well as many of the headings therein, have been borrowed from these three texts. Chapter Three, which is titled *Sowing: My Personal History Narrative*, responds to the question - *What has influenced my pedagogy?* In answering this question, I juxtaposed my personal history narrative with *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854/1973). I found that to do this enabled me to step outside of my story as I focussed on characters and events from the novel and drew comparisons between the people and incidents in my life. I chose *Hard Times* because I teach it to my fourth year English Major students and am very familiar with the characters, themes and events in the novel. Another reason for choosing *Hard Times* is that many of the issues that Dickens deals with in relation to education are relevant to what my students will face when they graduate and embark on their careers as teachers. In addition, I was intrigued by the fact that although the novel was written in 1854, many of the pedagogic practices described by Dickens are still in evidence 162 years later.

Chapter Four is titled: *Reaping: Unearthing the Influences*. There are three layers of analysis in this chapter: the first layer being to analyse my personal history narrative as I would a literary text; the second layer is the analysis of the narrative in more depth through coding. In the third layer, I chose to enhance my literary analysis through the juxtaposition of two films, *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007). I then presented the final analysis through the amalgamation of the three layers. This three layered analysis can be described as interpretive bricolage (Kincheloe, 2005) because in searching for influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy I was finding my role as a teacher educator “in relation to larger social, cultural, political, economic, psychological and educational structures” (p. 335).

I view myself as a bricoleur (Kincheloe, 1995) because in this study I did not follow a linear process and my mode of inquiry was complex as the relationships between my students, their contexts, my context, my past and present pedagogy and the past and present pedagogy of my participants were not viewed as separate units. My decision to juxtapose my study with literary texts meant that the characters, events and pedagogy within these literary proof texts (Nash, 2004) were connected to the histories and contexts of my participants and myself.

The ways in which the possibilities that had been unearthed influenced my current undergraduate pedagogy is illustrated in Chapter Five: *Turn on a Small Light in a Dark Room*. Chapter Six, with the title *Garnering: Take the Opportunity to Expand* – examines how the uncovering of influences on my pedagogy elucidated possibilities for my pedagogy as a teacher educator and how I used these possibilities to enact more purposeful pedagogies in my Language in Education honours module.

Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter titled *Do you Know?*, takes the discussion back to Chapter One titled *How do you Know?*, and it is in this final chapter that I review the thesis as a whole and consider my professional and methodological learning. The thesis closes with my response to the question posed in this opening chapter: *How will you know?*

CHAPTER TWO – MY RESEARCH PROCESS

2.1 Introduction

Awareness is like the sun – when it shines on things they are transformed – Thích Nhất Hạnh (2012)

The aim of this narrative self-study was to better understand influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy as an English teacher educator and because it was an expectation of this study that awareness of my pedagogy could transform it in a generative way, I thought it apt to include the Thích Nhất Hạnh (2012) quotation.

My opening chapter, Chapter One, served as an introduction to this thesis and covered the development of my research topic and questions. In addition, it gave an historical background of the study and explained where it was located. I then gave a brief introduction to my methodological approach. I also discussed my understanding of the major concepts related to the study, which are *Pedagogy, Critical Pedagogy, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Social Constructivism, Purposeful Pedagogies and Reflection and Reflexivity*.

I begin Chapter Two by explaining my choice of methodological approach and I then describe the research setting and research participants. I go on to describe the composition of my field texts and research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and to explain my layered literary analysis. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness as well as the research challenges are also discussed in this chapter.

2.2. Methodology

In this study, I viewed myself as a bricoleur because I “used research methods actively rather than passively as I actively constructed research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies.” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 324). This study drew on narrative inquiry and self-study methodologies. In what follows I explain my understanding of self-study and narrative inquiry with specific reference to the aspects of these methodological approaches that I drew together.

2.2.1 Self-Study

Dinkelman’s (2003, p. 56) definition of self-study is that it is “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice and included in this definition is inquiry of individuals as well as groups working in collaboration.” Thus, to be engaged in self-study is a useful way for

teachers and teacher educators to “learn from their practice and become better at what they do” (Crowe & Dinkelman, 2010, p. 1). Similarly, La Boskey (2004) emphasised that self-study is improvement aimed. In addition, Loughran (2004) highlighted that “attention to the self is always in the service of better knowledge of their particular research setting” (p. 9). I always had the sense that something was missing in my pedagogy and I viewed this study as an opportunity to identify where improvements could be made by questioning my pedagogy, not only in relation to the university setting but also in relation to the educational arena within South Africa. I felt that it was time to examine myself and my pedagogy as an English teacher educator because self-study is critical in social action and to change ourselves and our situations, we have to know more about ourselves as teachers and teacher educators (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009). I wanted to be more aware of my pedagogy and to use this awareness to improve my practice. I chose to do this through self-study, as I understood that “the *very process of self-study itself changes its practitioners and their situations*. Seeing things differently, self-study can prod us to take action” (Pithouse et al., 2009, p. 48).

One of the aspects of self-study research that attracted me is that it often involves not only conventional qualitative research methods such as observation, interviews and focus groups but also more innovative data generation methods such as personal history narratives, reflective journal writing and critical friend feedback that can allow for different perspectives on the issue at hand (LaBoskey, 2004). As Pithouse et al. (2009) explained, “....because teaching is messy, complicated, contextualized – hard to pin down, we need to be innovative and creative in the search for more suitable ways to understand and improve our practice as teachers and teacher educators” (p. 46).

What became clearer to me in looking at definitions of self-study research is that to be engaged in self-study is to have made a decision to gain an understanding about what is going on within the classroom in order to understand oneself as a teacher and that there are various ways to achieve this. It also became clear that self-study is not an egotistical navel-gazing exercise and that the primary focus is on one’s pedagogy with the intention of making changes that will impact both inside and outside of the classroom and that will have positive results for the students’ learning (Feldman, Paugh, & Mills, 2004).

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) highlighted the importance of awareness in self-study of personal practical knowledge, which refers to “the things we have learned that have become intuitive and instinctive” (p. 21). Such learning may be constraining or generative and

influence the way in which we conduct ourselves in the classroom. Therefore I wanted to find out what it was that I was doing instinctively in my pedagogic practice and why. This is in line with LaBoskey's (2004) assertion that to be involved in self-study must include interacting with, amongst other things, our previous experiences that have influenced our pedagogy.

2.2.2 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the study of experience understood narratively (Clandinin & Huber, 2010) and is "how people make meaning from experience" (Kitchen, 2009, p. 37). Before I could begin with the process of improving the learning experience for myself and my students, I had to come to know myself better and thus I composed my personal history narrative. In doing so I was using narrative as a way of making sense of my lived experiences (Pithouse, 2011). In writing my personal narrative, I started off by putting "the self of the scholar (myself) front and centre" (Nash, 2004, p. 18). I wrote my personal narrative, reflected upon it and rewrote it in collaboration with family members and friends who shared my experiences, with the aim of understanding influences on, as well as possibilities for, my pedagogy. In deciding to begin my study by composing a personal narrative, I was inspired by Pinnegar and Russell's (2001) idea that to promote pre-service teachers to develop, teacher educators need to fathom out where they themselves are coming from, as well as what impacted on their pedagogies. Likewise, in examining the benefits of autobiographical narrative for language teachers, Msila (2012) concluded that teachers who examine their stories could find answers as to how to transform their teaching and how to construct their own ways of being in the classroom.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "in the construction of narrative as experience there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story and reliving a life story" (p. 71). In this study as I reflected on what I had lived, and identified possibilities for more purposeful pedagogies which I reflexively enacted in my current pedagogy. I informed the students who were participants in the study as to what I was doing and thus during the reflexive stage of reliving my story, the relationship between my students and myself was being renegotiated (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

One of my objectives for this study was to better understand influences on my pedagogy in a way that would be generative. Ball (2009) used the term generativity to explain how teachers can integrate their own personal and professional knowledge with the knowledge that they gain from their students in order to meet the students' needs, which is what I hoped to achieve in my study. In expanding on the concept of generativity, Ball (2012) referred to the gap between

knowing and doing as the “zone of generativity” (p. 7). I was working within the space between my current pedagogy and the pedagogy to which I aspired as I created awareness of constraining and generative influences on my pedagogy. Ball (2012) suggested that as educational researchers work within the zone of generativity we can do so in four stages as suggested by Ball (2012) suggested that. The first stage is reflection in which the main question that one needs to examine is whether this research is making a difference. What I hoped at the outset was that my research would make a difference not only to my pedagogy but also to the student teachers and the wider education community. Phase two is the stage wherein the researcher undergoes a process of introspection in an attempt to understand the role of the self in the research. Ball referred to the third stage as critique and it is here that one needs to examine what learning has taken place and to what extent the research has empowered the self to close the gap between knowledge and pedagogy. Stage four is that the voice of the researcher must be heard as individual approaches to finding out are examined. Because this study was a narrative self-study, my voice was heard throughout the study.

2.2.3 Why Narrative Self-Study?

Pithouse (2011) identified self-study as “teachers and teacher educators examining their own teaching to improve their practice, and narrative inquiry as a way of making sense of the lived experiences of teachers, learners and researchers in educational settings” (p. 178). As Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) explained, “self-study can be a narrative when it follows narrative strategies but not necessarily the methodology” (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 19). Narrative inquiry and self-study can work hand in hand which becomes clear in Pinnegar and Hamilton’s (2009) observation that in recalling our Personal Practical Knowledge we will be telling, reliving and retelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) stated that in recalling memories from the past, we are bringing them forward into the present and in recounting these stories, there is a shift as we find a new place for them in our lived experiences. In bringing my memories forward into the future I was going backward, forward, inward and outward which is what a narrative inquirer does (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). During my backward, forward, inward and outward musings, I worked with participants and critical friends who were instrumental in assisting me as I deepened my understanding of my pedagogic experiences. As Kitchen (2009) described, narrative inquiry is the “study of how people make meaning from experience and telling or

collecting stories is the beginning of the process but it is through the multi-dimensional exploration of these stories that narrative knowledge emerges” (p. 37).

I chose narrative as an aspect of my methodological approach because this allowed me to compose and analyse my personal narrative in order to better understand my pedagogy and to take responsibility and make changes by becoming mindful of constraining influences and strengthening those influences that I identified as generative. What I took from self-study research is that I worked in collaboration with critical friends and these conversations became my field texts, along with my personal journal reflections, discussions with my sister and my peers and my students’ personal reflections and personal histories.

2.3 Setting

The research setting for my study was a School of Education at a University in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. All institutions of higher learning in South Africa were racially separated by government decree during apartheid and by 1985 there were nineteen universities designated exclusively for whites, two for coloureds, two for Indians and six for Africans. If a student could prove that a degree was not available in an institution designated for his/her race group, a permit would be granted allowing the student to study at a university classified for another racial group (Bunting, n.d).

After the end of apartheid, a university for Indian students and a university for white students merged to form the university where my research took place. In post-apartheid South Africa all teacher training colleges were merged with universities when institutions of higher education were restructured. The school of Education is based on the site of a formerly known white teacher training college.

2.4 Participants

I had a dual role in this study as I was the primary research subject and the writer-researcher but this does not mean that the study was all about me and only about me as while “self-study entails a personal inquiry, it is also interpersonal, interactive, and collaborative” (Samaras, 2011, p. 75). In as much as I drew on my lived experiences, I engaged in critical collaborative inquiry with my critical friends and my current students, as well as with people from my past and present.

2.4.1 Myself, My Sister and Peers

An aspect of self-study research that becomes clear in the definitions thereof (e.g., Dinkelman, 2003; La Boskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011) is that this method involves others and is not only about the self in the classroom. This is because “when we want to understand our practices more deeply, we use the voice of the other in our practice to support our interpretations” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 15). In as much as it involves others, it must be acknowledged that the self is at the forefront of self-study. As Richardson (2001) explained, everybody who writes is writing about their lives and all writing is touched by human hands and is thus subjective and not neutral. In his explanation of scholarly writing, Nash (2004) acknowledged the importance of the self in advising educators who are engaged in scholarly personal narrative writing to:

Find the I of yourself first, because this is the pre-requisite for finding everything else. Then focus on the you, your story telling students. Finally, find the point of intersection between I and you and this becomes the we. Teaching that matters is not about you or me. It is about us. (p. 127)

In following Nash’s (2004) advice on scholarly personal narrative writing, I wrote about my experiences that involved others, and in finding out, I engaged with my elder sister and two male peers who had studied with me. I selected these two peers as participants because we live in the same city and they are my friends and so it was easy to gain access to them. In composing my personal history narrative, I was endeavouring to find the “I” of which Nash speaks. I would have preferred both of my sisters to participate but my younger sister stated that she could not recall anything from our childhood and did not want to engage with me about it at all which I respected. My elder sister was happy to be involved and we had many chats over a period of three years.

When I had written my personal history narrative in collaboration with my sister and my peers, I began to involve my students and colleagues. In composing field texts through conversations with them, I looked for that space in which the “we” worked. In sharing our stories I made connections with others as I came to know more about who I am and who they are as “the self

can only exist...*in relationship to other(s)*” (Pithouse et al., 2009, p.47), and without the participation of others there is no self-study research. The notion of making connections is key to this study as I connected my past experiences with my present and in turn, connected who I was then with who I am, now whilst simultaneously connecting who I am with who my students are. Nash (2004) observed that in addition to wanting competence, fairness, compassion, intellectual stimulation and enthusiasm, students also want to be understood and what better way than to encourage them to tell their stories and to write our own as we try to understand who we are professionally as well as personally.

Kincheloe (2005) stated that in the active bricolage the researcher is bringing together previous experiences with research methods and understanding of the contexts in which the research is placed. According to Lassonde, Galman, and Kosnik (2009), self-study research is messy and it can become uncomfortable as one delves into the past and writes about it without knowing what will be found. My study was messy because of the constant toing and froing and also because I was not sure what I would discover about myself or about my relationship to students. There were times when my memories were disturbing and moments when I felt uncomfortable about my own pedagogy. One such instance is when I recalled how, when my planned lessons were not going quite the way I had intended and the students were rowdy, I reverted to authoritarian ways of delivering the content as discussed in Chapter Three.

2.4.2 Undergraduate Students

The under-graduate students who participated in my narrative self-study research were pre-service teachers of English in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year of their Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degrees. All of the B.Ed students have compulsory modules within the cluster¹⁰ in which I work which is the Cluster of Languages, Arts and Media.

Students in the senior phase (grades 7-9) and Further Education and Training phase (FET: grades 10-12) take English for three years if they have selected English as one of their teaching specialisations¹¹ and it is these students who were my student teacher participants. The English specialisation students are initially exposed to applied linguistics, narrative studies and various literary texts. They are then prepared for what will be encountered in the classroom and their

¹⁰ Previously known as Departments.

¹¹ English is selected as a major for students wanting to become teachers of English

critical thinking skills and appreciation and insight into English literature is developed as is the teaching of texts. Critical approaches to reading and research skills, as well as film study and sociolinguistic understanding are also part of the curriculum. The method modules run concurrently with the English major modules and Method 1 deals with the principles of the school English curriculum and how to teach using the four modes of communication – reading, writing, listening and speaking – effectively in the classroom. Method 2 deals with all aspects of the teaching of reading as well as comprehension skills and assessment. By the final year, when Method 3 is studied, students are engaging with how to teach and assess writing and language. Each year spans two semesters, which includes a practice block of teaching when the students enter the schools for practical experience.

I chose to work with the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students who selected English as their teaching specialisation because I had easy access to them. All of the students in these classes were participants because I used their feedback to the questions that I asked during the lectures as well as their module evaluations. I requested that all of the students sign consent forms and nobody refused. The group and one-on-one conversations during which the students spoke to me about their experiences of having been taught English at school and at university were voluntary. All students willing to participate were invited to do so. I worked closely with four second year students during 2015. Two were male, two female and all were African. There were eight fourth year students who participated in the discussion groups in 2016 and these eight had also participated during their third year in 2015. Of these eight, five were female and all African. One of these participants is passionate about being an English teacher and we had four one-on-one conversations about her experiences of and thoughts around pedagogy, three of which were at her request.

2.4.3 Honours Students

The 2014, 2015 and 2016 Honours students who selected Language in Education as an elective were the participant post-graduate students in the study. In 2014, I did not have conversations with the students nor did I use their lecture reflections but I have referred to some of their emails in Chapter Six. In 2015, there were eleven participants in the group and in 2016, there were sixteen participants. I worked far more closely with the 2016 students because it was during this year that I was reflecting on the 2014 and 2015 modules and effecting changes

every week. This group comprised of five African males, seven African females and four Indian females.

There were two students from this group who volunteered to participate in all of the discussions outside of the classroom and always responded to my questions when I emailed the group. One of these participants is a young African man whom I taught as an undergraduate student and who is a passionate teacher of English who has started a library in the school where he is employed because he is of the belief that reading is the cornerstone of all learning.

2.5 My Critical Friends

Awareness of classroom practice must involve stakeholders other than oneself, and Samaras (2011) highlighted that self-study research allows one to investigate what is happening within one's classroom with advice from colleagues. The cluster in which I work is small and I work closely with four colleagues who have been serving as my critical friends for a number of years. We meet informally and I often ask for advice and value their opinions because in self-study research a critical friend group is:

The community that helps extend an individual's understanding and critical friends encourage and solicit respectful questioning to gain alternative perspectives. Critical friend teams serve as a validation group to provide feedback on the quality and legitimacy of each others' claims. (Samaras, 2011, p. 72)

In elaborating on the role of critical friends, Elliot (1985) wrote of first order and second order research in which first order is conducted by the researcher in the classroom and second order makes reference to the critical friends who have the responsibility of promoting the learning capacity of the researcher. I relied heavily on this second order research through constant engagement with my critical friends. The majority of our discussions were informal and the only formal exercise was when three of my colleagues engaged in a peer-review exercise and sat in on my lectures in order to review my pedagogy (see Chapter Six). There is one colleague in particular who is an authority on English teacher education. She was supportive throughout the study and our discussions often led me to new questions and perspectives.

In addition, when I embarked upon this study I joined a self-study research cohort in which I found a diverse critical friend group. What is helpful about the group is that the members are lecturers in different disciplines such as maths, jewellery design and drama. They are not

employed at my university and have differing opinions of, and approaches to teaching and learning. Another critical friend was my research supervisor who advised me throughout the study and her input was invaluable. In addition, a colleague and friend who is lecturing on another campus at my university and who was reading for her a doctorate in Education at the same time as me, served as a critical friend who listened to what I had to say, asked challenging questions and encouraged me throughout the study. We went away on a writing retreat together and she questioned the way in which I had analysed my personal history narrative as she was of the opinion that it was not rigorous. This led me to a third layer of analysis (Chapter Four). Furthermore, I had included two metaphor drawings in my thesis and through her questioning I decided to omit them as I came to the realisation that they were redundant as I had explained myself sufficiently in my narrative.

My critical friends' feedback assisted me in "generating deeper insights and understandings" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 100) which prompted new ideas through "open, honest and constructive feedback" (Samaras, 2011, p. 75). I solicited my critical friends' opinions and advice and this often led me to greater understanding and to ask additional questions. This assisted me in reaching new understandings through my research as I relied not only on my own judgments but also on the opinions of others (Samaras, 2011).

2.6 Composing Field Texts and Research Texts

The ways in which the pedagogies of teachers and teacher educators have been formed are important to becoming a teacher (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004). I started the study by investigating the influences that have informed my pedagogy as a teacher and a teacher educator and the product of this process is one of my field texts. I then focussed on how I could use the generative influences on my English pedagogy to inform my current and future pedagogical practices.

2.6.1 What has influenced my Pedagogy? Composing my Personal Narrative History Research Text

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) coined the term field texts when referring to data that is collected in a narrative inquiry with the final product being referred to as the research text. To move from the field texts to the research text is not an easy transition but a process in which one writes many drafts, which are referred to as interim texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In examining the influences on my pedagogy I drew from numerous field texts as I looked backwards in order to compose my personal history narrative and then forwards to see how the elements of this narrative might affect what is happening now. During this constant toing and froing, I was writing about particular positions at specific times – I was not writing about my entire life and trying to cover everything all at once (Richardson, 2001). Rather, I was specifically honing in on my pedagogic experiences. This assisted in making the influences on my pedagogy explicit and I began to better understand my pedagogy as a teacher educator. During the process, I was reinterpreting, reliving and retelling my pedagogic experiences across time, place and distance because I was, and always will be restructuring myself as a teacher of English.

In doing so, I was considering new possibilities, as the best teachers go beyond boundaries imposed by time, place and distance through looking into the past, the present and the future (Jalango & Isenberg, 1995). During this backward and forward process in which I was telling and re-telling my personal history, many stories were being told. In writing a personal history narrative, teachers attempt to make meaning of their pedagogy as they consider and re-think their practice (LaBoskey & Lyons, 2002) and in recalling and evaluating incidents, I was attempting to make sense of the influences on my pedagogy so as to use awareness of these as possibilities in my future pedagogy.

One way of finding out more about who we are as teachers or teacher educators, is to examine our pedagogy and, in doing so, a personal and professional story is told with the “self” in the foreground (Palmer, 1998). The self is at the forefront of who we are as teachers and “removing the self from teaching makes it difficult if not impossible to theorise or understand teaching in any meaningful way” (Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber 2009, p. 47).

What one must guard against is that the study remains self-focussed but does not become self-centred wherein the self is the purpose and focus (Berry, 2008). Bruner (2003) observed that people are constantly constructing and reconstructing the self in order to cope with current situations and that to do this requires the recalling of past experiences. My recollection of past experiences led to the identifying of visions and failings, and the self-insight that I gained enabled me to envisage new possibilities for my pedagogy, which is what Samaras (2011) states should be a consequence of self-study.

In responding to my first research question – *What has influenced my pedagogy?* and choosing to write a personal history narrative which examined influences on my pedagogic experiences,

the purpose was not simply to relate a story, but to understand what has shaped me as a teacher educator. Nash (2004) proposed that educators who write personal scholarly narratives think of teaching as a vocation and are called upon to acknowledge the importance of connections and relationships. He also explained that this includes fostering relationships between students and subject, teacher and student, reader and writer, student and student, course work and the work of the discipline and the world. To this I add that the primary relationship should be between teacher or teacher educator and personal history, as once we as teachers or teacher educators better understand our personal histories, a deeper understanding of the self should follow and I think that other relationships might then become easier to foster.

According to Mitchell and Weber (1998), “teachers might have (should have?) greater interest in memories of schooling – their own, and equally importantly, the memories of others. In what way do we continue to ‘play out’ early experiences long after we begin our teaching careers?” (p. 46). They stated that their first interest is in memory as phenomena in order to investigate how memories can assist in understanding how our past experiences inform who we are. I recalled my memories through the writing of my personal history narrative in order to become more aware of pedagogic events and influences that could become part of what Mitchell and Weber (1998) term the ‘useable past.’ In recalling my experiences, I identified pedagogic practices to which I had been exposed and recalled different teacher personalities and styles as well as proficient and inadequate teaching methods.

Mitchell and Weber (1998) proposed that as we recall events from our past, we could ask whose memory it is and in what way issues around gender, race, class, sexual orientation contribute, either because they are present or absent. In addition, we should examine the emotions around the memory as well as what meaning the memories have to our current practices. As I recalled events from my past I recognised that the memories and the reconstruction thereof were my own. I also acknowledged the role played by social, political and economic issues that affected events in my life.

I initially used trigger words in my recollections of events. An example of such a word is ‘reading’ – this word triggered my memories about being read to by my mother as a toddler, being taught how to read at school, my independent reading at school, how I approached reading in my own classrooms, reading to my own children and then hooking all of this onto a theoretical perspective. This word – ‘reading’ – thus triggered many memories that span across my life and when I collaborated with others about my memories, they added to what I had to

say. Nash (2004) supports the idea of a trigger for writing a personal narrative with his advice on having hooks on which to hang the ideas and with which to hook readers. For me, the use of trigger words hooked me first and I thought that this would allow me to investigate ways in which to then hook my readers. The trigger words/hooks assisted in the initial writing and I discovered that the words were not isolated incidents but that there was often a relationship between words which suggested possible themes and once I started identifying these themes, I realised that there were larger implications for political, social, educational and economic issues around the memories (Nash, 2004).

2.6.2 Narrative Union

Macintyre (as cited in Clandinin, 1985) coined the phrase narrative union which means writing our narratives and then revising what has come before as we go about our current lives through which new narratives are constantly being created. This idea of union appealed to me and was carried through my study as I realised that I was not only uniting my past and present as I wrote my personal history narrative, but that my past and present became intertwined with the past and present of my students who bring their personal histories to every one of my classes. In addition, my personal narrative and the students' stories and experiences were intertwined with literature as I juxtaposed my narrative with literary texts. The students' personal histories were important to me and I wanted to get to know them as individuals and asked that they share their pedagogic experiences (Chapters Five and Six). In doing so, I was attempting to understand where they were coming from in order to find the points at which we could be intersecting.

In understanding ourselves, we construct an image of self as teacher and Clandinin (1985) explained that image can be a type of knowledge that is part of a person and connected to the past present and future. Stern (as cited in Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2004) referred to the knowledge that is uncovered during the process of narrative writing, as implicit knowledge that then becomes explicit as it is examined and explained in order to be understood. In writing my personal history narrative as the starting point to answering my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* I was unearthing what had always been latent and attempting to make it explicit in order to understand my pedagogy. The past influences the present (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Whilst uncovering and interpreting the memories that contributed to my personal history, I was not alone but relied on people such as my sister, peers and critical friends who had walked those paths with me to assist in the retelling of these tales, as I explored what had contributed to my pedagogy.

Brookfield (1995) viewed this examination of pedagogy through four complementary lenses, which are one's autobiographical learning; the perceptions of colleagues; the students' views and literature. I was not only constructing an image of myself as a teacher but also encouraging my students to do the same as they shared their pedagogic reflections with me. This image draws present and past together and links experience with the immediate situation as it reaches to the future in order to create threads and as the students and I created our individual threads, we also created threads that bind us.

2.6.3 Creative Non-Fiction

My starting point in this study was to write my personal history narrative and from time to time, I would set it aside as I did not know how to continue. Willis (2006) noted that in reflecting on practice, we are firstly describing the process and writing what is recalled, which is very instrumental. My solution to escaping this stilted way of writing was to change the approach to writing my story by using my disciplinary knowledge.

I began juxtaposing what I had written with extracts from the novel *Hard Times* (1854/1973) by Charles Dickens. As I wrote, I became aware that many of the political, social educational and economic issues in my story resonated with those in *Hard Times* in spite of the fact that the novel was first penned in 1854. What I wrote could be classified as creative nonfiction and Eisner is credited as being the educational advocate for this genre: "Barone & Eisner (1997) began to refer to research that contained a number of aesthetic design elements in the research and compositional process as arts-based research" (Barone, 2008, p. 108). In writing about creative non-fiction, Barone (2008) noted that before the 17th Century there was distinct delineation between science and art but that as early as the 19th Century, the clearly demarcated lines between fact and fiction were becoming blurred as literary texts were beginning to include non-fictional writing and social scientists and journalists began to include literary genres within their academic writing. This allowed science and art to be integrated within texts and the lines were becoming blurred. Leavy (2016) noted that the arts can be used as powerful tools in research and teaching and she goes on to state that "fiction is one genre with enormous potential to transform understanding and deepen engagement" (p. 29). In juxtaposing my narrative with the novel, I found that my writing became less instrumental and it was made more complex and wide ranging with references to the novel where commonalities between my personal history and events and characters in the novel were discussed.

The re-examination of my pedagogic experiences in juxtaposition with *Hard Times* enabled me to view my experiences through another lens as I identified similarities between my experiences and those of the children in the novel. I also found it instructive to compare those who had taught me to characters in *Hard Times* (1854/1973). This juxtaposition enabled me to write even the most painful and sometimes embarrassing memories because I stood outside of my personal narrative as I drew comparisons between events in my life and those in the novel.

Nash (2004) presented what he referred to as “tentative guidelines” (p. 56) for personal scholarly writing. His ninth guideline advocates for constant reference to “proof texts” (p. 65), which are scholarly texts because “the apt proof text provides a context, deepens your writing, extends its implications, grounds its insights and, most of all, explicitly acknowledges the contributions of others in your thinking” (Nash, 2004, p. 66). Leavy (2009) wrote that some narrative inquirers use fiction to work through or restructure their ideas and I chose to use fiction as my proof texts. In this study, I selected a Victorian novel, *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854/1973) as one of my proof texts. The more contemporary films, *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007) were also used as proof texts. I chose to use these texts because I lecture on them and know them well and felt it fitting that I bring my disciplinary knowledge into my research.

To juxtapose my personal history narrative and analysis thereof with these texts meant that when necessary, I could remove myself from my story and concentrate on fictional characters and events. In doing so, I was producing what Leavy (2009) referred to as arts-based writing. Through the juxtaposition of my personal narrative with *Hard Times*, I was reflecting on the major influences on my pedagogy and replotting them as I repositioned myself differently (Leavy, 2009). The way in which I chose to reposition myself was through juxtapositioning with fictional characters.

I chose not to have a separate literature review chapter and my writing was interspersed with reference to scholarly texts which served the purpose of Nash’s scholarly proof texts. In my thesis I was constantly going backward and forwards between my field texts, research texts and fictional and scholarly proof texts.

2.6.4 My Research and Field Texts

In this study, my research text was my personal narrative and my field texts were my reflective diary, conversations with my sister, peers and students as well as critical friend feedback. In addition, I used student emails, assignments and lecture reflections and valuations as field texts.

In composing my personal history narrative, which served as my research text, I followed the advice of Nash (2004) which is to start with the particular and then move to the general. The juxtaposition of my personal narrative with *Hard Times* allowed me to “shift the experience of everyday life to the world of the novel” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 70). It also allowed me to “create a possible world, to turn back to my life as lived and to detail unique and particular aspects of my life” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 70). I worked from the inside and then outwards and the initial writing was very particular as it focussed on my early experiences and memories of pedagogic practices and then moved outwards to also include other memories.

Kincheloe (2005) noted that in methodological bricolage the researcher employs numerous techniques in the generating of field texts. The field texts composed to illuminate the influences on my pedagogy were narratives from conversations with: my sister; my critical friends who were my research supervisor, my colleagues, my self-study group and my friend who was also doing her PHD; my pre-service teacher students and my post graduate students. My personal journal and lecture reflections also served as field texts. In working with critical friends and other participants such as my sister and students, there was dialogue and I interacted with people on many different levels which Leavy (2009) noted is critical to cultivating and understanding our subject matter. At times, the interactions were informal conversations, while at other times they were more formal conversations. The interaction with others ensured multiple meanings as there were many voices in addition to my own and “these rich sources of field texts were important for the construction of social narratives” (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 115). Artefacts such as books and long playing records from my childhood, as well as a sample of my school progress reports served as triggers and as evidence for writing my personal history narrative because “it is these artefacts, collected in our lives that provide a rich source of memories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 114).

From the outset of this study I was very aware of my pedagogy and I noted this in lecture reflections in my journal wherein I often wrote that I had new-found awareness as to what had influenced my pedagogy. I was keeping a reflective journal for the specific purpose of my study. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted, “research data are not always audience free as

audience is always a presence and interpretively shapes the field text constructed” (p. 102). In defining reflective practice Ruth-Sahd (2003) stated that it is examining the self by looking back over one’s practice in a way that is not linear as the past is recalled and evaluated. In my reflective journal, I commented on all aspects related to my lectures as I wanted to capture the experiences as they happened so as to evaluate them with the intention of understanding my pedagogy. As the study progressed, and because I was interrogating my pedagogy constantly, I was interceding with what I was discovering about the way in which I conducted myself in the classroom. As I was gathering data from what had been sown, reaped and garnered, I was making notes in my reflective diary. In addition to one’s own voice, the voice of the other needs to be captured in self-study research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) and in this study I view my students as the most important ‘other’.

According to Clandinin and Connelly, (2000) “conversation is more often a way of composing a field text in face-to face encounters between pairs or among groups” (p. 108). From my conversations with students, I learned about their past experiences of having been taught English, as well as present pedagogic experiences and because I had conversations with students, the field texts I composed were rich and authentic. I asked that the participants, who were seated around a round table, have a conversation about their pedagogic experiences throughout their lives and stated that they were free to talk about anything relating to their pedagogy. The conversations which were audio taped with the permission of the participants, were marked by equality among “participants and by flexibility to allow participants to establish forms and topics appropriate to their group inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 109).

Pinar (2004) described the space in which the artist-researcher-teacher meets as a/r/t. I initially used metaphor drawings to scaffold my ideas and to organise my field texts. I was the artist, the researcher and the teacher, and the metaphor drawings represented what I was discovering as my study unfolded. I also used self-interviews as scaffolding that could be dismantled in the final draft of this thesis. The metaphor drawings and self-interviews clarified my thinking and in the writing up of the final thesis, I realised that I no longer needed the scaffolding.

To sum up the composition of my field texts and research texts, writing my personal narrative that was juxtaposed with *Hard Times* (Chapter Three) created awareness of my pedagogic influences. In conversations with my student participants, I gained a better understanding of

my students and their contexts, which developed awareness as to some of their needs, wants and expectations.

My point of departure in trying to link my past experiences with current practice was to analyse my personal narrative. The analysis phase was the start of responding to question two - *How can awareness of these influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?* In responding to this question, I chose to juxtapose my responses with two films – *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers* – both of which centre around English pedagogic practice. The reason for choosing these particular films is that I teach them both to the fourth year students and when analysing them, I always see similarities between the way in which I was taught, how I started out as a teacher and where I am moving in my current practice.

2.6.5 Creative Analytic Practice

Every thought you produce, anything you say, any action you do, it bears your signature - [Thích Nhất Hạnh](#) (2012).

“Narrative analysis studies rely on stories as a way of knowing” (Coulter & Smith, 2009, p. 577) and my personal history narrative bears my signature as I related my story in an attempt to understand what has influenced my pedagogy, hence my choice of the quotation by [Thích Nhất Hạnh](#) to foreground this section.

Narrative researchers use literary devices such as story telling rather than discursive logic in the presentation of their analysis (Coulter, & Smith, 2009). In my study, I was analysing data as it was being generated in order to create awareness as to what was happening during the research process. Samaras (2011) noted that because self-study is explicative, the generating and analysis of data is not a process that follows a consecutive and continuous pattern and analysis of data should be simultaneous with the generation thereof. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) referred to the product of this simultaneous generation and analysis of field text into research text as interim texts and these were being constructed throughout my study.

I initially chose to treat the analysis of my personal history narrative as I would the analysis of a literary text such as a fictional short story and this became my first layer of analysis or an interim text. In this first layer of analysis, I considered literary elements common to fiction texts, such as characterisation, plot and setting (Coulter & Smith, 2009) in order to recognise

and understand the influences on my pedagogy. These literary elements were familiar to me because of my teaching of English literature. Thus, I was drawing on my disciplinary knowledge.

However, I was concerned that this method of analysis alone was not sufficient as my understanding of my pedagogy still seemed to me to be at a surface level. I then returned to my narrative and wove in connections to characters, plot and setting in the novel *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854/1973). Coulter and Smith (2009) wrote that as research studies are transferred into narrative texts, “the researcher can choose to vary the point of view from section to section, portraying multiple voices” (p. 583) and I chose to include the multiple voices within the novel *Hard Times*. Van Manen (1990) questioned the efficacy of writing about an experience in order to understand it because “with words we create some-thing – concepts, insights, feelings – out of no-thing – lived experiences – yet these words forever will fall short of our aims” (p. xviii). He went on to question how we capture and interpret the meaning of experiences and my way of doing this was to juxtapose my pedagogic experiences with *Hard Times* which enabled me to start looking beyond the particularity of my personal narrative (Van Manen, 1990). This juxtaposition of my personal narrative with *Hard Times* enabled me to deepen and extend my learning from the first layer of analysis. Through the juxtaposition, I created spatial distance (Coulter & Smith, 2009) as I stood back from my personal narrative. This also enabled me to see how my narrative might resonate with other lives and contexts as personal narrative writing is meant to “benefit readers, touch readers’ lives by informing their experiences, by transforming the meanings of events and delivering “wisdom” (Nash, 2004, p. 28).

2.6.6 Second Layer of Analysis: Coding

I then created a second layer of analysis to try to deepen and extend my learning from the first layer of analysis. In this, I was guided by Samaras (2011), who advised:

Read and reread your data. Pay particular attention to any repeated statements, behaviours, and actions across the data set. Reflect on your work and learning. Read through the items you have collected and consider what you are learning about your students and your role as a teacher. (p. 199)

What I was doing with this layer of analysis was “breaking down the data collected to build meaning” (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 148). In “breaking down the data”, I was identifying themes. As Coulter and Smith (2009), explained “constructing a narrative almost always invokes some theme or moral. Themes that emerge from data can be alluded to – never named explicitly or asserted directly” (p.585). I chose to explicitly name the themes that I identified as I was coding, and I thus made meaning of descriptive writing through labelling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The way in which I initially recorded the codes was to identify words that were repeated and seemed important and to write them on a piece of paper. I then organised the words into themes and wrote them onto sheets of newsprint, which I pasted onto the wall in my study so as to have immediate access to it and to add additional information at any time. The next step was to draw up a table into which the 28 themes were populated. Thereafter, codes were added to every theme in order to flesh out more information about the themes that had been identified. The codes were identified as “words”, “where” and “who”. In the “words” column, I recorded words that signalled relevance to the themes. The “where” and “who” signalled the physical location of the incidents under discussion and the people who were involved in the particular incidents (Annexure One).

Samaras (2011) advised analysing codes in order to identify connections, and the table, which was the start of the analysis of the codes, assisted me to see, at a glance, the relationships of the places/people and incidents highlighted in my story. I identified many connections and three themes that seemed predominant in my personal history narrative then became the major themes. The other themes were collapsed into three themes that had been identified as follows: a) *Fear*; b) *Importance of Reading* and c) *Teacher Education*. Figure 2.1 shows these three predominant themes and then the first and second layer of analysis themes, which fell within these three main categories (Figure 2.1).

SELECTED THEMES	FIRST AND SECOND LAYER THEMES
FEAR	parental influence importance of building confidence authoritarianism fear vs respect punishment authoritarianism teacher personality
IMPORTANCE OF READING	inequality parental influence literacy empowerment
TEACHER EDUCATION	theoretical knowledge modelling pedagogy interaction theoretical knowledge modelling authoritarianism empowerment teacher personality

Figure 2.1: Themes in my Personal History Narrative

2.6.7 Third Layer of Analysis: Using Film

I had identified influences on my pedagogy (research question one) and now considered how awareness of these influences could empower me as I sought to find new possibilities for my pedagogy as a teacher educator of English (research question two).

In an attempt to avoid two-dimensional and predictable writing (Coulter & Smith, 2009), I moved into a third layer of analysis in turning my focus to my current pedagogy. In keeping with applying my disciplinary knowledge to the study, I juxtaposed discussions about my classroom practices with events and characters from the films *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007). I chose these two films because I teach them and know them well and also because they both revolve around teaching English using innovative pedagogical practices.

Because this study does not have a scholarly literature review chapter I infused references to scholarly literature into the chapters where relevant. Here, I was following the advice of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who explained how narrative researchers “weave the literature throughout the dissertation from beginning to end in an attempt to create a seamless link between the theory and the practice embodied in the inquiry” (p. 41). The focus of my “scholarly conversations” with academic literature in my analysis chapter was around the three major themes: a) *Fear*; b) *Importance of Reading* and c) *Teacher Education*. As I juxtaposed events, themes and characters in my life with the novel and the films, the discussions were enriched through the positioning of my learning in relation to scholarly literature (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). What I now had were three overlapping layers of analysis, which I brought into dialogue with scholarly literature in my final writing of the analysis (Chapter Four).

2.7 Ethical Considerations

In terms of procedural ethics, the Ethics Committee of my university provided approval for ethical clearance (Protocol Reference Number: HSS/ 0476/ 014D. Annexure Two). Gatekeeper permission was sought from the Cluster leader of the Languages and Arts education cluster and permission was granted to conduct the research in the Cluster with the English Education students.

It was easy to gain access to the student participants as I taught all of them. At the start of a lecture I explained that I was a doctoral student and that I was researching my pedagogy as a teacher educator. I also stated that because I was researching my pedagogy, I would at times articulate why I chose to present lectures in a particular way and that I would sometimes ask for their feedback about my pedagogy. All students were asked to sign a consent form and I assured them that those to whose work I referred or those who chose to participate in discussions with me and their peers were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. All students were informed that participation was voluntary and were given information sheets and consent forms which they signed (Annexure Three). I did not have any students refusing to sign the forms. Before including any of the comments that were made by participants in class or in our small discussion groups (Chapter Five & Chapter Six), I asked them if they would mind if I included some of their comments, reflections and extracts from their reflections and their discussions.

In terms of relational ethics (Ellis, 2007) in which researchers are required to act with our hearts and minds whilst acknowledging our bonds to others, what is more important than knowing

what we should do at a particular time is constantly asking ourselves what we should be doing (Bergum, 1998). I had a constant battle with relational ethics as much of what was in the early drafts of my personal history narrative was about my family. I took the advice that Ellis (2007, p. 214) gave her students who are writing about their lived experiences:

I tell them to think about ethical issues before writing but not to censure anything in the first draft to get the story as nuanced and truthful as possible. Write for yourself. Later you must deal with the ethics of what to tell. Don't worry we will figure out how to write ethically. There are strategies to try. You might omit things, use pseudonyms or composite characters, alter the plot or scene, position your story within the stories of others, occasionally decide to write fiction.

When I felt uncomfortable about what I had written and felt that something was not appropriate and too personal, I decided to omit it from my personal history narrative. What assisted me in telling my story was the juxtaposition with *Hard Times* as I made the characters from the novel the focal point when I felt uncomfortable.

Relational issues did not only have to be considered when it came to my family, but also to other participants such as my students and when I felt uncomfortable relating their experiences I treated these in the same way as I had treated my own experiences, either by leaving them out or by making the characters in *Dead Poets Society* or *Freedom Writers* the focal point.

2.8 Trustworthiness

“We have all made up our own truths, lock stock and barrel....We believe the truths that we need....my reader how do you know what is true and what is false about what I've said?the answer is narrative, narrative. Just find my story, compare it to your own and decide for yourself”. (Nash, 2004, p. 32)

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative research relies on criteria other than reliability and generalisability and a term that is used to describe these criteria for evaluation in qualitative research methodologies such as narrative inquiry and self-study, and which I have chosen to adopt, is trustworthiness. Samaras (2011) advised that in order for a self-study to be trustworthy, the data must be generated from varied sources and viewpoints and also that transparency, wherein the researcher is open, honest and reflective is important. In commenting on the role of reflection in self-study, Loughran (2004) argued that self-study deepens the integrity of reflection because it relies on dialogue and is open to public critique. In their reflections, self-study researchers rely on conversations with colleagues as they question their

classroom conundrums. The supportive critical friend community in which self-study researchers work plays a key role in endorsing or challenging the researcher's suppositions and interpretations (Samaras 2011). This resonates with Mishler's (1990) view of validation in narrative research as asking whether what has been socially constructed is sufficiently trustworthy so as to be relied on by the research community.

Transparency about the way in which the data that have been constructed is analysed and represented is also important for trustworthiness in self-study research and Feldman (2003) explained that it is not enough for self-study researchers just to represent findings – what is equally important is the clarity of explanation of how data were constructed and collected. In addition, Samaras (2011) advised that field and research texts and the analysis thereof must be discussed with others at various points in the study, which is where the critical friends were particularly important to my study. I engaged with them about my data generation methods and whether what I had generated was sufficient and could be trusted.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advised narrative inquirers to “listen closely to their critics as they compose field texts, interim research texts and final research texts.....every response is valid to some degree and contains the seeds of an important point” (p. 181). It is my experience that my research supervisor was an invaluable critic whose advice I valued and did not question. I found that there was never a need to question her advice because I trusted her and there was never an instance wherein I felt reluctant to put her suggested changes into effect as I could see the wisdom of the suggestions. When talking to one of my critical friends who is also my colleague, about my field and research texts, I acknowledged that data I had generated with students might not be trustworthy because they could have told me what they thought I wanted to hear. I took heed of my critical friend's suggestion that I ask the students the same questions in different ways and at different times during the study.

Another reason for asking the same questions in different ways and at different times was that I was seeking clarity, which is one of the features that Elbow (2000) identified as differentiating personal from academic writing. He cautioned that academic writers need to take heed of “claims, reasons, evidence and argument. Being winning, sincere or even powerfully seductive is not enough” (Elbow, 2000, p. 315). I had to be convinced that my claims were based on trustworthy evidence. As a participant and the researcher in the study I had to take care that in amalgamating the field texts and research texts, I had to be “the storyteller narrating a number

of stories, in order to create meanings.....at times I was both storyteller and story verifier; narrator and analyser; values seeker and facts seeker; inside the text and outside the text and humanist and social scientist” (Nash, 2004, pp.19-20). As I made meaning of my field and research texts, I was looking deep within myself in the hope that what I had to say might also be important to others (Nash, 2004).

In making meaning and interpretation central to narrative research, Mishler (1990) called for clear and detailed descriptions of how field texts were generated and constructed. As Feldman (2003) explained, “we need to make sure that we are not blinded or fooled by the ways that we construct our stories. We must also provide reasons why others should trust our findings” (p. 7). In writing this thesis therefore my intention was, not to provide something that can be considered as “best practice” but to allow others to scrutinise the trustworthiness of the research by “providing a rich description of the context and research process” (Samaras, 2011, p. 221).

According to Elbow (2000), another feature that sometimes differentiates current academic writing from personal writing is that of seeing other positions. One does not have to claim absolute objectivity to achieve this and academics in the humanities indicate how their writing fits into a larger landscape by stating their positions in relation to what others are saying (elbow, 2000). In my writing, I constantly interspersed what I had to say with evidence and reasons for my claims, as the validation of self-study research lies in the convincing evidence (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Elbow, 2000). In commenting on objectivity, Eisner (1992) argued that there is not clarity around the meaning of objectivity and in eliminating subjectivity we would not write about ourselves but instead, only write about the world that surrounds us.

We all construct our individual frameworks, which are dependent on what we know as we rely on the discourses available to us (Richardson, 2001). Eisner raised the question as to the feasibility of absolute objectivity and asked if there is only one absolute truth to which we all subscribe. He made the point that individual perceptions will be “influenced by skill, point of view, focus, language and framework” (p. 11). In my understanding, Eisner’s point was that ontological objectivity is not possible and I agree with his suggestion that subjectivity be accepted as personal frameworks which we have constructed and which will differ for every situation and the view of the world as it is. In my opinion, this means that there must be acknowledgement that there cannot be one truth due to the influence of the frameworks or

perspectives through which we seek understanding in a particular situation. Elbow (2000) is in agreement with Eisner's view and stated:

Few academics now believe that they can achieve objectivity – or that this view from everywhere-and nowhere is a desirable goal. Everyone seems to agree that we can never write anything except from a situated and interested point of view. But the death of objectivity has not catapulted academics into publishing personal expressive writing in learned journals. (p. 315)

Yet another feature of personal writing that is said to differ from more conventional academic discourse is that of logical organisation (Elbow, 2000). Whilst the structure of a personal history narrative might not be as rigid as that of conventional academic discourse, throughout the thesis I aimed to be explicit about what I wrote and signposted what had come before and what was to follow in order to maintain coherence and cohesion. In my experience, academics often tend to avoid talking about themselves in their writing and Elbow (2000) questioned why academic writing that is personal should not be taken seriously. The writing of my personal history narrative and the juxtaposition with literature and film throughout my writing contributed to a tone that was expressive. I was circumspect about which parts of my personal history narrative I included in the final thesis and took care to intersperse references to relevant scholarly literature throughout my thesis. Elbow (2000) questioned why, if arguments are being made, problems solved and issues addressed – which is what I attempted to achieve throughout my study – the academic discourse cannot also be personal.

Having written my personal history narrative, analysed it, used the findings and reflections in my practice and reported on the process, I hoped to represent events and characters so as to leave the reader with the sense that this is indeed a “believable story that represents truth” within the contextual and conceptual framework which I had clearly outlined because “language constructs one's sense of who one is, one's subjectivity” (Richardson, 2001, p. 36). Nash (2004) distinguished between ethical and narrative truth and differentiated between fact and truth. He argued that if the facts have been distorted the reader will soon know that the writing is dishonest and not true. I thus took Nash's advice and was as honest as possible and I tried to ensure that what I wrote was consistent and coherent throughout the thesis.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted that in narrative inquiry fact and fiction can become blurred and as we wonder about our field texts, narrative truth “informs and re-forms ethical truth” (Nash, 2004, p. 140). They explained that as we recall the past we reconstruct it to represent what we perceive at the time because our narratives rely on who we are at the time of writing them. In constructing my personal history narrative I recalled and wrote what I felt I needed to and in my writing I did not change the events of the past which I saw as the facts, but in the writing process I did sometimes change how I viewed them.

2.9 Challenges

Something that concerned me was that in writing my personal history narrative and delving into my past, there were painful stories to be told and I did not feel comfortable to divulge all to my readers. This fear was assuaged by Nash (2004, p. 89) who advised: “the degree of personal self-disclosure and self-probing is always the author’s choice, not the readers’.”

What I sometimes found difficult in writing my personal history narrative was that I was including others who are already in my life (Ellis, 2007). My mother passed away in 2009 and at times, I found it uncomfortable that in writing my narrative I was writing about her. On reviewing what I had written, I made the decision to omit some incidents in which I had painted my parents in a very negative light and I found that in doing so, the story was still told as I recalled it. I also made the decision to delete some very personal information that my sister had shared, as in writing about lived experiences “we need to honor and respect our relationships with intimate others while being true to what we perceive to be the truth” (Ellis, 2007, p. 210).

When I informed my sister about my decision to delete certain information, she stated that she did not have a problem with the inclusion thereof. Nevertheless, I feel that in deleting selected information I was still including enough in the narrative whilst honouring my family members’ privacy. Likewise, Nash (2004) recounted that one of the reviewers of his book stated that she encourages students who write personal narratives to divulge only what they feel ready to share and that in doing so, they must have respect for the confidentiality of those whom they mention.

To write my personal narrative history was emotionally draining when I recalled some childhood incidents that I had not thought of for years. Nash (2004) warned that those pursuing personal narrative writing “may need professional help” (p. 32). However, the way in which I dealt with the memories that were too painful was to not pursue or include them.

I always claim to have a terrible memory and was thus concerned that I would have very little to write about, but I was encouraged by Bailey et al. (1996) who wrote that when they were working on their autobiographies, they recalled things that had “almost been forgotten” (p. 21). Besides the concern about not having much to say in my story, another concern about my self-study was that I was worried that to write my personal history narrative would not be an academic way to present my thesis. Here again, I was reassured by scholars such as Nash (2004) who argued that “our personal stories contain within them the gems of many intellectual and experiential truths. At the very least, they become the means for conveying our wisdom. At the very most, they can change lives” (p. 42).

Nash (2004) advised that in scholarly personal narrative writing the writer should start by looking inward initially and then looking outward later which is where other influences such as political and social would come into the narrative. The way in which I did this in responding to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* was to write my personal history narrative and to analyse it. I then rewrote it through juxtaposing events, themes and people in my personal narrative with events, themes and characters in the novel *Hard Times*. This became my second layer of analysis, which included both the particular and the general, as it was my personal narrative interspersed with *Hard Times*. The third layer of analysis was juxtaposed with two films, *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers*, which both centre on English education. The interspersion of scholarly literature within throughout the thesis was also a way of moving from the particular to the general and an example of where I did this was to construct themes from my personal history narrative and to then move away from my personal narrative by reconsidering these themes from the perspectives of scholarly literature.

Another concern was that personal history narrative does not follow any conventional template and that the genre is not fixed but tends to be composed along the way. The fact that it is not conventional appealed to me but at times what I had written was messy and this caused me to become anxious. The way in which I dealt with my anxiety was to voice my concern to my research supervisor who advised me to keep writing and that at the end we would make sense of it together.

2.10 Conclusion

“The energies of mindfulness, concentration and insight can liberate us from our anxiety and worries. We let go of the past and the future, and come in touch with the wonders of the present [Thích Nhất Hạnh](#)” (2012).

I selected the above quotation because what is at the heart of my study is my hope that to be mindful of the pedagogic influences of the past will liberate me from the constraining influences and that knowing will enable me to develop more purposeful pedagogies. In this chapter, I explained my research process by elucidating my methodological choice of narrative self-study. I then described in detail the research setting and research participants so as to give a sense of where the study was situated and who contributed to the generation of my field and research texts. Following this was a section on the generation and representation of the field texts. It is in this section that I explained the process of the juxtaposition of my thesis with my “proof texts” of the novel *Hard Times* and the films *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers*. An explanation of my multi-layered analysis followed in a section on creative analytic practice. The ethical considerations and trustworthiness were discussed as well as the challenges that I encountered during this study.

The chapter that follows is titled *Sowing* and it begins with a brief background to *Hard Times* before it moves into my personal history narrative that retraces my life in three phases. The first being from birth to my secondary school years, the second my university years and the third tracks my working life from a secondary school teacher of English to a teacher educator.

CHAPTER THREE: SOWING – MY PERSONAL HISTORY NARRATIVE

3.1 Introduction

Chapter One of this thesis introduced my study. In the chapter, I explained the reasons for my choice of topic - *Influences on, and possibilities for, my pedagogy: a narrative self-study* and my two research questions – *What has influenced my pedagogy?* and *How can awareness of these influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?* The chapter went on to give an historical backdrop to the study. Next, the context within which the study is situated and the participants were introduced. What followed was a brief introduction to my methodological approach and then a discussion of the concepts relevant to the study. An outline for the structure of the thesis concluded the introduction to the study.

Chapter Two offered an explanation of my research process wherein the methodology, the setting and the participants were examined in detail. The composition of the field and research texts were explained before my layered literary analysis was introduced. Ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness and challenges associated with my research process were examined before the chapter was concluded.

In writing Chapter Three, I was responding to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* In agriculture, one sows seed, reaps the crop once the seed has grown and garners or gathers into a granary what has been sown and reaped. My personal history narrative, which is represented in this chapter, has been juxtaposed with Charles Dickens's novel *Hard Times* (1854/1973). The novel *Hard Times* is divided into three books. Book One which makes reference to the education and upbringing of children is titled "Sowing". Because this chapter portrays my life and influences thereon, I am remembering seeds that were sown.

I started composing my personal history narrative by writing down my experiences with teachers at school and then realised that influences on my pedagogy had started way before then, as my mother was a teacher who had had an enormous influence on my formative educational experiences. I was really struggling to start my story and initially what I wrote seemed to me to be shallow and uninteresting. I kept asking myself, "Who on earth would be interested in this personal narrative or even bother to read it?" At the time of writing the initial draft of my personal history narrative, I was teaching *Hard Times*. In my lectures, I kept comparing my lived pedagogic experiences and people whom I know with events and

characters in the novel. I also encouraged my students to relate the characters, plot and setting of the novel to their own lives.

After my initial attempt at analysing my personal history narrative, I decided that it needed to be revised. I returned to what I had written and similar to how I had related the novel to the lives of my students as a pedagogic strategy, I related my personal history narrative to the novel. Kathleen, my research supervisor, kept telling me to use my disciplinary knowledge in my narrative self-study research, but I was not sure how to go about this. When I began to juxtapose my personal history narrative with *Hard Times*, I suppose that this was the beginning of my response to Kathleen's suggestion. I thought, "Why not use what I know and am familiar with?" as an English teacher educator.

I was intrigued that although the novel was written in the 1800s I could see similarities with pedagogic experiences when I was a learner, a university student, a teacher of English and in my current position as an English teacher educator. I asked myself: "Why have we not evolved? How is that hundreds of years later the same teaching methods are evident?" I also saw similarities in the social sphere as many of the ills of society that Dickens wrote of are evident in our contemporary South African context. Dickens (1854/1973) explored many social inequities in the novel, in relation to themes such as education, social class, self-interest, morality, marriage and family.

Nash (2004) proposed that the writing of a scholarly personal history narrative can be strengthened by drawing on formal background knowledge and discipline knowledge, which I have done in writing this narrative. I chose *Hard Times* because it is my favourite classic novel and also, because I love lecturing on it to the fourth year English Education students. In my view, *Hard Times* is based on people, themes and events with which my students can identify. I have found that the themes and events in the novel relate to issues that my students have encountered in their lives and that they are likely to be exposed to in their experiences as teachers. The focus of my study is pedagogy and I used the juxtaposition of *Hard Times* with my lived experience to explore this concept, because scholarly personal narrative "writers use their personae in order to explore subject matter other than themselves" (Nash, 2004, p. 28).

My personal history narrative begins with a brief overview of the setting and major characters of *Hard Times* in order to set the scene. I then go on to write about my formative years from birth through to my secondary school years and thereafter record my years as a university student. What follows is my career trajectory from a secondary school teacher to a teacher

educator of English. The concluding section of *Sowing* highlights what was revealed in writing my personal history narrative and gives a short overview of the chapter that follows.

3.2 Setting the Scene

One of the reasons why I enjoy teaching *Hard Times* is that I am an English teacher educator and the novel centres on Dickens's critique of a failed education system in a very unequal society. Although *Hard Times* was first published in 1854, the social and economic issues that are dealt with in the novel, such as poverty and class differences, are relevant in the contemporary world. I know the characters so well and many of them remind me of people whom I have encountered over the years. The events described in the novel are similar to some of my experiences. In addition, the novel is set in an industrial town by the name of Coketown where everything is black from the industrial dust. About Coketown, Dickens wrote:

...it was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if smoke and ashes had allowed it...it had a black canal in it and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long....you saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. (p. 65)

Durnacol, where I spent my formative years, was a coal-mining town and many issues that were faced by the miners were much the same as those in Coketown, with appallingly dangerous working conditions and little remuneration. Durnacol was surrounded by mine dumps and smoke constantly curled off them from the sulphur which had a very offensive odour. Durnacol was characterised by mine buildings and little else.

Charles Dickens was passionate about social and educational reform and this is evident in *Hard Times*. The novel was written a decade after the industrial revolution in Britain, which was a period in which the working class was oppressed and the class distinction was characterised by the very wealthy and the impoverished. Similarly, there was a definite class distinction in Durnacol and because my parents were educated, with my father being a surveyor and my mother a teacher, my sisters and I were brought up in the belief that we were of a higher social standing than the offspring of the miners. There was also a social hierarchy within the schools that I attended, as any learners who hailed from the mines tended to be seen as inferior to other

learners in the school. Both the primary and the secondary schools that I attended were not on the mine and the mine children were bussed in daily.

Hard Times centres on the character of Mr Gradgrind, who is a man of means in Coketown and who is the superintendent of a school. The novel is divided into three books named “sowing”, “reaping” and “garnering”. At the start of the novel, the reader meets Mr Gradgrind in the classroom and it becomes evident that he is sowing an education that is based on facts and facts alone and that his view of education is that the learners are empty vessels to be filled with facts. I imagine that in the agricultural sector, if fine seed is sown, what is reaped and garnered will be fruitful. However, Mr Gradgrind does not reap or garner what it is that he intended when he takes in a girl called Sissy Jupe who hails from circus stock. He clearly states his intentions as follows:

I shall have the satisfaction of causing you to be strictly educated; you will be living proof to all who come into communication with you, of the advantages of the training you will receive. You will be reclaimed and reformed. (p. 88)

Throughout the novel, Sissy represents an imaginative and creative side of life, which is contrary to a life that revolves around facts; and eventually it is the creative, imaginative side that triumphs.

Bitzer, a learner at Mr Gradgrind’s school, is also a major character, and he is the antithesis of Sissy. When the reader first meets Bitzer, his physical description is in sharp contrast to that of Sissy:

...but whereas the girl was so dark eyed and dark haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes but for the short lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves expressed their form. His short-cropped hair might have been a mere continuation of the sandy freckles on his forehead and face. His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white. (pp. 49-50)

Other key characters in the novel to whom I make reference in my personal history narrative are Louisa and Tom, two of Mr Gradgrind’s children. Louisa and Tom are not permitted to

have anything fanciful in their lives. In the novel, the reader follows the lives of these two characters from childhood through to their adult lives. Louisa is the character who represents the factual aspect of the novel and she is the polar opposite of Sissy. Because of the way in which Mr Gradgrind brings up his children, Louisa is not able to show emotions such as joy and she appears to accept that this is her lot in life. Tom, on the other hand, has a rebellious streak. To illustrate, Tom begins a conversation with Louisa by stating: “I am sick of my life Loo. I hate it altogether and I hate everyone except you” (p. 90). He goes on to become agitated about his life and Louisa responds:

As I get older, and nearer growing up, I often sit wondering here, and think how unfortunate it is for me that I can't reconcile you to home better than I am able to do. I don't know what other girls know. I can't play to you, or sing to you. I can't talk to you so as to lighten your mind, for I never see any amusing sights or read any amusing books that it would be a pleasure or a relief to you to talk about, when you are tired. (p. 90)

Tom continues to vent his frustrations as the conversation continues:

Tom: I wish I could collect all the Facts we hear so much about, and all the Figures, and all the people who found them out: and I wish I could put a thousand barrels of gunpowder under them, and blow them all up together! However, when I go to live with old Bounderby, I'll have my revenge.

Louisa: Your revenge, Tom?

Tom: I mean, I'll enjoy myself a little, and go about and see something, and hear something. I'll recompense myself for the way in which I have been brought up.

Louisa: But don't disappoint yourself beforehand, Tom. Mr. Bounderby thinks as father thinks, and is a great deal rougher, and not half so kind” (p. 92).

The above conversation from Book the First gives insight into Tom and Louisa's unhappiness. At the end of this first section of the novel, Louisa marries Mr Bounderby because it is what her father wishes. Mr Bounderby is Mr Gradgrind's good friend, a pompous character who purports to be self-made but is in actual fact living a lie. By the end of Book the Second, Louisa has left her husband and is back in her father's house, while Tom has adopted a lifestyle of drinking and gambling and is in financial difficulties.

The characters in the novel are very cleverly and aptly named as can be seen by the alliteration¹² in the name of Mr Gradgrind. *Hard Times* was written in response to the industrial revolution and offers a critique of the harsh working conditions of factories. The novel portrayed the people who worked in the factories in Coketown as poor, uneducated and badly paid with no opportunity for escaping this situation. Dickens describes them as all doing the same work and following the same routines that continue year after year. In the same way that the workers go about their “daily grind” and toil for long hours, Mr Gradgrind is always making his charges at the school return to the grind, which is to work hard. Another example of an aptly named character is Mr Bounderby who turns out to be a vagabond who has lied about his background and capitalised on this untruth in order to make money. The connotative meaning of his name thus signals that he is not an honourable man. To refer to somebody as a bounder is to indicate that he is not to be trusted and is a fortune-hunter. The name of the school teacher, Mr M’Chooakumchild, is also apt as he is an authoritarian teacher who does not tolerate any deviation from facts. His name is a play on the words “choke-a-child” and the children in *Hard Times* are almost choked with facts.

3.3 My Formative Years: Book the First

The opening of my personal history narrative titled “Book the First” deals with my formative years from birth until I went to secondary school. The headings of the sections have been borrowed from relevant chapter titles of *Hard Times*.

3.3.1 The Key-Note

“The Key-Note” is the title of one of the chapters in *Hard Times* and because a synonym for key-note is “the heart of the matter”, I have chosen this as the heading for this section because my formative years are at the heart of this part of the narrative.

I initially thought that in remembering my pedagogic experiences, I would start with my school career. However, in writing my narrative, I came to realise that there were many pedagogic influences even before I went to school and the story thus starts with my birth on 15 April 1962. I was born into a white South African family and am the middle daughter in a family of three girls. My father was a mine surveyor and my mother was a teacher. I spent my formative years in a conservative white community in the coal-mining town of Durnacol. My whiteness in

¹² Alliteration is a literary device in which there is repetition of the same first letter or sound in words that are close together in a phrase or sentence.

apartheid South Africa in the 1960s meant that I was privileged, according to Verwoed's¹³ philosophy of white superiority. The history of apartheid makes me ashamed of my whiteness, but I have accepted that I cannot spend my life apologising for this accident of birth.

In *Hard Times*, Chapter One of Book the First is titled "The One Thing Needful", and it sets the scene for Coketown school's stifling, repressive pedagogy, which left nothing to the imagination and which revolved around facts. Mr Gradgrind opens the novel by dictating his pedagogic philosophy to the teacher, Mr M'Choakumchild:

Facts. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will be of service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, Sir! (p.47)

There was a public library in Coketown. However, the children who attended the Mr Gradgrind's school were not permitted to enter the library.

Mr Gradgrind greatly tormented his mind about what the people read in this library: a point whereon little rivers of tabular statements periodically flowed into the howling ocean of tabular statements, which no diver ever got to any depth in and came up sane. It was a disheartening circumstance, but a melancholy fact, that even these readers persisted in wondering. (p. 90)

By contrast, my sisters and I were encouraged to read and we visited the library once a week. Sometimes we would be left there to peruse the books whilst my mother went into town. My mother was an avid reader and I recall being read to when I was very young and loving this special time with books. I am aware that being exposed to books from birth meant that I was privileged in a way that many children are not. My eldest sister also recalls being read to and her memories are of Enid Blyton books. I also have fond memories of Enid Blyton and her *Magic Faraway Tree* books are what come to mind. Perhaps this is because the books were about exciting adventures that took place in a fantasy world. I remember how I would then play outside and climb trees, find "fairy rings" on the grass and imagine that I was in the middle of

¹³ Dr Hendrik Verwoed was the Prime Minister of South Africa from 1958 – 1966. He is often referred to as "the architect of apartheid" due to some of the acts that were passed during his tenure as Prime Minister.

a great adventure. A clear memory is of my mother taking us outside one morning and pointing out a ring on the grass and spinning a yarn about the fairies dancing at night.

I also loved the *Doctor Dolittle* series by Hugh Loftings and the Roald Dahl stories such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *James and the Giant Peach* (1961) and *Fantastic Mr Fox* (1970). These books allowed me to escape into a world of make-believe. Bible stories were read by my mother every evening and I was spellbound by stories such as *Noah's Ark* and *Jonah and the Whale*. Not only was I read to and exposed to books, I was also encouraged to listen to “story records” and my favourite was “Peter and the Wolf” by Sergio Prokofiev because not only did it tell a story, it also included music and taught about musical instruments. “Peter and the Wolf” was thus informative as well as entertaining.

My early experiences of reading and stories form a contrast to the experiences of the Gradgrind children in *Hard Times* who are curious about a circus in town. Their father, in wondering how this curiosity started, asks: “...whether in spite of all precautions, any idle story-book can have got into the house? Because in minds that have practically been formed by rule and line, from the cradle upwards, this is so curious, so incomprehensible” (p. 63). The children in *Hard Times* are not permitted to wonder, read storybooks or listen to stories.

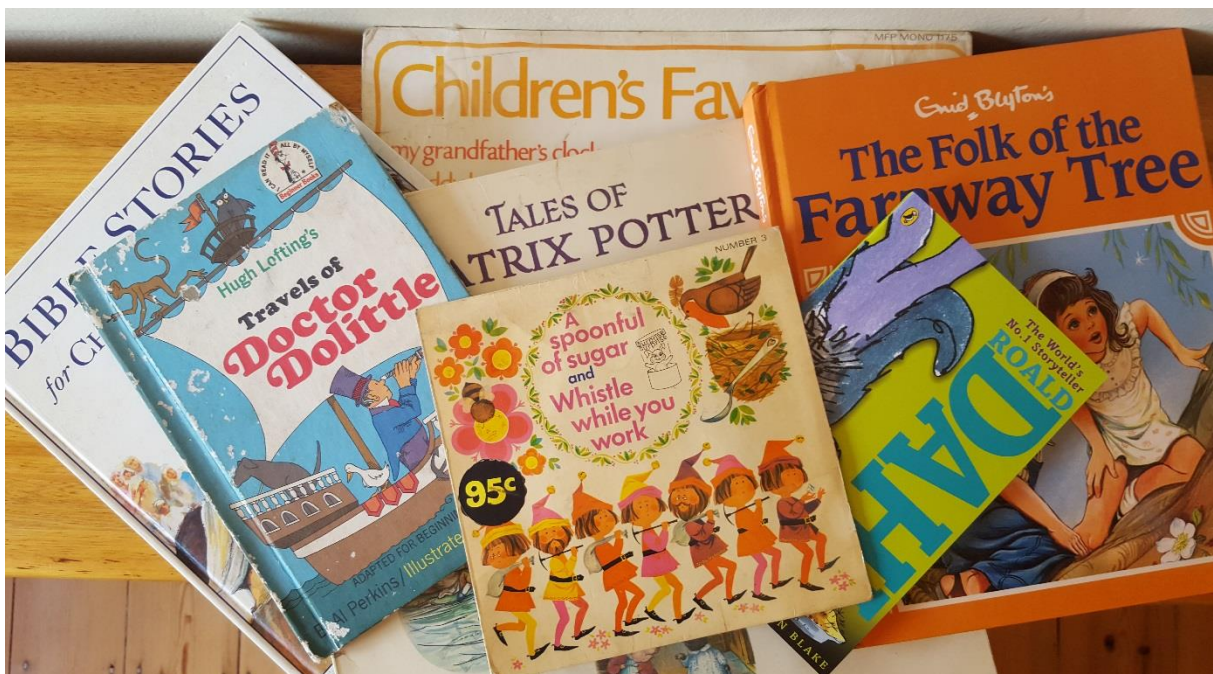


Figure 3.1: *Down Memory Lane: My Favourite Childhood Storybooks and Records*

I kept many of my favourite childhood books and records for my own children (Figure 3.1). Our mother owned hundreds of books and a memory that my eldest sister has is that a friend

of ours, who was the same age as my sister, used to come and borrow books from my mother and my sister recalled how she was always impressed that somebody so young was always reading. Many years later, when my sister's children were little and going to a birthday party, she would always buy a book as a present, much to the disgust of her boys who were adamant that a book was not a present. When I had a conversation with my sister about our childhood, she proclaimed: "Reading for me is essential as it improves vocabulary and I always buy a newspaper even if it is just to do the crossword. I think that it is because we always had a newspaper at home." When her children were young she read to them, as did my younger sister and I with our respective children.

My children would see me reading novels and as they grew older we would read together and the youngest, who hated reading, would read a page of his homework to me and I would then read the next page as he followed and so on. What is interesting to me is that the older two are avid readers and my third son has read very few novels in his 21 years. Nevertheless my children have all achieved academically and perhaps the son who does not read gleaned much from being read to.

3.3.2 Murdering the Innocents

The second chapter in *Hard Times* is titled "Murdering the Innocents" and in this chapter, the reader is familiarised with the pedagogy of facts, rote learning and punishment that characterised 19th Century classrooms. "Murdering" is an interesting choice of word as it suggests violence and death and the phrase suggests that the victims were unaware because of their innocence. I have chosen this as my heading for this section because the primary school that I attended from 1967 to 1974 subscribed to traditional methods of teaching and keeping order. Corporal punishment was the preferred method of punishment for the boys and writing of lines was the standard punishment for the girls, although many of the teachers were not above giving the girls a whack if they deemed it necessary. I recall being terrified of one particular teacher, Mrs SC. She was an authoritarian who shouted and hit us with a ruler when we had not learnt our work by heart. Although she was not the only teacher who was a disciplinarian and who subscribed to teacher-centred methods, she taught me for the first three years of my schooling and thus had an enormous influence on me.

However, my maths educator, Mrs N, who was certainly not "nice" and, in the minds of her young charges, did not display any human qualities, did seem to respect the members of her classes. I do not recall any instances in which she did not afford us the same respect that she

demanding. She would reprimand us without shouting and treated us courteously. We all knew her rules, as well as the consequences for breaking them. We also knew that Mrs N. was fair and treated all in her classes equally. Contrary to this, Mr Gradgrind does not afford Sissy any respect. For example, when he goes to fetch her from the circus folk, she is lamenting that her father has disappeared and that he will be helpless without her. Mr Gradgrind responds by saying:

...this is a wanton waste of time. Let the girl understand the fact. Let her take it from me, if you like, who have run away from, myself. Here, what's your name! Your father has absconded – deserted you – and you mustn't expect to see him again as long as you live. (p. 79)

Mr Gradgrind then takes Sissy away from the circus folk to live in his home, which means that fact and fancy now reside in the same abode.

Many of my teachers seemed to be of the ilk of Mr Gradgrind who is of the opinion that to indulge and to encourage a child to have any imagination is “vulgar curiosity” (p. 62). The children's “play area” in the Gradgrind home is stacked with cabinets filled with books about educational facts and they have never been exposed to anything as fanciful as a story book in their lives. In the same way that there is no place for frivolity and play in the Gradgrind home, there was no place for this in any of my primary school classes.

My mother taught at the primary school I attended and so I felt that there was a great deal of pressure on me to perform academically. I felt forced to rote learn every word from the textbook for every subject in order to regurgitate it all perfectly in tests. When my mother tested me at home, she would shout and I would cry as I struggled to learn the work verbatim. I recall many a book sailing across the room in my direction when I did not know something and there was always the fear and threat of physical punishment. Looking back, I can see that I had little understanding of what I was learning. This method of education in which the teacher imparted information which was then stored by the learners was what characterised the first seven years of my schooling. I felt that it was in my best interests to learn the work verbatim as I would then be rewarded with kind words.

3.3.3 Bridget's Progress

One of the chapters in *Hard Times* is titled “Sissy's Progress” and as this section records my school progress, I have taken the liberty of using the heading, “Bridget's Progress.”

For many years, I was always top of the class in primary school. In looking through my bookshelves recently, I found some book prizes that had the nature of the award pasted in the front. These certificates (Figure 3.2) served as artefacts to prompt my memories of my schooling.

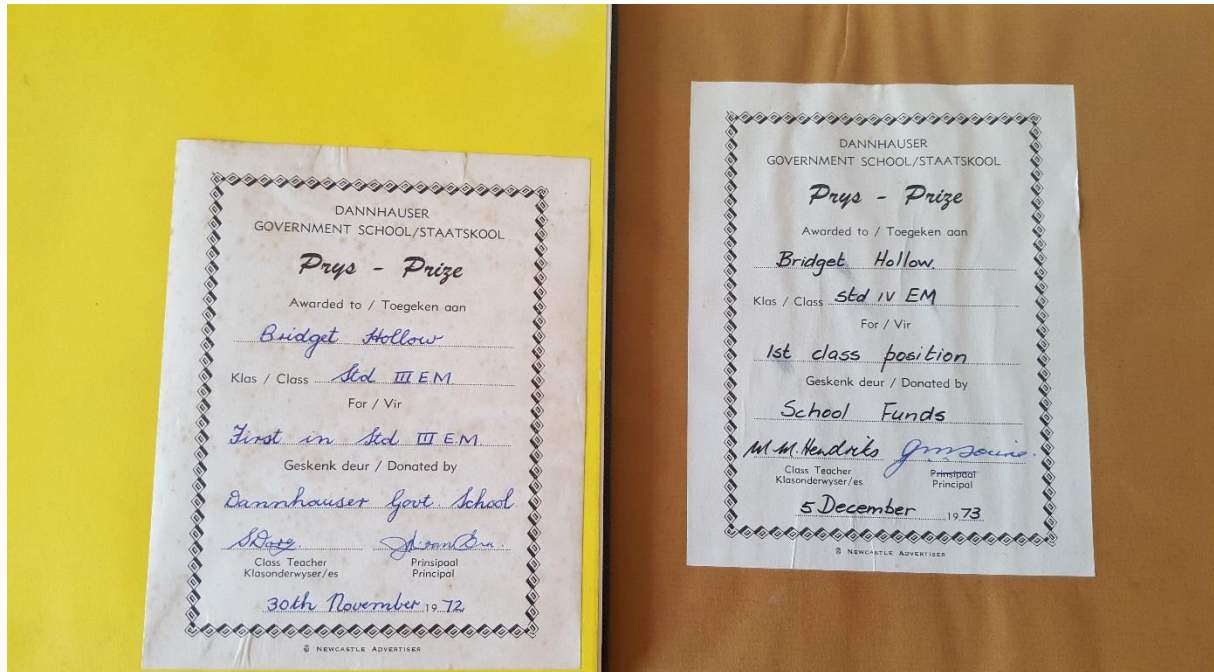


Figure 3.2: *Top of the Class: The Certificates in the Front of the Books that I Received as Prizes in Standards 3 and 4*

As can be seen from the dates on the certificates they are from 1972 and 1973 and I found them in the front of book prizes that I received at my primary school's year-end prize-giving ceremonies. It is interesting that I found these books at home as I am not a hoarder and generally do not keep anything that is no longer useful. I gave boxes of children's books to a children's home and do not recall making a decision to keep my book prizes. I am not sentimental and would not have kept them for that reason. Perhaps there is a part of me that felt proud to have been awarded these books and I thus kept them?

These certificates remind me of how I always came first in class until standard 5 when a girl, called Karina came from Durban. She just pipped me in every test, which placed me in second position. My mother put great energy into trying to reinstate me into first position and my results were very impressive as a result of the extra coaching from her. However, I still came second to Karina and I felt that the fact that my marks were still really high was never acknowledged by my mother. Instead I was reprimanded for not coming first and I have thus

given the certificate in the front of my standard 5 book prize the title of “*Fall from Grace*” (Figure 3.3).

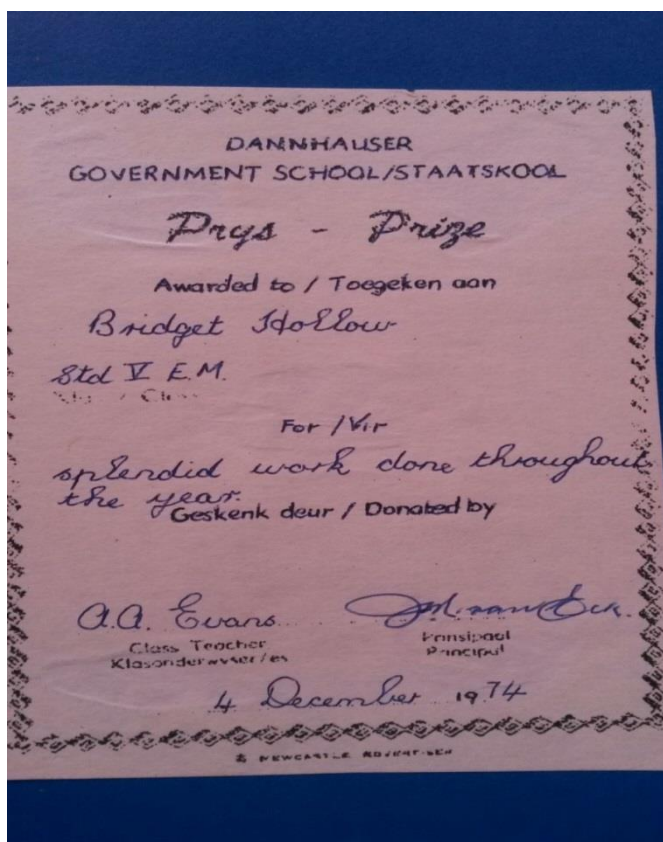


Figure 3.3 – *Fall from Grace: The Certificate in the Front of the Book that I Received as a Prize in Standard 5*

On close inspection of the certificate, which states “For splendid work done throughout the year”, I find the choice of “splendid” interesting and rather strange. I have always used “splendid” in the context of something that is aesthetically pleasing such as a lavish building. The Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus (2001/2007/2009) identifies synonyms such as “ornate, magnificent, palatial, elegant, dazzling and glorious” for the word “splendid” (p. 896). Looking back, I wonder if the teacher knew that I was feeling under tremendous pressure from home. Did she believe that my work was splendid? Why did she not choose from words such as “diligent”, “industrious”, “conscientious”, “studious” or “assiduous”, which seem far more appropriate to describe my diligence? As far as I remember, the teacher’s view that my work was “splendid” was certainly not shared by my mother.

3.3.4 A Loophole

The chapter in *Hard Times* titled “A Loophole” describes how Tom and Louisa are caught peeping into a circus tent by their father. Mr Gradgrind is furious to find his children in this “degraded position” (p. 57). The ensuing conversation is:

“I was tired. I have been for a long time,” said Louisa.

“Tired? Of what?” asked the astonished father.

“I don’t know of what – of everything I think.”

“Say not another word,” returned Mr Gradgrind. “You are childish. I will hear no more.” He did not speak again until they had walked some half-a-mile in silence, when he gravely broke out with: “What would your best friends say Louisa? Do you attach no value to their good opinion? What would Mr Bounderby say?”

In the same way as Mr Gradgrind is always so concerned about what others would say, I recall that my mother seemed to me to be concerned about what her friends and family would say about me not living up to her expectations. She would often threaten me with how my father would react to my academic underachievement.

A long buried memory that surfaced when writing my personal history narrative is of how in primary school I wrote a test and after the test I realised that I had mixed up two things up in an answer. I knew that I had done well and that this mix up would cost me a mark close to 100%. In the same way as Tom and Louisa find a loophole out of their factual existence by peeping in at the circus, I found a loophole out of having an incorrect answer in a test. At break, I sneaked into the classroom where the teacher had left the test scripts on her desk. I found mine and put arrows to change my two answers around. In mulling over this incident I still feel the fear and my racing heart as I hoped not to get caught. To make matters worse, I recall that, before changing the words around, I checked my book to see which answer was correct. I scored 98% for that test and Karina still beat me and so the cheating was in vain! I pride myself on my honesty and integrity and was thus shocked when this memory surfaced. I can only think that I behaved in this manner because I felt that nothing but perfection was good enough for my mother and I was afraid of being inadequate.

Looking back, I feel that these early feelings of inadequacy have probably contributed to my belief that whatever I do in my life is not enough and that I am always falling short. I would

like to think that my own feelings of inadequacy would have alerted me to the effect that my mother's ambitions had on me and that I did not place academic pressure on my children, but rather that I accepted their shortcomings. It is with a deep sense of regret that I have come to realise, upon reflection, how I treated my own children. I now see that when assisting them with their homework I did exactly what my mother had done to me and put a tremendous amount of pressure on them to perform. Rote learning and shouting matches became the norm when my older children were working on their homework during their primary school years. The pressure that I applied was perhaps a bit more subtle, as I recall saying something along the lines of: "Oh well, at least you tried your best. How did your friends perform?" It was only when my third child, who is nine years younger than his eldest brother, was at school, and not coping well academically that I realised that there are different ways of learning. I find it remarkable that I had been a teacher for over fifteen years when my youngest son was born and it had not occurred to me before. In comparing him to his brothers it struck me that each person responds according to the type of learner that they are and that a teacher has to try and accommodate all learners in the classroom! My middle son, who has a psychology degree as well as a law degree, blames me for his habit of rote learning and he feels that he did not achieve his full potential at school as a result of his formative years. He would listen when I was assisting his little brother with homework and would always comment on how I had ruined him and how he wished that I had treated him in the same way as his brother when helping him with homework many years before. He is a practising attorney and, having said this, he also acknowledges that law is about being able to recall and recite what has been learned. So in the long run perhaps it really did not do him too much harm!

3.3.5 No Way Out

The chapter in *Hard Times* that is titled "No Way Out" explains how Stephen, whose character represents the working class, goes to ask Mr Bounderby for permission to divorce his alcoholic wife who keeps disappearing for years on end and then resurfacing. Stephen is not given the necessary permission and thus has no way out of his marriage. In writing my narrative, I have become aware that my eldest two boys on whom I modelled my behaviour of my mother and primary school teachers, had no way out even if they wished to do things differently.

I certainly felt that I had no way out of my mother's expectations. In addition to having to excel at school, I also felt that I was expected to do well on the sports field and in other extra curricula activities. I went to ballet and music lessons as well as elocution lessons. My mother would

laugh at what a clumsy ballerina I was, and yet she would insist that I continue with the classes. She would also watch my hockey matches and tell everybody about how I was so terrified of the ball that I would run the other way. This embarrassed me and eroded my confidence on the hockey field. To please my mother and get some positive feedback I played the piano. I played reasonably well. But any joy that I could have derived from this was dampened by my mother's insistence that I practice for at least an hour every day and that I had to play a piece until it was perfect. When I was in my 40s, my mother gave the beautiful old family piano to me. However, I never open it as I am no longer able to read music or to play in spite of having passed the Grade 7 practical and theory music exams.

I remember how, when I was about 10 years old I was entered into a talent contest by my mother and, on arrival at the venue, realised that I had left my music at home. We lived a few blocks away from the hall and my mother refused to go home and fetch my music. To teach me a lesson, she forced me to play without the music to a hall full of people. I had been crying and had to dry my eyes and sit down and play. I won the competition and the prize was an electric organ which my father still has in his home. Recently, my father told me that I must take the organ home and I refused, telling him to give it to my sister's grandchildren. He seems to have no idea as to why I do not want it and neither did I at the time. Now that this memory has surfaced, perhaps I understand myself better.

Recalling these memories has assisted me in shedding light on why I am seldom confident about anything and why I always feel like a failure. Throughout my childhood I felt that nothing that I ever did was good enough for my mother. Mr Gradgrind makes Sissy feel much the same way: "You don't know" said Sissy, half crying, "what a stupid girl I am. All through school hours I make mistakes. Mr and Mrs M'Choakumchild call me up over and over again, regularly to make mistakes" (p. 96). Like me, poor Sissy has no confidence. When I was in my 40s and had enrolled for my Masters degree in Education, my mother told me that she knew I would never stick it out and graduate. However, when I graduated, my mother attended and informed me how proud she was of me.

My elder sister never seemed to me to be forced to do anything by our mother. From my perspective it was almost as if my mother did not expect my sister to achieve much. On completing school, my sister refused to take up her place in a teachers' training college but instead went to work in a bank.

I have not painted a picture of a loving mother but, in writing this narrative, I have come to realise that my mother did the best that she could. I now see her as ambitious and frustrated. Perhaps because she saw herself in me. I seem to have been the child through whom she lived vicariously. The story thus far might make my mother seem like an ogre, but she could also be great fun. For example, every December we would go to Durban for the annual Christmas ice show and the children's Christmas pageant. I can now appreciate this as an attempt to broaden our minds and expose us to happenings outside of the small mining community and our school. My mother was a wonderful story teller and would tell us about fairies, gnomes and elves that inhabited a wonderful fantasy world. In contrast to this, the children in *Hard Times* are not that fortunate as they are not encouraged to have any imagination. Imagination, creativity and play were part of my formative years, but this was reserved for special times at home. As a mother myself, I had great fun with my boys when they were young and many of the games that we played and our little fantasy world that we would create were similar to what I had done with my mother as a child.

The Gradgrind children are not that lucky, and in the incident where their father catches them peeping in at the circus, Mrs Gradgrind responds to the news by lamenting:

“...as if, with my head in its present throbbing state, you couldn't go and look at shells and minerals and things provided for you, instead of circuses. You know as well as I do, no young people have circus masters, or keep circuses in cabinets, or attend lectures about circuses? What can you possibly want to know of circuses then?....I could remember the mere names of half the facts you have got to attend to.

“That's the reason,” pouted Louisa.

“Don't tell me that's the reason because it can be nothing of the sort” (p. 60).

In comparing my personal history narrative to *Hard Times*, I have become mindful and appreciative of how my mother acknowledged that children need more than school and rote learning.

3.3.6 Lower and Lower

The chapter in *Hard Times* that is titled “Lower and Lower” deals with Mrs Sparsit's fall from grace. Mrs Sparsit is the housekeeper of Mr Bounderby and is full of airs and graces. I have

chosen to call this section of my narrative “Lower and Lower” as my academic record plunged when I left primary school and moved into the secondary phase of schooling in 1975.

Looking back, I can see that I did not have the wherewithal to cope with the demands of learning at high school level as I only knew to learn by rote and then regurgitate the content. I suppose that when I started high school and tried to learn for a test, I applied the rote learning technique with which I was familiar. At high school, we were streamed according to academic achievement and I was in the A class throughout my secondary schooling years. However, I remember how in what was then referred to as standard 7, five of us were called in by the school psychologist, and he gave us a speech about how we were underperforming and had potential. He asked us questions about why we were not working harder. I think that he was trying to establish what our problems were and wanted to encourage us to work harder in order to achieve our potential to do better. What I recall is that we were really badly behaved and giggled our way through the interview until he lost his temper and told us to get out of his office. To me, it seems noteworthy that three of the five of us were from the same small primary school.

As evidence of how my marks dropped in high school I have included my standard 4, standard 5 and standard 6 reports (Figures 3.4, 3.5, 3.6). I have given the caption of “*Why?*” to my standard 4 report because the principal’s comment was: “88%, 87%, 84% why? Aim for 90% Bridget. You can!” Why could he not give credit where it was due? “Congratulations for coming first in class” would have been more appropriate. My standard 5 report has the caption of “*Lower*” because my marks decreased that year. As can be seen in my standard 6 report, my marks dropped even lower when I started secondary school.

B. Hollow

Quarterly Report

1		2		3		4	
Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.	Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.	Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.	Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.
77	100	170	200	74	100	159	200
92	100	124	150	85	100	117	150
88	100	267	300	86	100	252	300
A		A		A		A	
90	100	50	50	91	100	47	50
90	100	43	50	82	100	43	50
94	100	41	50	88	100	38	50
531	600	695	800	506	600	656	800
88%		87%		84%		82%	
64%		63%		66%		61%	

f. j. Hollow

REMARKS/OPMERKINGS:

1. Onderwyser/es: Bridget is a very pleasant, hard-working pupil.
 Teacher: _____
 Skoolhoof: It's a pleasure to have Bridget in one's school.
 Principal: grosso

2. Onderwyser/es: Bridget's marks were outstanding. She deserves it.
 Teacher: _____
 Skoolhoof: Excellent work! Keep it up, Bridget!
 Principal: grosso

3. Onderwyser/es: Bridget's work and homework is always excellently done.
 Teacher: _____
 Skoolhoof: 88, 87, 84% Why? Don't forget 90% Bridget! You can!
 Principal: grosso

3.

f. j. Hollow

Figure 3.4: Why? My Standard 4 School Report

B. Hollow

Quarterly Report

1		2		3		4	
Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.	Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.	Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.	Leerling Pupil	Mak. Max.
						127	200
						148	200
						259	300
						76	100
						81	100
						61	100
						752	1000

Pupils percentage = 75 %
Class average = 62 %

REMARKS/OPMERKINGS:

1. Onderwyser/es: _____
 Teacher: _____
 Skoolhoof: _____
 Principal: _____

2. Onderwyser/es: _____
 Teacher: _____
 Skoolhoof: _____
 Principal: _____

3. Onderwyser/es: _____
 Teacher: _____
 Skoolhoof: _____
 Principal: _____

3.

Figure 3.5: Lower: My Standard 5 School Report

NAAM/NAME Hollow B

ST/STD 6 E.

	ST. OF HOER STD. OR HIGH	1ste KWARTAAL 1st QUARTER				VAK. ONDERW. SUBJECT TEACH.
		Marks Max	Learning Pupils	Klas Gem. Class Ave.	Effort Sym. Paging Sim.	
AFR. A						
AFR. B		100	57	54		T.S.
ENG. A		100	70	50	C	M.S.
ENG. B						
DTS / GERM.		100	69	69	B	R.K.
WISK. / MATHS.		100	68	54	D	N.J.
SK. NAT. / P.Sc.						
BIOL.						
TEG. TEK. / TECH. D.		100	33	48	Z	K.v.d.W.
AARD. / GEOG.		100	40	49	C	M.B.
GESK. / HIST.		100	64	63	C	R.J.
BOEK / BOOKK.						
TIK. / TYP.						
HVT. / HCR.		100	54	48	D	R.B.
HOUT. / WOOD.						
KUNS. / ART.						
FUNC. MATHS / FU. WIS.						
METAL WORK / M.W.						
BEDRYFSEK. / BUS. EC.						
ECONOMY / EKONOMIE						
FUNC. SCIENCE / F. WET						
NAALD. / KLD / NEED. / CL.						
HUISHOUDK. / HOME EC.						
GEN. Sc. / ALG. WET.		100	65	57	C	W.O.
BEDRKENNIS / IND. ART						
TOTAAL / TOTAL		100	58	51		

Figure 3.6: *And lower.....: My Standard 6 School Report*

When I was in Standard 9, a first year male teacher who I will refer to as Mr BP was appointed as our English teacher. This is the first time that I can recall in my schooling history when I was exposed to a pedagogic approach that required that I have my own opinions which were

valued. Mr BP is the first teacher I can remember who encouraged original thought in his learners. Mr BP taught very interactively and encouraged the learners to engage in dialogue amongst ourselves and with him. An example of his pedagogy is the way in which he approached the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (1954). Mr BP would give us a few chapters to read and we would sit in groups and discuss questions relating to what had been read. We were permitted to refer to our novels in class but barred from reading what had been set as homework. Not to have read for homework was thus a major disadvantage, as it would be impossible to engage in the group discussions and we would not have had anything to share. I remember that we learnt a lot from each other through these discussions and I enjoyed collaborating with my peers. I am of the opinion that the small group discussions were valuable as all group members were expected to contribute.

Another of Mr BP's strategies was that at the start of reading a novel we were told to identify a character who reminded us of any person who played a role in our lives and to also identify a character who we would choose as a friend and why. I recall identifying the character of Piggy, who was overweight, ungainly and wore thick glasses, as the person whom I would choose as a friend. This does not surprise me as I have always been drawn to the underdog in a crowd. Throughout the reading of the novel we had to build up a character sketch of the two characters we had chosen and relate events that involved them to events in our lives. I can see how this had an impact on me as it is precisely what I have done in writing my personal history narrative in juxtaposition with *Hard Times*.

Mr BP would pace up and down and gesticulate wildly as he taught and we learners would hang onto his every word. Our very authoritarian school principal headmaster would often be called by one of the other teachers because there was too much noise emanating from our classroom. Mr BP would be summoned out of the classroom and reprimanded whilst the class sat and listened as he was told that he was a useless teacher. Mr BP was not at the school for very long before leaving to go back to the metropolitan city of Durban. We really missed Mr BP when he left and there were a number of us girls who were heartbroken as we had really fallen for his charms!

Until the exposure to Mr BP's way of teaching, my experience of schooling had mostly been where the class sat quietly and listened whilst the teacher taught. While Mr BP's pedagogy was so refreshing to me, it was not accepted in our conservative high school. His teaching methods must have been quite revolutionary for the school at that time, as he encouraged us, the learners,

to construct our own knowledge and relate what was being taught to events in our lives. This is in contrast to the school children in *Hard Times* who were not permitted to relate their learning to anything other than facts. To illustrate, when lamenting about how weak Sissy is as a learner, Mr M'Choakumchild reports: "...she is extremely slow in the acquisition of dates, unless some pitiful incident happened to be connected therewith" (p. 95). Sissy is constructing her knowledge in relation to events in her life. Similarly, Mr BP encouraged us to construct our own knowledge in relation to our world experiences. As explained earlier, when teaching literature, Mr BP would encourage us to discuss the characters and to relate them to people whom we knew. I remember that it was then much easier to build character sketches and to identify themes into which they would fit.

I recall being taught William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1595/) by Mr BP and finding the play incredibly romantic, particularly when the young lovers died. I related to their relationship because I had a boyfriend whom my parents deemed unsuitable, and this caused much tension in our home during this short lived relationship. It was through conversations with peers and relating events to our own lives that we interrogated, analysed and understood the literary texts under discussion in Mr BP's class. We were also encouraged to read and discuss the novels as Mr BP would walk around and insist that what we discussed was substantiated with reference to the text. A novel that I enjoyed discussing was George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). I was fascinated by the satire in the novel and by the way in which Orwell dealt with how power cannot be divided equally. I was introduced to the concept of the oppressed becoming the oppressor, and because I also studied history, I then related this to what we were studying in that learning area.

In our discussions, Mr BP did not allow us to make assumptions and reach conclusions that were impossible to justify. When we were off track he would interact with us and ask questions that prompted us to take our discussion in another direction. Without giving us his interpretation of events, Mr BP would guide us to channel our thoughts and discussions in a different direction and then leave us to take ownership of the learning and to come up with alternative interpretations. That the conservative school principal did not appear to accept Mr BP's way of teaching does not surprise me as the community in which I spent my formative years was very conservative. Looking back, I can see how we were sheltered and largely oblivious to what was going on outside of our community. We did not discuss religion, politics, sex or any issues that were controversial at school until this teacher arrived and our young

minds were broadened. Be that as it may, Mr BP left after teaching at our school for a short time.

My matriculation school leaving examination results were very average. The highest mark was for Afrikaans which is interesting because we had a middle aged male educator who called me “oogies” (eyes) and perhaps I enjoyed the attention and worked hard to please him. The fact that he noticed me and made a fuss when my work improved could have had a lasting impact on me, because later on as a teacher, I always encouraged those who seemed to lack confidence and I would give them special attention.

3.4 My University Years: Book the Second

3.4.1 Effects in the Bank

I have chosen to use this heading of “Effects in the Bank” figuratively, whereas Dickens used it literally to name a chapter that deals with a bank owned by Mr Bounderby. I use it figuratively with reference to the knowledge that I had accumulated by the time that I started university as well as to explore my efforts to grow my intellect in order to expand my knowledge base.

When I enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree at a university in 1979, I realised that there was much more to life than what I had been exposed to so far in my 17 years. I became truly aware of a divided country and of a man called Nelson Mandela who was in prison for treason. I recall arriving at university and having this new found freedom, attending political rallies and signing petitions to free Mandela. However, I was always on the fringe of these protests and never really got involved in politics. When I went home during the vacations I would talk to Anna, the domestic worker who worked for my parents. We would have conversations about apartheid and about Anna’s life as a black South African, but any attempts to engage my family in these discussions were futile. My parents were very vocal about their concern as to what I was being exposed to as a university student.

My years as an undergraduate student were spent attending as few lectures as possible without losing my duly performed certificate¹⁴ and just doing enough work to pass. I do not recall any lecturer who was outstanding, but I do remember enjoying the small group tutorials as they were sessions in which 10 students would sit with a lecturer and be encouraged to engage. A

¹⁴ A duly performed certificate makes reference to the minimum percentage that a student has to attain in order to qualify to sit for an exam.

poem that I recall from these tutorials is Wilfred Owen's *Dulce et Decorum est* (1920) and my recollection is of feeling really sad about the young men went to war and died in such terrible circumstances and that many of them suffered slow, painful deaths. In discussing the poem, we were encouraged to explore how we felt and I loved the opportunity to be given a voice and to have the freedom to interpret poems, novels and articles in a way that made sense to me.

However, in the university lectures, there was no engagement between lecturers and students. When I deigned to attend a lecture I did not always understand the content of the lectures. I am not making excuses for my lack of interest in academic life, but perhaps I would have been more committed to my studies if I had understood the content of the lectures better. Even though I was privileged by virtue of the fact that I happened to be born white in South Africa in the 1960s, and I had attended schools that had more than adequate facilities and qualified teachers, I now understand that my literacy practices were inadequate. I was literate and able to encode and decode texts. However, I had little idea about how to make meaning of the texts as, other than in Mr BP's lessons, I had always learnt by parroting the content.

Furthermore, to be honest, I had little interest in my academic work. My university years were spent attending parties, rallies and the like and the last thing that was on my mind was to excel academically. I met my husband during this time and we had a wonderful, carefree life in which academics did not even feature. In my first year I passed two modules, failed one and did not even bother to get out of bed for one of the exams! This meant that I had to spend an extra year completing my undergraduate degree. My father, who had taken a loan to pay for my first year, was absolutely furious and forced me to go back to university and to fund my own studies. I applied for a student loan from what was then the Natal Education Department and the condition was that I would have to work for the department for four years as a teacher in order to pay it back. This meant that I was now obliged to become a teacher although this had never been my intention. In retrospect, I am ashamed of my lack of interest in academics during this period of my life and I would do it so differently if I could go back in time.

After completing my Bachelor of Arts degree at the end of 1983, I embarked upon a Higher Diploma in Education (HDE) which was a professional teaching qualification. It was during this year that I showed a smattering of interest in academics and attended lectures, learnt for and wrote the tests and scored reasonable marks. Perhaps it was because I had matured or perhaps it was because there were one or two lecturers who were enthusiastic and inspired me. I remember that our English method lecturer was knowledgeable and his lectures were

interesting and informative. In our first session with him, he gave us a 20 question spot test on parts of speech. When I was at school there had been a move away from teaching formal grammar and the emphasis was on understanding content rather than on the mechanics of language. I do not recall having been taught parts of speech whilst at school. I remember that this test made all of us in the class panic as we were clueless as to the definitions and functions of the parts of speech on which we were tested. I scored a very low mark on this test and, if I recall correctly, I achieved no more than 20% if that! This was a wake-up call for me and I made it my business to learn the definitions and use of all of the parts of speech so that when I went into the classroom as a teacher I would know the basics.

My history method lecturer, Mr BR, was the most entertaining educator I had ever encountered as he seemed to see the classroom as a stage and his students as the audience to be entertained. He was loud, energetic, enthusiastic and very knowledgeable. His way of lecturing was inclusive with concrete examples and accessible language. Unfortunately, Mr BR left teaching to go into the priesthood. Years later I encountered him when he was the priest of the parish that I attended in Ballito. He is as entertaining as a priest as he was as a lecturer.

The HDE programme was only a year and the core modules that we covered were principles of education, sociology of education, religious studies, drama studies, general methods of education and national and international studies. The only module in which we would have discussed pedagogy would have been in general methods of education and I do not recall being exposed to any inspiring pedagogic understandings or approaches. My HDE programme seemed to fall within the academic tradition in which the teacher's task is to be an expert in the subject matter being taught. It seemed to be taken for granted that whatever else needed to be known by teachers would presumably come from the teaching experience when the pre-service teachers were in the schools. Knowledge of the discipline coupled with broad general education knowledge thus appeared to be seen as adequate preparation to embark on a teaching career. I do not recall learning much about classroom practices during my teaching practicals and where I gleaned the broad education knowledge was in the lectures such as classroom methodology. We were expected to acquire certain classroom techniques that were recognisable when we were assessed. For example, I remember having chalk board practice sessions as well as having to prove that I could project my voice while teaching. Some "how to's" of being a teacher were taught and these included the "best" way to deliver course content, to control a class and to assess.

3.5 My Early Teaching Years: Book the Third

3.5.1 Another Thing Needful

In *Hard Times* the chapter titled “Another Thing Needful” is in Book the Third when Mr Gradgrind comes to the realisation that his children need more than education and facts. I have chosen this as the heading for the section in which I discuss my early teaching years. This was when I began to realise that a novice teacher needs much more than a degree in order to be effective in the classroom.

I started teaching in 1986 during the apartheid era and for my entire secondary teaching career I taught in all white government schools and never questioned the status quo of racially segregated schools. When I started teaching English in 1986, Mr BP and Mr BR were the two people on whom I probably subconsciously wanted to model my teaching practices. I can remember how I always wanted my lessons to be vibrant, entertaining and engaging, but often felt that I was falling short as a teacher. With hindsight I realise that this could have been because I did not have a theoretical basis for this pedagogic approach and I was trying to emulate and implement something that I knew little about. When all else failed in the classroom and I felt that it was becoming too unruly and rowdy I would revert to the safe traditional methods of teaching to which I had been mostly exposed as a learner and a university student. I can now see how I simply took the default position of falling back on what I knew and what had been modelled throughout most of my schooling because I was not sure as to how to move from teacher-centred to learner-centred pedagogy.

I am mortified to recall how I also fell back on threatening my learners and would threaten to send them to the office to be punished when they were disruptive in class. When they performed badly in tests and I thought that they should have achieved higher marks I would give them punishment. In as much as I am very judgemental about the teachers using the fear element in a classroom, I was guilty of exactly this in my years as an English teacher! I am ashamed about this recollection as not only did I fall back on the pedagogy that had been modelled by many of my teachers, I too ruled my classroom by fear when the learners became too animated and a little loud and I interpreted this as being unruly.

Looking back, I can see that perhaps learners were enthusiastic at times when they understood something and could relate it to their lives and they wanted to share this with others. Perhaps

if I had had more awareness that I could encourage my learners to talk and to get to know them and their contexts, as a point of departure when teaching, my planned creative lessons would not have ended up in a manner similar to how the children in *Hard Times* were taught. In writing about Mr M'Choakumchild's pedagogic approach, Dickens described it as follows: "When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by and by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within – or sometimes only maim him and distort him!" (p. 53).

Perhaps the "robber Fancy" that was in me had been maimed and distorted and perhaps I inadvertently did the same to my learners? Why I say this is that a persistent memory that I have of my school teaching years is of often feeling inadequate and of trying different methods of teaching but not really knowing what to do or how to go about it. It never seemed to occur to me to research teaching methods or to see what others were doing and to model my teaching on their methods. Perhaps if I had not allowed those missed opportunities at university, I would have realised that there were ways to improve rather than bumbling along trying method upon method that did not always work.

I do not recall having any colleagues who were doing anything different or outstanding during these years. I also recall little if any team work and collaboration with colleagues. We all simply planned lessons individually and executed what had been planned.

I have recollections of being carefully monitored by the principals under whom I worked. We teachers had to submit our weekly forecasts and daily planning as well as all lesson plans to the principal on a Monday morning and he would then comment on them and give feedback as to their suitability. In addition, we had school inspectors who would come around and inspect our administrative files and sit in on our lessons as we taught. I do not remember that the visits were developmental, as the purpose appeared to be to find as much fault as possible with what was happening in our classrooms. Our heads of department would also arrive unannounced and sit in our lessons, and again, I recall nothing that reflects that these visits were developmental. On reflection it seems clear that the intention was to criticise and find fault rather than for developmental purposes. I endured this "policing" for the first nine years of my teaching career which were in what were formerly referred to as model C schools¹⁵ and where I taught English

¹⁵ During Apartheid in South Africa the white, well-resourced government schools were referred to as Model C schools. The parents and governing bodies of the schools were partially responsible for the administration and funding thereof.

as a first and as an additional language. I loved being in the classroom and was a conscientious teacher. In retrospect, I was proud of the fact that my classes were so well disciplined! My lessons might have looked good on paper, but I can now see that I had actually modelled my pedagogy on the authoritarian teachers who had taught me at school.

I was at the first school for a year and did not really have a chance to settle in before getting married and moving to what was then the Transvaal. This was to set the tone for many years as, whenever my husband was transferred, I moved to another school. I was always very involved with the learners and they often opened up to me and told me about their problems and I did much informal counselling.

When Mr Gradgrind's daughter, Louisa has a breakdown, having left her husband Mr Bounderby her father comes to a realisation, which he expresses as follows: "Some persons hold that there is a wisdom of the Head and that there is a wisdom of the Heart. I have not supposed so....I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the Head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient: how can I venture this morning to say it is!" (p. 246). The first time that I was truly exposed to a situation where I could teach with my heart and not only with my head was in the early 1990's when I was helping out at a private school that a man from one of the local churches had started for African¹⁶ children.

This was the first time that I had taught African children and what struck me was their apparent commitment to learning. Their parents made huge financial sacrifices to send them to the school and the learners seemed to recognise that education was a privilege. I realised that these learners needed more than just facts. They needed to expand their English communication capacity and general knowledge and I took advantage of every opportunity to help them to do so. For example, they would ask me about things that I had taken for granted all my life, such as going on a holiday and eating in a restaurant. Although I taught the learners about these extra things, it was on my terms and it is my recollection that I did not encourage my learners to have inquiring minds and that they had to accept what I taught without question. This is what the learners in *Hard Times* experience, and when talking about the teachers, Louisa asks: "Mr and Mrs M'Choakumchild never make any mistakes themselves I suppose, Sissy?" and Sissy responds with: "Oh no! They know everything" (p. 96). It is with regret that I realise that I did

¹⁶ African - refers to black students of South African descent.

not take full advantage of this opportunity to teach with my heart and that I acted as the one who knew everything.

I was volunteering at the private school for a few months and then started teaching at the local high school as we were not in the financial position to survive on one salary. My two older children were in primary school, but upon going back into a government school classroom, I felt really unfulfilled and was no longer enjoying my teaching. I was at the school for about two years before making the decision to resign as a school teacher.

3.5.2 My Adult Educator Years: Very Decided

In Book the Third of *Hard Times*, the chapter titled “Very Decided” is where many decisions are made. Mr Bounderby gives his housekeeper, Mrs Sparsit, notice as well as deciding to part ways with Louisa who has become his wife. Mr Gradgrind makes the decision to support his daughter as she leaves her husband. Louisa builds a new life in her father’s home. This section of my story deals with my very firm decision to leave teaching in a secondary school in order to move into the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) field of education.

I had heard about a literacy company that was selling ABET franchises and so I went for the training and bought a franchise. This was because I had started looking for opportunities outside of teaching English in a high school and think that this was probably linked to my exposure to the African children who I had been teaching at the private school. I went up to Johannesburg for my first week of training and I clearly recall the excitement that I experienced in the training sessions. The training was very interactive and was so refreshing after the years that I had spent teaching in rigid ex-model C schools. The facilitator was inspiring and very energetic. When I recall this week of training I can still feel the excitement that I felt at the time. I would go back to the hotel where I was staying and be bubbling and enthusiastic about my day. I remember how I could not wait to get my own teaching started. And so my adult literacy business started in 2002.

The pedagogic approach of the ABET franchise was in direct contrast to Mr Gradgrind’s philosophy of teaching which was authoritarian and governed by fact alone. As discussed earlier, the Gradgrind household is also governed by fact when Louisa and Tom are growing up. When they leave home and Mr Gradgrind allows Sissy to take over the running of the household, she introduces new ways of doing things into the home and it is no longer governed by fact as Sissy’s fanciful ways creep in. Louisa notices this when she goes back to her father’s

house after leaving her husband, Mr Bounderby. She confronts her father and collapses and is put to bed. On waking, she finds her sister Jane at her bedside and the following conversation ensues:

“What a beaming face you have Jane!” said Louisa, as her young sister – timidly still – bent to kiss her.

“Have I? I am very glad you think so. I am sure it must be Sissy’s doing”. (p. 243)

In the same way as Sissy and her fanciful ways change the household and make a difference to the Gradgrind family members, I recall being so excited about teaching adults because of a feeling that I was making a difference in their lives. I eventually resigned as a school teacher and my ABET business grew in and around the town of Empangeni. Throughout my time as an adult literacy educator, I did not lose the excitement that I had first felt. It was very rewarding work and the adults were motivated and excited to learn. The classes were fun and the pedagogic approach was very interactive. Looking back I can see that what I enjoyed is that I was not the authority who was the “sage on the stage”. I was rather “the guide on the side” who was a participant rather than a teacher. An example of this is that we would role play scenarios in order to practice everyday conversation and the adult learners would assign a role to me. More often than not, I was the mother, which suited me as I could then drive the conversation by asking the members of my “family” questions about what they had been doing that day. The questions that I chose to ask would start by being in line with what had been taught so that the adult learners would be comfortable to respond. I was scaffolding by building on the known, and once the learners seemed relaxed, I would introduce new, sometimes unfamiliar vocabulary into the conversation. The prevailing atmosphere was informal and I deliberately did not pressurise class members to respond to questions. If an individual did not understand a word or battled to answer a question, the other group members knew that they were at liberty to intervene. This approach is in direct contrast to Mr Gradgrind’s way of teaching as shown in the following dialogue between Mr Gradgrind and Sissy:

Mr Gradgrind:...Cecilia Jupe. Let me see. What is your father?

Sissy: He belongs to the horse-riding, if you please, sir.

Mr Gradgrind frowned and waved off the objectionable calling with his hand.

Mr Gradgrind: We don't want to know anything about that here. You mustn't tell us about that here. Your father breaks horses, don't he?

Sissy: If you please Sir, when they get any to break, they do break horses in the ring sir.

Mr Gradgrind: You mustn't tell us about the ring here....Describe your father as a horsebreaker. He doctors sick horses I dare say?

Sissy: Oh yes Sir.

Mr Gradgrind: Very well then. He is a veterinary surgeon, a farrier and horse-breaker. Give me a definition of a horse."

(Sissy Jupe thrown into the greatest alarm by this demand.)

Girl number twenty unable to define a horse!" said Mr Gradgrind, for the general behoof of all the little pitchers,"girl number twenty possessed of no facts, in reference to one of the commonest of animals. Some boy's definition of a horse. Bitzer, yours."

Bitzer: Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-five grinders four eye-teeth and twelve incisive. Shed coat in the spring; in marsh conditions, sheds hoofs too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.

"Now girl number twenty," said Mr Gradgrind. "You know what a horse is". (pp. 49-50)

Mr Gradgrind would certainly not have approved of my ABET teaching methods as they were designed to be fun. We played games in class and the one that the learners requested most often started with recalling and naming colours. I would throw a pile of pencil crayons onto the floor and the learners would line up against the wall on the opposite side of the room. I would shout a colour out and they would rush forward and snatch the colour from the floor. If they chose the wrong colour they would be disqualified. The winner was the person who had the most pencil crayons at the end of the game. A chocolate would be awarded to the winner and it was touching to see the excitement on the face of the recipient. I observed how as the learners' vocabulary increased their confidence also seemed to grow. After a few months, the activities did not stop with picking the pencil crayons off the floor. The learners were asked to think of a sentence about the pencil crayons or the game and to tell their sentence to the class.

In my classes, if when working in groups the communication was not effective, the peers would not have any idea as to the message and all in the class thus had to be articulate so as to learn to communicate the message effectively. I encouraged the learners to engage with each other and would set tasks and expect feedback from the class, thus reducing my time for talking. There was much group work and interaction. In all of this, I tried to be very supportive and would move around and engage with all the individuals whilst they did most of the talking. The activities in the classroom were designed to create meaning in collaboration with peers, whilst listening to what others were saying and learning new ways of developing one's spoken language through taking note of the feedback from the peers and teacher.

I really enjoyed this role of facilitator and the engagement with the students. It was fulfilling to witness a father or grandfather being able to go into a bank and sign his name rather than signing with a cross. I think that I experienced as much joy out of this as the adult learners and their families did. I attended many a graduation and always felt very emotional at these events.

My little business grew and I trained many facilitators for companies. I sold the course materials to them and my role thereafter was to monitor that everything was going well in the classrooms. Not all companies trained in house facilitators and, in these instances, I conducted the classes. In one of the companies, I taught a group of supervisors who needed to learn to engage with management and deliver both oral and written reports.

Every company within which I worked would take me on a tour of the workplace and I would shadow the adult learners in order to gain a sense of what it was that was needed in order for them to communicate effectively in the workplace. I would then customise the course content to suit the clients. Because what was presented pertained to the adult learners' daily work, it was easier for them to take what had been presented in class and practice this, before producing it in the real world.

I made much money by teaching literacy in the private sector as I was working for well established companies. However, what gave me the most joy were the projects outside of these companies. I employed seven facilitators and the fact that they had jobs made such a difference in their lives. They taught in rural areas and I was always driving out of town to visit the projects. It really was not that safe for a white woman to drive out there alone as this was outside of the norm. It is only on reflecting that I realise how risky my trips out there were.

My husband was transferred to Durban and in 2003 I enrolled for an Honours degree in adult education at a university. Because I had been working in the field for many years, I was able to answer questions that my fellow students asked when the lecturers who did not have field experience could not answer. An example of this that I recall is when a peer asked our lecturer about how to set up a literacy project in a rural area and the lecturer replied that he really did not know and that he presumed that one would go in and put up posters advertising a meeting. I was able to inform the class that it takes at least six months and that it is a process that involves the entire community and must be approached with caution and respect. One has to have a contact within the community and that person will set up a meeting with the traditional chief. If the chief agrees then the community committee is invited to a meeting and the chief addresses the group. If there is agreement about the project, the committee arranges a community meeting and it is at this meeting that the entire community is addressed and given the chance to ask questions. They then meet without the presence of the service provider and a final decision is made. When the chief is informed that all are willing to have the project in their area, recruitment begins. The recruiting is done by the committee and when the delegates have been selected, the service provider is called in to conduct a base-line test. This can take a long time as people have to walk long distances and one can sometimes sit there all day without much happening. When the tests have been conducted, the results are sent to the committee and if they are happy with the candidates they send the list to the chief who gives the go-ahead. The entire process can take up to a year and a person who has never been involved in such a project would not know the protocol.

After that, the lecturer would often ask me to explain what happened on the ground as he realised that I had the work experience. I was asked to sit a test and given recognition for the prior learning within the workplace and I moved into the Master's class. With hindsight, this was not a good move as I did not have the requisite academic knowledge. My Master's study was entitled "A comparative study of learner and management perceptions of ABET English level 4 in selected companies in Durban". I really struggled with the research project as I had missed the research module in the Honours programme and had not completed a research project as an Honours student. I was back to the feeling of inadequacy and the belief that I could not do this and would never complete the programme. I still feel that I struggle with research and have the notion that I do not know where to start. In writing my personal history narrative I have become aware that it is because I lack confidence.

It was a really difficult time whilst I was studying because I was working at different companies and travelling around whilst juggling a family and doing what a mother does. My husband is very easy going, but he did not really understand the stress that I was under. My Master's thesis was really a rushed effort and I wish that I had had more time to devote to it as I am not proud of the final project.

I would motivate the adult learners by convincing them that to become literate would open doors for many opportunities. I truly believed this, but as more and more people passed the literacy courses and did not see the career opportunities and changes that had been promised by their superiors and by myself, I began to question the validity of the notion that literacy was the key to promotion and success in the workplace. I became aware that some of the employers seemed to be offering the classes merely to tick a box and access money from the Skills Development Levy.

It was when I enrolled for a Master's degree that I started to interrogate the issues around adult literacy and began to understand how the intention of the ABET was seldom in the interests of the learners but was often rather for the gain of companies. What my Master's research project confirmed for me, was that I was selling a myth when promising the adult learners that education would change their lives. This was a devastating reality for me to accept.

I was involved in teaching literacy in the corporate world when the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were introduced by the government in order to regulate what was happening in the various sectors. A Skills Development Levy (Act No. 9 of 1999) was imposed and this forced companies to put funding into training by paying a percentage of their monthly payroll to the South African Revenue Services (SARS). A percentage of this is paid to the SETAs and companies that had a Workplace Skills Plan and were able to report on the progress of their employees were able to claim a percentage of their levy back. I started feeling like a fraud in spite of knowing that the learners were happy to be learning to read and write and that they thus did benefit from the classes. I suppose that I enjoyed being the person who made a difference to their lives.

The commute from Durban to Empangeni was very tiring. My youngest son was 23 months old at the time and he used to travel with me and went to day care in Empangeni. I have a very vivid memory of him asking if we were there yet, as I drove out of the driveway one morning. This memory has brought to mind the fact that as much as I thrived on the work, I always felt

guilt as a working mother. Mrs Gradgrind is the polar opposite and would never have considered working. When the reader first meets her, she is described thus:

Mrs Gradgrind, a little, thin white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, of surpassing feebleness, mental and bodily; who was always taking psychic without any effect, and who, whenever she showed a symptom of coming to life, was invariably stunned by some weighty piece of fact tumbling on her....” (p. 59).

Dickens goes on to explain that Mr Gradgrind had married her because: “....she was most satisfactory as a question of figures; and secondly, she had ‘no nonsense’ about her. By nonsense he meant fancy....” (p. 62).

In contrast to Mrs Gradgrind, I have worked throughout my marriage and this has been partly because the extra salary enabled us to send our children to a private school. But, if the truth be told, I love being at work and in the classroom and think that I would have been very frustrated staying at home with babies. It interests me that Dickens chose images associated with babies when describing Mrs Gradgrind as one associates “little, thin, white feeble pinked-eyed bundle of shawls” with a helpless baby and she really is a rather insipid helpless character.

In spite of loving what I was doing, I realised the stress that I was under and decided that I could no longer do this to my children and I closed my adult literacy business and stayed at home for a few months before taking up part time lecturing at two universities in Durban. I worked very hard at both institutions and spent much time preparing the lectures and marking conscientiously with a myriad of comments so that the students could see their shortfalls and know where improvements needed to be made.

3.5.3 My NGO Years: Lost

In *Hard Times* the chapter that is titled “Lost” refers to the character Stephen Blackpool who has left Coketown and cannot be traced. Stephen works in one of Mr Bounderby’s mills and his character represents the workers who are collectively referred to as “Hands”. Stephen is an honest man who has no luck throughout the novel. He lives in poverty; is married to a woman who is a drunk and has fallen in love with a co-worker. But because he does not have the funds, he is refused permission to divorce his wife; he is fired from his job after a dispute with Mr Bounderby and has to leave town in order to look for work outside of Coketown. Tom robs a bank and Stephen is blamed for the robbery. On the way back to Coketown to clear his name,

Stephen falls into a disused mine shaft and dies. He is a pathetic character who epitomises the difficult lives of the “Hands.”

I have titled this section of my personal history narrative thus as it alludes to how the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)¹⁷ where I was working was closed and I lost not only my livelihood but also what I was so enthusiastic and passionate about.

Whilst lecturing part-time at two universities, I applied for, and was offered a job with a literacy NGO. I started there and felt completely inadequate for the first few months. I was completely ignorant of the NGO world and how it worked but was expected to write funding proposals as well as to develop training materials. Other duties included marketing training courses for teachers, and arranging the courses as well as being the trainer.

Once I knew what was expected of me this was a very exciting period of my life in which I grew both personally and professionally. I learnt so much and because the job was so varied, I was able to multi-task and grew in my capacity as a teacher as well as in other areas of my job. I was involved in projects in prisons and had much contact with youth in prison and there the years of teaching adult literacy stood me in good stead. I trained the prison wardens as ABET facilitators and these classes were such fun as I modelled my training on what I had learned when I was first trained in Johannesburg. The sessions were interactive and I encouraged the participants to do the work whilst I facilitated the workshops. I recall that at the end of a training week, a trainee spoke to me about my passion for what I did and stated that she had noted throughout the week how I loved what I was doing and that she hoped to be as enthusiastic when she started teaching the prisoners.

In retrospect, I can see that somehow I found it easier to model my practice on that of Mr BP and Mr BR when I was teaching adults than when I was teaching in a formal school situation. Perhaps this was because I was dealing with adults and the classes were smaller and more relaxed than in a school. I prefer a less structured environment with few rules and the freedom to experiment. This might explain why, when I was in the school system, I did not feel so comfortable.

¹⁷ A Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information (<http://www.ngo.org/ngoinfo/define.html>).

Another aspect of the job that I enjoyed was visiting rural areas and engaging with the trainees who were enrolled in our teaching courses. It was wonderful to see the growth of the adult learners both inside and outside of the class room. I would often be invited into people's homes and recall being shocked at how little those in the rural communities had in terms of material wealth. Yet they appeared to me to be content with their lot in life in spite of the high unemployment and poverty in the area. In *Hard Times*, Louisa goes into Stephen's house when he is fired by Mr Bounderby for refusing to spy on the trade unionists and her visit is described thus:

For the first time in her life, Louisa had come into one of the dwellings of the Coketown hands; for the first time she was face to face with anything like individuality in connection with them. She knew of them by their hundreds and thousands....She knew them in crowds passing to and from their nests like ants or beetles. But she knew from her reading infinitely more of the ways of toiling insects than of these toiling mean and women....She stood for a few moments looking round the room. From the few chairs, the few books, the common prints, and the bed...(pp. 187-188)

I felt much the same as Louisa as I entered a rural home for the first time. The Coketown workers were, in some respects, in a better position than the adult learners as the Coketown workers were employed whereas the adult learners were unemployed and had little chance of finding employment in the communities in which they lived. The spin-offs of adult literacy in a setting that is truly meant to empower are much more than learning to read and write and the learners were so grateful and proud that they could now sign their names, read what had to be filled in on forms and help their children with their homework. I observed how their confidence grew and they felt empowered and able to take control of their lives. A few of the adult learners managed to find employment and this was so wonderful to me because it meant that they were reaping the benefits as promised by us at the start of the project. I felt that it was a genuine accomplishment for them and I basked in this and really revelled in their triumphs. Nevertheless, it was work that was emotionally draining as I encountered first-hand the realities of a sample of the millions of South Africans who are plagued by lack of access to adequate health care as well as poverty, unemployment and a host of social and economic problems. It was hard to distance myself from this work when I went home.

After a year I was promoted in the company and became a signatory on the bank account. I soon became aware that the NGO was paying too many people inflated salaries for doing very

little work and that the money was being spent faster than it was coming in. I alerted the director to the fact that we were soon to be in serious financial trouble and a series of board meetings ensued. The end result is that the NGO was closed and what was kept open was the disability unit because there was funding specifically for projects for persons with disabilities. True to form, I felt guilty and responsible for the closure of the NGO and wished that I had kept quiet. There was, however, no way to avoid closure and it was better to close before the funders started asking questions as to how their funds had been spent.

When the literacy NGO closed, I was appointed to run the NGO that dealt with people with disabilities and this was another rewarding yet stressful period in my life. Many of the international funders no longer funded South African organisations. I noticed a trend in the funding of NGOs, which we referred to as funding for “sexy projects”. This means that certain projects are funded for a season and then funders change their focus and move elsewhere. The majority of our foreign funders moved into other areas of Africa. Many of our local funders were not funding as much as they had previously allocated to NGOs and we were a small NGO in desperate need of funds for projects as well as for operational costs. I managed to procure sufficient funding for projects and we had seven successful and exciting projects running but it was impossible to run projects when there was insufficient funding for the operational costs. How does one pay salaries and rental without any money? This NGO eventually closed after a period of four years and yet again, I was left with the feeling that I was responsible. The records show otherwise, as they reflect that I did all that I could in an attempt to save the organisation and no stone was left unturned in the bid to keep afloat. For me, the worst thing was that people with disabilities who are so marginalised had been given a glimmer of hope with our literacy and skills training and then we simply disappeared from their lives overnight.

3.5.4 Higher Education Years: Philosophical

In my understanding, to be philosophical is to face situations in a way that is calm and sensible. Mr Gradgrind is very philosophical about the way in which he has to protect Tom, his son, and so he goes about trying to bribe Bitzer, his model student, in a very calm manner. In the same way that Mr Gradgrind comes to accept that the world cannot be governed by facts alone, I accepted that the NGO had to close and I moved on to the next challenge in my teaching career.

When the NGO closed, I was working part time at a university of technology and it was whilst I was there that I was offered full time employment as an English teacher educator at a research intensive university. I was thrilled to get the position as I enjoyed lecturing and was concerned

about education in South Africa. So, to be appointed as a teacher educator was very exciting for me. As can be seen from my story, I had had extensive teaching experience at so many levels of education, and had started out teaching in schools. I felt ready for the challenge of being an English teacher educator. I also felt that I could really understand the students as I had been working in the rural areas and had been into the homes of the people there, and so I could relate to the home circumstances of many of the students who attended my lectures.

Perhaps it was to my detriment that I had an open door policy and allowed students to pop in and consult with me whenever they needed something. I was initially very involved with the academic literacy programme and would spend a large part of my day assisting students with their writing and editing their work, which took me away from some of my other duties. I enjoyed working with, and helping the students, but in 2012 I was warned by the leader of the cluster in which I work that I spent too much time with the students and needed to start becoming a researcher. Because I was not registered for a doctorate, I was invited to have tea with the vice-chancellor in his office! This scared me to such an extent that on the 30th November 2012, I registered for a doctorate without really having an idea as to what I wanted to research. I changed my topic and my supervisor three times in my first year and was terrified about what seemed to be an impossible project. The old feelings of insecurity and inadequacy returned and I even considered resigning as a teacher educator.

In retrospect, I can see that having to undertake this doctoral study has been beneficial as it was when I was appointed as a teacher educator that I first became aware of the complexity of the concept of pedagogy and this study has given me a chance to further explore this. As a teacher educator, I finally began to understand why I had grappled with my pedagogy as a teacher for the 20 odd years of my teaching career. I have always had a notion of what I wanted to do in the classroom and of the type of teacher that I wanted to become, but I was never sure of what it was that I should be doing or of how to go about doing whatever it was!

In writing my proposal for my narrative self-study research, I came to see that in order to achieve this understanding, I had to examine the influences on my pedagogy and that this could not be achieved without writing and analysing my personal history narrative.

3.6 Conclusion

The juxtaposition of events and characters from *Hard Times* with my personal history narrative facilitated the writing of my narrative as it allowed me to approach writing about my life in a

similar way to how I approach writing about a literary text. My initial attempts at writing my personal narrative resulted in what seemed to me, a superficial account of my life. Nash (2004) stated that writing a scholarly personal narrative is to “look deeply within ourselves for the meaning that just might, when done well, resonate with other lives...” (p. 22). It was only when I juxtaposed my personal history with *Hard Times* that I began to probe events and characters in my life. When this deep introspection became uncomfortable, I was able to divert the focus from myself to the characters, setting and plot of *Hard Times* as they resonated with events and characters in my life. The juxtaposing of my personal narrative with *Hard Times* enabled me to “go outside of myself in order to see my external world in a different way” (Nash, 2004, p. 60) and going outside of myself empowered me to “draw larger implications from my personal story” (Nash, 2004, p. 60).

This personal history narrative chapter has portrayed the people, events and pedagogies that influenced the development of my own pedagogy. The juxtaposition of people and events in my life with people and events in *Hard Times* followed what Richardson (2000) referred to as evocative writing. Going outside of myself through *Hard Times* allowed me to write my personal history narrative in a way that did not make me feel uncomfortable as “evocative representations do not take writing for granted but offer multiple ways of thinking about a topic and nurturing the writer” (Richardson, 2000, p. 5).

Through composing my personal history narrative I have realised that key people who influenced me are my mother, Mrs SC, Mr BP and Mr BR. Recalling events such as being punished at home and at school has created awareness that when in a position of authority I should be compassionate and understanding. It is now more clear to me how the path that my teaching career followed from the school classroom, to the ABET classroom, to the NGO world and finally into the tertiary education arena, has influenced who I am as a teacher educator. I had exposure to constraining and generative role models throughout my life and in as much as I wanted to follow the generative examples set by Mr BP and Mr BR in the classroom, I often resorted to the default position of authoritarianism and treated my learners in the way I was treated by Mrs SC and my mother. The writing of my personal narrative also revealed to me that my lack of confidence can be attributed to the constraining influences in my formative years.

The chapter that follows is a layered literary analysis of *Sowing* and is titled *Reaping Influences*. The chapter begins with an explanation of my layered literary analysis. It then offers discussion

around reading, fear and the importance of teacher education, which are the main dimensions I identified as being influential in my pedagogy. These discussions are interspersed with references to my scholarly proof texts (Nash, 2004). The conclusion of *Reaping Influences* sums up the findings to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?*

CHAPTER FOUR: REAPING INFLUENCES

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter, *Sowing – My Personal History Narrative* was the start of responding to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* I wrote my personal history narrative and juxtaposed it with the novel *Hard Times* (Dickens 1954/1973), which served as one of my literary proof texts (Nash, 2004). To contemplate my personal narrative in relation to a novel allowed me to step outside of myself as I made connections to fictional characters and events. I began the chapter with a brief overview of *Hard Times* in order to orientate the reader before writing about the influences on my pedagogy from birth to secondary school. What followed were my years as a university student and the discussion then outlined my progression from a secondary school teacher of English to my current position as a teacher educator. The concluding section of Chapter Three foregrounded the influences on my pedagogy.

Reaping Influences serves as an analysis of *Sowing*, which is my personal history narrative. Through the analysis of *Sowing*, *Reaping* explicates the influences on my pedagogy. The chapter begins with a layered literary analysis of my personal history narrative, which is juxtaposed with two films serving as literary proof texts (Nash, 2004). These are *Dead Poets Society* (LaGravenese, 1989) and *Freedom Writers* (Weir, 2007). What follows is discussion around: a) *Fear*; b) *Importance of Reading* and c) *Teacher Education*, which are the main dimensions I identified as being influential in my pedagogy. These discussions are interspersed with references to my scholarly proof texts (Nash, 2004). The chapter concludes by highlighting the possibilities for my pedagogy that were revealed in my layered literary analysis.

4.2 A Layered Literary Analysis of my Personal History Narrative

In writing about self-study research, Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber (2009) described it as: "...a stepping back, a reading of our situated selves as if it were a text to be critically interrogated and interpreted within the broader social, political, and historical contexts that shape our thoughts and actions and constitute our world" (p. 45). I hoped to do exactly this through treating the analysis of my personal history narrative as I would a literary text such as a short story. *Sowing* was critically analysed by firstly, identifying the purpose of the narrative and secondly through discussion about the setting, characters and events in the story, and influences

that these characters had on me as the protagonist¹⁸. Whilst events were analysed, these were not in chronological order, as themes were uncovered and the events and people relevant to these themes were critically discussed as the events unfolded.

In reading this analysis, I realised that it had not revealed much and I found it unsatisfactory and shallow. I then re-read my personal history narrative and recognised that the problem lay not so much in my first layer of analysis as with my personal history narrative because it was a sanitised version in which I had excluded any information that would paint others and myself in a negative light. I then decided to use my disciplinary knowledge and rewrote my personal narrative by juxtaposing it with the novel *Hard Times*, which served as one of my proof texts (Nash, 2004). In rewriting my personal history, I juxtaposed the people, characters and events that had been identified in my first layer analysis with characters, themes and events in *Hard Times* and to me, this version was richer than my first attempt.

My personal history narrative was written in response to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* In my first layer of analysis, the people whom I identified as main characters in this endeavour were: my mother, Mrs SC, the primary school teacher who taught me for three years and instilled fear into her learners; Mr BP the dynamic high school English teacher who allowed his learners freedom to explore; and Mr BR, who lectured me in my HDE year and who later went into the priesthood. In order to analyse these characters' influence on me, it was important to interrogate relationships and as these were examined, themes were constructed. Characters and events were discussed with reference to the broader social, political and historical context of the time.

On realising that I needed to analyse the second account of my personal history narrative, I created a method of coding to assist with a second level of analysis. In this way, I constructed 28 themes. I populated a table with the themes and then in columns alongside, I added the people, places and events related to every one of these. It was then easier for me to see which people and places had been most influential and which themes were dominant. This table (Annexure One) allowed me to see how I could collapse the themes into what I then referred to as the main dimensions of influences on my pedagogy. These three dimensions were: a)

¹⁸ In characterisation in literature, the protagonist is the main character.

Fear; b) *Importance of Reading* and c) *Teacher Education* and they responded to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?*

As an English teacher educator, I also teach film study. In developing my literary analysis, I decided to enhance this third layer of analysis with reference to films that I teach and that deal with education, as I have come to see that much of what is discussed in lectures about the films under scrutiny is relevant to my pedagogy. The films that I chose are *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) and *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007) and a synopsis of each follows.

Dead Poets Society is a 1989 film about an old established American school, Welton Academy, steeped in tradition and to which parents send their sons in order that they can be prepared to become professionals. There is no place for fancy or imagination in this school, as is the case in *Hard Times* (see Chapter Three), and it is all about learning the facts on which to build a professional career. One of the main characters, Neil, has ambitions of becoming an actor, but his father has different ambitions for him and has sent him to Welton in order for him to obtain an education that will allow him to qualify as a doctor. Todd, who is new to the school, has a brother who graduated from the school. Todd's brother was a high achiever at school who was also popular and was valedictorian. The same is expected of Todd who is shy and not brilliant and is thus a very different character to his brother.

Mr Keating, who is an alumnus of Welton Academy, is appointed as an English teacher and he recognises that Todd is shy but that he has potential and encourages him, thus building up the young man's confidence. Mr Keating's pedagogy deviates from traditional pedagogy such as that espoused by Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times*. In contrast to Mr Gradgrind's view of learners as empty vessels who have to be filled with facts, Mr Keating's motto is "*Carpe Diem*" which means, "Seize the day". He encourages his charges not to take anything at face value, but rather to be critical in their thinking. In doing so, his teaching methods are viewed as unorthodox and frowned upon by the authorities at Welton.

In contrast to Todd, Charlie is a very out-going character who takes Mr Keating's motto literally and keeps pushing the boundaries that have been set by the school. Steven, a serious character, is very academic and does not like to break the rules or to be taken out of his comfort zone. He thus often feels uncomfortable with the way in which Mr Keating conducts his classes. Contrasts such as realism versus romanticism, conformity versus seizing the day and tradition versus rebellion abound and the film has a sad ending with Neil committing suicide and Mr

Keating being dismissed from his post. Whilst fancy was victorious in *Hard Times*, fact and tradition are the victors in *Dead Poets Society*.

The second film which I chose to focus on is *Freedom Writers*, which is a 2007 film based on actual events. It is set in a school that is in sharp contrast to Welton Academy. The setting is Woodrow Wilson High in Long Beach, United States of America. A first year teacher, Ms Gruwell, is appointed at the school which, like Welton and Mr Gradgrind's school, is proud of its high academic standards and achievements. An integration programme had been introduced into the school two years prior to Ms Gruwell's appointment and the school is now open to anybody wishing to apply. This means that many learners from marginalised communities have enrolled. Following the introduction of this programme, the academic results dropped dramatically and it is no longer a given that all of the learners will graduate. The school is fraught with social problems and racial tensions, with ethnic groups sticking together and gangs fighting both in the school and on the streets.

In contrast to the awe in which the boys at Welton hold Mr Keating, Ms Gruwell is unpopular when she first arrives at Wilson High School. Her class of "at risk" learners cannot relate to her in any way. It is only when she asks them to keep journals that she begins to understand their world as she reads their life stories. By asking learners for their personal stories, she is making it clear that she wants to know the learners as individuals rather than categorising them all according to societal stereotypes. She glimpses personal experiences that learners bring to the class and thus has a better understanding of the social issues influencing their behaviour. This exercise allows her to get to know learners as individuals rather than as a group. As Ms Gruwell gets to know and understand her learners, she changes her attitude and the way in which she responds to them. She adjusts her pedagogy and so as to make it more relevant to the needs and concerns of her learners. In doing so, she gains the respect and co-operation of the learners. However, the teachers who have been there a long time continue to complain that the integration programme has negatively affected the academic results and Ms Gruwell is unpopular with her peers as her pedagogy disrupts her colleagues' ways of thinking and doing.

4.2.1 What Does Everybody Want From Me?

This section deals with the dimension of *Fear* and is titled thus because in a scene from *Freedom Writers*, Eva who is one of the characters had witnessed a murder and was called to testify in court. She was terrified and was aware that all of the stakeholders in the incident wanted her testimony to favour their side of the story. She has an argument with her mother and storms out with the words “what does everybody want from me?”

I have identified my mother as the antagonist¹⁹ in *Sowing* as she played a major role in my personal history narrative. Being a key character in my life during my formative years, she would have been a great influence in my life and on my education. What I find interesting is that my mother’s influence and interest in my school life seemed to wane when I needed it most, which is when I attended high school. It is also noteworthy that my mother was a teacher and this must not be overlooked as her pedagogic practices at home might have been influenced by her classroom practice, which, in turn, had an influence on me. Indeed, in the narrative I stated that at times I reverted to behaving in the same way as my mother, such as when I forced my own children to rote learn. Whilst I acknowledged that my mother was fun and not always a tyrant, it was almost presented as an aside in the following statement:

The story thus far might make my mother seem like an ogre, but she could also be great fun. For example, every December we would go to Durban for the annual Christmas ice show and the children’s Christmas pageant. I can now appreciate this as an attempt to broaden our minds and expose us to happenings outside of the small mining community and our school. My mother was a wonderful story teller and would tell us about fairies, gnomes and elves that inhabited a wonderful fantasy world. (Sowing, p. 74)

In Chapter Three, I also noted that the fun that I had as a child was in contrast to the children in *Hard Times* who are not that fortunate as they are not permitted to engage with anything that is not factual. I do not get the sense that my perception of my mother’s ambition for me motivated me to achieve or benefitted me in any way, but rather, that this caused me to become insecure and anxious.

¹⁹ In characterisation in literature, the protagonist is the main character and the antagonist is the main adversary.

In discussing my early schooling, it would be remiss of me not to mention Mrs SC (whom I have identified as another person who influenced my pedagogy) in the discussion about fear, anxiety and insecurity. She was a forbidding figure who ruled her classroom with a rod of iron and made me very anxious in the same way as Mr Gradgrind made his children and Sissy nervous. Of Mrs SC I wrote:

I recall being terrified of one particular teacher, Mrs SC. She was an authoritarian who shouted and hit us with a ruler when we had not learnt our work by heart. Although she was not the only teacher who was a disciplinarian and who subscribed to teacher-centred methods, she taught me for the first three years of my schooling and thus had an enormous influence on me (Sowing, p. 67).

The pedagogy to which the children in *Hard Times* and I were exposed differed from the pedagogy in *Dead Poets Society*. Mrs SC and my mother expected me to do as I was told without questioning or being an active participant. What was modelled by both my mother and Mrs SC was that the teacher is in charge and that the classroom is an unequal space where learners' rights are not recognised. In contrast, Mr Keating in *Dead Poets Society* subscribes to pedagogy that encourages free will and participation and he models pedagogic practices that are supportive of all in the classroom. To illustrate, in encouraging participation in class, Mr Keating asks every learner to write a poem and recite it to the class. One of the boys stands up and says: "The cat sat on the mat" and then sits down. The class laughs and Mr Keating explains that they are not laughing at him to which the boy does not take offence. Mr Keating knows that Todd, the new shy boy, is terrified of being called up to address his classmates and that he has not written a poem. However, Todd is not reprimanded for not having done his work. This is in contrast to the way in which I was treated if I had not followed the instructions given by Mrs SC and my mother. Mr Keating encourages Todd to stand up and then starts the poem with him and asks questions until Todd is confident to continue on his own. Mr Keating points to a photograph of Walt Whitman on the wall:

Mr Keating: Close your eyes, close your eyes! Close 'em! (*Mr Keating covers Todd's eyes with his hands*). Now, describe what you see.

Todd : Uh, I-I close my eyes.

Mr Keating: Yes.

Todd: Uh, and this image floats beside me.

Mr Keating: A sweaty-toothed madman.

Todd: A sweaty-toothed madman with a stare that pounds my brain.

Mr Keating: Oh, that's excellent! Now, give him action - make him do something!

Todd: H-His hands reach out and choke me.

Mr Keating: That's it! Wonderful, wonderful!

Todd: And all the time he's mumbling.

Mr Keating: What's he mumbling?

Todd: Mumbling truth.

Mr Keating: Yeah, yes.

Todd: Truth like-like a blanket that always leaves your feet cold.

Mr Keating: *(some of the class start to laugh)* Forget them, forget them! Stay with the blanket. Tell me about that blanket!

Todd: Y-Y-You push it, stretch it, it'll never be enough. You kick at it, beat it, it'll never cover any of us. From the moment we enter crying t-to the moment we leave dying, it'll just cover your face as you wail and cry and scream.

(long pause then the class members applaud)

Mr Keating: *(As an aside to Todd)* Don't you forget this.

What Mr Keating did was to support Todd in a constructivist manner until he gained confidence and competence and then he stepped out of the process. The viewer witnesses the courage that it took for Todd to follow Mr Keating's instructions. The pride that Todd feels when he has achieved the feat is evident. In the scene Todd experiences not only a poetic breakthrough but also a deep shift within himself as he becomes more confident in his academic abilities.

As I reflected on this incident from the film which served as one of my proof texts, it struck me that the Mr Keating's role is supportive and he steps back only when the boy displays confidence. What I can take from this incident, is that when the learners are going to be taken out of their comfort zones, they need to be warned of what is to come and to be supported through the process. Edwards and Edick (2012) identified four principles that underpin *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* which are as follows: interaction, accommodation, ownership and opportunity (p. 3). In interacting with learners the teacher is getting to know them on many levels and once teachers get to know the students, better understanding of who they are should follow. In the poetry incident, Mr Keating interacted with Todd and dealt with the boy's insecurities by giving him the opportunity to take ownership of the situation and to develop the confidence to compose and recite a poem.

When Mr Keating first meets his learners, he knows that he will expose them to a pedagogy with which they are not familiar as he teaches differently to the other teachers in the school; so he gives them a warning by stating: “In my class you will learn to think for yourselves again”. To think for oneself is a tenet of constructivism which encourages critical thinking as knowledge is being constructed. Mr Keating then proceeds to instruct the learners to read the preface in their prescribed poetry books. This section informs the learners about what they should look for as they read and analyse the poems. Mr Keating refers to what has been written in the introduction as excrement and instructs his learners to rip the pages out of their poetry books. As they are tearing the pages out of their books Mr Keating states:

This is a battle- a war and the casualties could be your hearts and souls. Armies of academics going forward measuring poetry. NO! We will not have that here. In my class you will learn to think for yourselves again. No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world.

His colleague witnesses the learners tearing pages out of their books on Mr Keating’s instructions and when they meet after the incident, the following conversation ensues:

Mr McAllister: What an interesting class you gave today Mr Keating.

Mr Keating: Sorry if I shocked you Mr McAllister.

Mr McAllister: Oh there is no need to apologise, it was fascinating misguided though it was. You take a big risk encouraging them to become artists John. When they realize that they are not Rembrandts, Shakespeares or Mozarts, they will hate you for it.

Mr Keating: We are not talking artists John, we are talking free thinkers.

Mr McAllister: *Laughs*. Free thinkers? At seventeen?

Mr Keating: Funny, I never pegged you as a cynic.

McAllister: Not a cynic, a realist. Show me a heart unfettered by foolish dreams and I will show you a happy man.

Keating: But only in their dreams can men be truly free. ‘Twas always thus and always shall be.

Welton Academy clearly does not encourage free thinkers and thus would not espouse the concept of constructivism. To discourage originality is reminiscent of *Hard Times* where anything fanciful is depressed and learners are not allowed to have dreams. This philosophy is at the expense of the learners' happiness as seen in Louisa, Mr Gradgrind's daughter who always felt that something was missing from her life but she never quite knew what it was. To be a free thinker was also not generally encouraged during my days as a learner and as a university student. This was in contrast to Sissy who had spent her formative years in a circus community and was encouraged to have dreams and a life outside of what existed within facts and *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* espouses to this way of learning. A pedagogic possibility that I have learned from writing my personal history narrative is that I want to encourage more free thinking in my students and for them, in turn, to encourage the same in their learners.

In encouraging his learners to think for themselves, Mr Keating jumps up onto his desk and states that he is up there to remind himself that "...we must constantly look at things in a different way." He goes on to say that just when you think that you know something you have to look at it in another way and advises: "Even if it may seem silly or wrong you must try....Now when you read don't consider what the author thinks, consider what you think....You must strive to find your own voice. Dare to strike out and find new ground."

By undertaking this self-study research I am also striving to find my voice as a teacher educator of English and to find new ground. Mr Keating then asks the learners to go up to the front and to stand on his desk and look at the ground before jumping off. In a review, of the film Dettmar (2014) had the following opinion on this incident:

For all his talk about students "finding their own voice," however, Keating actually allows his students very little opportunity for original thought. It's a freedom that's often preached but never realized. A graphic example is presented in one of the film's iconic moments, when that zany Mr. Keating with his "unorthodox" teaching methods suddenly leaps up onto his desk. Why? "I stand on my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things in a different way," he helpfully declaims. How bold: He's standing perhaps 2½ feet off the ground. Keating then has the boys march up to the front, of course, and one-by-one and two-by-two they mount his desk and they too "look at things in a different way"—exactly the different way that he has. (para. 11)

I wanted to encourage my students to be true free thinkers who were willing to take risks in the classroom and reading the review above made me mindful that the students have to be

encouraged to really have their own opinions and that I must try not influence them to think exactly as I think, which is what Dettmar (2014) accuses Keating of. With this in mind, when watching this film whilst preparing to teach it to my fourth year students in 2016, I was motivated to encourage those in my class to think differently and have their own interpretations without the fear of being wrong. Having said this, I am well aware that the learners need guidance and cannot be left entirely to their own devices as the teacher should be available to support and guide them as necessary. I informed my students that their opinions must be substantiated with reference to the text under discussion and I guided them in this endeavour by asking leading questions which is in line with constructivist teaching.

Nash's (2004) view of constructivist and objectivist teaching is that "Constructivists tend to ask: What meaning lies inside you, and how can you best narrate it? Objectivists ask: What meaning lies outside of you, and how can you best prove it?" (p. 19). He went on to say that we are all constructivists and objectivists. I am of the view that because I ask my students to look inside themselves and to then justify what they think with evidence from outside of themselves this makes me both constructivist and objectivist. Before I started to explore possibilities for purposeful pedagogies, I was of the opinion that to be a constructivist was to scaffold learners and in order to do so means to know who the learners are and to understand the contexts within which they are familiar. However, I have come to see this as a very simplistic view of constructivism.

When I was at school as a learner and as a teacher, the demographics of the classrooms were that all learners were white as was the teacher, and most were Christian and middle class. However, I have come to realise that it does not mean that the teachers should have presumed that the classes were homogenous and they thus could have made assumptions about the class members that were not necessarily accurate. In writing my personal history narrative I have become aware to guard against treating all students as if they come from the same backgrounds and do not have their individual histories. Taking them out of familiar comfort zones without any warning or consideration for their previous experiences could make some learners uncomfortable. When Mr Keating takes his learners out of their comfort zones the ultimate consequences are dire. The boys are encouraged to follow their dreams and Neil who wants to be an actor defies his father by taking the lead role in a play. When his father reacts angrily and forbids him to act again, Neil commits suicide by shooting himself.

The school's head, Mr Nolan blames Mr Keating and his pedagogy for the death of Neil. The pedagogy that was advocated at Welton Academy was that the teacher taught and the learners were seated in rows and listened, which is the antithesis of constructivism wherein the learners are encouraged to construct their own meaning in collaboration with peers and the teacher. Pedagogy in which learners construct their own knowledge encourages them to draw from contexts with which they are familiar. In doing so, they take ownership of their learning and accommodate new knowledge within the framework of what they know from their personal contexts.

During my school days, my university years and my early teaching years, which were during the apartheid era, the transmission mode, in which the teacher taught and the learners listened seemed to me to be the preferred pedagogy. The way in which my learning happened was influenced by how my teachers taught. In reading about the history of education in South Africa, I have realised that this pedagogy was influenced by the state. Jansen (2001) explained that under apartheid:

The sole requirement of teachers was bureaucratic and political compliance with state education. Compliance was ensured through a complex of instruments including a system of school-wide and individual teacher inspection, a rigid syllabus outlining official content, objectives and methods of teaching, and a hierarchy of internal (such as the principal) and external controls (such as routine visits by departmental officials). The teacher was an obedient civil servant that executed the well-defined instructional tasks as per an official syllabus and a "moderated" examination. (p. 243)

Mrs SC, the authoritarian teacher who taught me during my primary school years, was thus not alone in her classroom practice, and neither was Mr Gradgrind who was the superintendent of the school in *Hard Times*. Dickens captures this beautifully in Chapter One of Book the First with the comment about Mr M'Choakumchild and the fact that he and 140 others were "turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles like so many pianoforte legs" (p. 53). This meant that neither teachers nor learners were encouraged to find their own voices and had to conform in order to achieve. In such a teacher centred classroom, the teacher is viewed as the only authority and is not to be questioned. What was modelled is that the teacher is the keeper of the knowledge. The role of the learners is to accept what is taught without questioning or interacting. Under a system such as this, any learner who is a non-conformist faces punishment. Morrell (1994) noted that in the 20th Century South African schools, corporal

punishment was rife in white, single-sex boys' schools and metered out liberally in all other schools except in single-sex girls' schools where its use was limited.

According to UNESCO (2006b), corporal punishment is practiced by teachers who confuse it with discipline and what teachers fail to realise is that it is a form of child abuse. The UNESCO report highlighted that children can feel guilt, shame, aggression, a lack of independence and a lack of caring for others because of being physically punished by a teacher. Although they were not subjected to physical punishment, the Gradgrind children experienced these kind of negative feelings due to being isolated from anything that was not factual. However, whilst the Gradgrind children suffered long-term effects, with Tom becoming a gambler and a thief and being forced to flee his hometown, and Louisa suffering a mental breakdown, I do not feel that I suffered as a result of my punishment. Rather, I am of the opinion that I felt shame when hit by my mother and by Mrs SC because I felt that I had not lived up to their expectations and possibly thought that I deserved the hiding. I find it interesting that in the UNESCO (2006b) report on corporal punishment in schools, the discussion pertaining to corporal punishment revolves around being punished for negative behaviour with no mention of the physical abuse being as a result of perceived academic under-achievement. Yet, this was experienced by me and by other South Africans such as Ndaleneni (2013) and Madondo (2014). Madondo (2014) recalled that his teacher would: "abuse us physically when she was exercising discipline. She used corporal punishment for no good reason" (p. 34) and he added that she would not hit the learners on their hands or buttocks but would hit them on their backs with a stick. Ndaleneni (2013) was also beaten by teachers and of his primary school teacher he recalled: "I could not stand the lady teacher who either beat us with a stick or pinched us. We were punished for failing to reproduce what she would have told us a day before" (p. 19).

I find it sad that I seemed to feel very anxious about my perceived under-performance. My personal history narrative shows that this feeling of anxiety had a long lasting influence on my teaching practice throughout my career, as is evident in my comments about feeling that I was falling short as a teacher and often felt inadequate.

It is interesting that there were so many demands on, and grand expectations for the learners in *Dead Poets Society*, whilst in *Freedom Writers*, the overriding expectation was that the learners would fail. And yet, whilst *Dead Poets Society* is a film that was released in the 1980s and *Freedom Writers* was released in 2007, the prevalent pedagogy that was disciplinarian and authoritarian had not changed in 20 years and was much the same as during the time of Charles

Dickens in the 19th Century. In contrast to these practices is Nash's (2004) belief that effective pedagogy is about helping students to know that they matter and he went on to state that "good learning is authentic learning both for teachers and for students" (p. 108).

In *Freedom Writers*, following an incident where Ms Gruwell does not get support from her head of department, she asks a colleague for advice and support and is told to stop her cheerleading and that she has no right to judge those teachers who have taught at the school for a long time. I interpret this as a threat not to interfere and to leave the status quo as it is and to conform to the traditional way of teaching, which is in contrast to constructivism and culturally responsive teaching. It has been my experience that if one goes into a school and wants to do things differently, there will be people who do not like change and will not accept suggestions as to how to do things differently. The resistance that Ms Gruwell encounters indicates that she does not have support for the changes that she wants to make in her classroom nor for interventions in the lives of her learners. The teachers at her school seem to work individually rather than as a team and in reading my personal history narrative, I realise that when I was a learner there did not seem to be any team work amongst the staff and that when I was teaching in high schools I was never part of a team.

4.2.2 I want to do more: "Just do your job".

This section is a continuation of my exploration of *Fear*. It is titled thus because in *Freedom Writers*, Ms Gruwell tells her father that she wants to do more for her learners than to just teach them and his advice is to "just do her job". I have always questioned my pedagogy and an objective of this study was to identify possibilities for my pedagogy that would allow me to do more for my students rather than just doing my job.

From my personal history narrative, I feel that I suffered from a lack of independence and felt abandoned at the start of my high school career. There was no pressure on me to perform and little interest in my academic progress as I noted that my mother appeared to show no interest in my academic life when I went to high school. The illustration provided in the form of a very average school report (Figure 3.6) exemplifies my underperformance in high school and I wonder if this was partly due to a lack of independence. However, other factors such as laziness cannot be overlooked. In reading my personal history narrative, I get the impression that although I was a very lazy high school learner and university student, I was not lazy when I started working and I gave my all in the preparation and execution of my lessons. However, when I embarked on a career in education the feelings of anxiety and insecurity were still there

and what I have written about my recent experiences leads me to conclude that I am not that secure in my role as a teacher educator. Nevertheless, I am left with the sense that I am in the right profession and that I care deeply about education issues and about my students.

My caring nature is evident to me in discussions about my relationship with the learners when I started my career as a high school teacher of English, when I taught African learners²⁰, as well as in the statement that I felt excited to enter the field of adult literacy and to make a difference in the lives of adults. An important aspect of pedagogy that I see emerging here is one of *pastoral care* particularly in my ABET work where I appeared to have formed relationships with the members of the class. In contrast to this, my experiences of the teacher-learner relationship whilst I was at school, and a student at university had been very different and I did not recall any of my lecturers or educators being involved with the lives of their learners outside of the classroom. The fact that in my personal history narrative I state that I feel passionate about my current job as an English teacher educator and write that I worry about the students and feel guilty for not having the time to assist them, confirms for me that I am fully invested in the well-being of my current students and that I would like to form *relationships* wherein I am able to be a positive influence in the lives of those whom I lecture. My personal narrative history reveals that whilst I was at school and university there was seemingly no attempt by my teachers and lecturers to get to know their students and their experiences. My personal narrative similarly makes no mention of my exposure to getting to know my learners when I was a schoolteacher.

In *Freedom Writers*, when Ms Gruwell asks that her learners write in their diaries every day, she gives guidelines rather than rules. The guidelines are to refer to past, present and future experiences and dreams and that the learners can write about absolutely anything. Ms Gruwell is encouraging the learners to reflect on their lives. The journals are not to be assessed and Ms Gruwell will not read them without permission. The learners all allow Ms Gruwell to read their journals and in this way, she learns who they were and begins to understand where they are coming from and why they react as they do in class. This gives her the wherewithal to practice *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* because she is now able to relate her lessons to the learners' social and cultural contexts. In seeking advice from her father, he tells her that she is not responsible for her learners' lives outside of the classroom and that her job is to do the best that she can within the classroom. Whilst I agree with this statement about not being responsible

²⁰ Refers to black students of South African descent

for the learners' lives, I do believe that when teachers are aware of their learners' circumstances outside of the classroom they have a responsibility to use this knowledge in their teaching and where the circumstances are undesirable, to attempt to uplift the students.

In writing about my experience of university lecturing in my personal history narrative I seem to be of the opinion that the students have been let down in a system that forces lecturers to spend less time teaching and consulting with students as we juggle our time in order to write and publish academic articles. I appear to be torn between my students and the university demands and state that I feel guilty. *Guilt* is a word that is written frequently in my personal history narrative. For example, I felt guilty about letting my mother down when I went to high school. I also stated that at times I felt guilty about being a working mother and about not spending more time with my current students. The learners in *Freedom Writers* tell stories about their childhoods and many of them grew up in single parent or abusive homes but the parents did the best that they could and sent their children to school. What I can take from the film is that as parents we do what we think is best for our children and as teachers we do what we think is best for our learners and as long as we are doing our best, there should be no place for guilt. However, even in doing what we believe is our best requires reflection and self-questioning so as to identify alternative ways of doing what we do.

In questioning the influences on my pedagogy, what I have learned thus far is that whilst Mrs SC's and my mother's influence on me during my formative years, contributed to many of my feelings of insecurities both inside and outside of the classroom, my mother's ambition for me also contributed positively to my pedagogy. I have also come to realise that, in spite of the fact that I do not want to behave in an authoritarian manner, my behaviour in the classroom often mirrors that which was modelled by my mother and Mrs SC. However, I do not only mirror constraining pedagogic practices but also generative pedagogy that was modelled by Mr BP and Mr BR.

4.3 How do I Make Them Interested in Reading These?

This section is titled thus because in *Freedom Writers* Ms Gruwell requests that her class be given novels to read and her superior, Ms Campbell offers her the condensed version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Ms Gruwell questions how she will be able to make the class interested in reading the play. The theme of the *Importance of Reading* was identified in my personal history narrative as reading influenced my formative years and played a role in my

pedagogy. This section examines the importance of reading in my formative years and the influence that reading had on my pedagogy.

Whilst fear, guilt and other negative emotions are written about in my discussion of my mother and Mrs SC in my personal history narrative, the discussion about reading and that my mother exposed me to books from such an early age gives me the sense that I feel gratitude for this privilege and that I appreciate how my mother did what she thought was best for me. I think that *reading* emerges as a key aspect in my narrative. As a parent and teacher, I appear to appreciate the value of reading as I exposed my children to books and always encouraged them, my learners at school and my current students to read. A few of my current students borrow novels from me. My primary objective in my ABET work was to teach the adult learners to read and write and it appears that I felt genuine pleasure when my ABET learners gained independence through having learned these basic literacy skills.

My personal history narrative makes it clear that I was fortunate on many counts – firstly that I happened to be born white in South Africa during apartheid education and by the virtue of my skin colour I was afforded amongst other privileges, an education. Another privilege that was afforded my sisters and me was that we were exposed to books from an early age and were thus at an advantage when we started school whilst millions of other South African children came from illiterate backgrounds. Over the years, there have been numerous initiatives to improve the literacy levels of disadvantaged African children in South Africa. One such project called the Family Literacy Project (FLP) was founded in 2000 in an attempt to get parents involved in their children's literacy development (Desmond, 2010). Many of the parents in the community where the project started were not literate and seemed to feel that they would not be in a position to support their children in this endeavour; but Desmond (2010) reported how parents were taught to assist their children through everyday tasks that were not necessarily obviously literacy related. Parents were taught to simply communicate with their children. Desmond related the example of fetching water from the river and discussing this activity with the children in order to develop their memories, sequencing of events and vocabulary. Activities such as this are oral activities that can assist in developing the pre-literacy development of a child. The everyday stories and the fact that the parents in the FLP were orally engaging with their children equipped them with important skills for when they started school. As this project progressed, many of the parents started learning to read and write and

those who were literate started to work with children in the community and to read to them. The project grew and by 2007, three community libraries had been opened in the community.

Although it is not the same way in which the Gradgrind children and I were privileged with easy access to books and literate parents who could assist us when necessary, the children who grow up in areas with projects similar to the FLP are in a more privileged position than some other children. I say this because when starting school they have had access to books and the community is involved in developmental reading programmes. The FLP is not the only project of its kind in South Africa. For instance, the UNESCO institute for lifelong learning reported on a project called the Run Home to Read Literacy Programme (RHTR) that was started in 2006. This programme essentially aims to improve the literacy of adults as well as to improve the basic literacy skills of children. UNESCO (2006a) reported the following:

Improved literacy skills among pre-school children: According to reports by most local primary school principals, RHRLP child-graduates have greater cognitive, literacy and social skills. They are also more creative than other children who did not participate in the programme. As a result, it has been noted that RHRLP child-graduates have greater capacities to quickly comprehend new and higher-level literacy as well as to adapt to the formal school system. (p. 27)

Children who are fortunate enough to have been exposed to programmes such as RHTR and the FLP have an advantage over their peers when they start school and possibly have a greater chance of academic success. However, exposure to literacy and well developed literacy skills do not guarantee a place in a tertiary institution, in the same way that not everybody who comes from a middle class background is going to achieve academically and go on to study at a university. When discussing this with my sister, she noted: "...um...not everybody is going to be a doctor or a lawyer just because they were read to, but people who do not finish school and get a trade are often very successful." During the apartheid era which is when I was at school and university, job reservation²¹ for whites meant that they were likely to find employment if they left school early whereas the Africans did not have the same opportunities or privileges.

²¹ Job reservation was a system that was introduced by the apartheid government in 1956 to give "White wage earners an exclusive or preferred claim to selected occupations in industry, commerce and public services. It amounts to a system of sheltered employment" (Alexander & Simons; 1959, p. 4).

The above discussion reiterates how my personal history narrative demonstrated that to be white and free to go to school was a privilege. While I have criticism of the schools that I attended, they had excellent facilities and small classes wherein teachers were able to give learners individual attention. I do not recall ever questioning the fact that there were only white children enrolled in our schools.

My reflections on reading during my own and my children's formative years have brought me to the realisation that the exposure to books that I took for granted was a privilege in itself as books were always available to me. According to Rose (2004), to have had no exposure to literacy in one's early years can have a detrimental effect on performance at school because there is a relationship between literacy and educational outcomes, economic opportunities and social advantage. When children start school, not all of them have been socialised into the school's ways of meaning and they are thus disadvantaged from the outset. With parents who valued education and a mother who was a teacher, I was thus at an educational as well as an economic advantage from the start. Rose (2004) made the point that the literacy development sequence within schools tends to assume that all learners have been assimilated into certain ways of being and teaching is based on the teachers' presumptions. If this is indeed the case, it means that many learners are left behind from birth and the gap widens. One of the reasons for this widening gap is that learning to read is more than being able to recognise the words. Word recognition and being able to sound out what is on a page should be accompanied by understanding of what is being read, and about becoming independent thinkers who have mastered reading to learn. If, as Rose (2004) states, the ability to learn from reading underlies all content orientated activities, learners who take longer to learn how to read to understand texts are likely to get left behind.

What is expected of the students in the film *Freedom Writers* is that they will fail, and when Ms Gruwell requests that her class be given novels relevant to their lives, in order to encourage them to read as there are "great stories to which they can relate", her superior, Ms Campbell, refuses. This is evident in the following conversation:

Ms Campbell: If I give your kids these books, I will never see them again. If I do, they will be damaged.

Ms Gruwell: I don't know how to make them interested in reading.

Ms Campbell: You can't make someone want an education. The best you can do is try to get them to obey - to learn discipline. That would be a tremendous accomplishment for them.

Ms Gruwell also wants to link the learners' lives to what happens in the classroom and when her request for books is denied, she secures a second job in order to raise funds to buy novels for her learners. When handing these novels to the learners she states that the books all remind her of them in some way and they have a moment's silence in order to "make a toast for change." Because the learners are able to relate to the content of these novels, they become enthusiastic and change their attitudes toward reading because Ms Gruwell has made the effort to get to know their lives and stories. Against all odds, the learners in this class graduate, with many being the first in their families to do so. Ms Gruwell takes her learners on field trips and encourages them to read in order to spark their interest and to encourage critical thinking. In her teaching, Ms Gruwell is mindful of using the learners' life experiences and of relating them to the new knowledge. In doing so, she is practicing critical pedagogy wherein education is understood in its social and political context and which has a societal transformation agenda (Giroux, 1988).

Shor (1987) related how he started out as a teacher who relied on traditional teaching methodology, as did I, and then came to the realisation that the students became animated when talking about their own realities and that they were motivated when able to relate the subject matter to their own contexts. This resonates with my recollection of how I felt when Mr BP, my Secondary School English teacher, encouraged us to decide which character we could relate to when we were reading *Lord of the Flies*. He then started teaching around themes and found a discourse wherein learners' language counted as much as his own. In thinking of my own teaching of high school English, what I did was to encourage learners to relate to the characters and from there, we identified themes, but I do not recall that we then worked together.

The impression I get from reading my personal history narrative is that I felt fulfilled in my role as an ABET teacher. One of the reasons, amongst others, could be that the teaching methods were very learner centred and deviated from my experiences with most of my schoolteachers and university lecturers. Also, because the benefits were far reaching and more than learning to read and write, the students' confidence grew and that they were able to take control of their lives as a result of becoming literate pleased me immensely. What I noted in reading my personal narrative is that I often seem to have found a place where I felt comfortable

and secure, such as in my ABET classes, and then have had to give it up and I seemingly did this without regret which intrigues me. I say this because there is no mention of any such feeling, and I get the sense that I moved on and always looked forward to the next challenge in my teaching career. Perhaps because I never felt absolutely secure in any job, I was willing to leave a post and move onto something else.

4.4 I am Not a Social Worker – I am Barely a Teacher

This section deals with teacher education and the heading is borrowed from a scene in *Freedom Writers* when Ms Gruwell tells her father that she does not know what to do with her learners as they have so many problems outside of school.

In reading my personal narrative, *Teacher Education* was identified as my third theme and it appears to be another noteworthy influence on my pedagogy as it seems to me that I felt unprepared and unsure of myself when I started teaching:

I always wanted my lessons to be vibrant, entertaining and engaging, but often felt that I was falling short as a teacher. With hindsight, I realise that this could have been because I did not have a theoretical basis for this pedagogic approach and I was trying to emulate and implement something that I knew little about. (Sowing, p. 83)

Having said this, I went on to acknowledge that I was a lazy student who missed many lectures and it was possible that I missed the sessions in which the methodology and theoretical aspects were taught.

In discussions about teacher education, what often comes to the fore is teachers' prior knowledge and experiences of having been taught (Korthagen, 2006; Lortie, 1975). In attempting to rationalise why I felt inadequate as a teacher of English I came to the conclusion that I did not have the pre-requisite theoretical knowledge to know what to do in the classroom. Zeichner (1993) refutes this idea with his view that theoretical teacher education does not have much of an impact on what happens in the classroom. What I have now come to realise is that teacher education programmes are much more than the link between theory and practice. This complexity is illustrated by Korthagen, Loughran and Russell (2006), who developed seven principles of teacher education which are inter-dependent and grouped as follows (Figure 4.1):

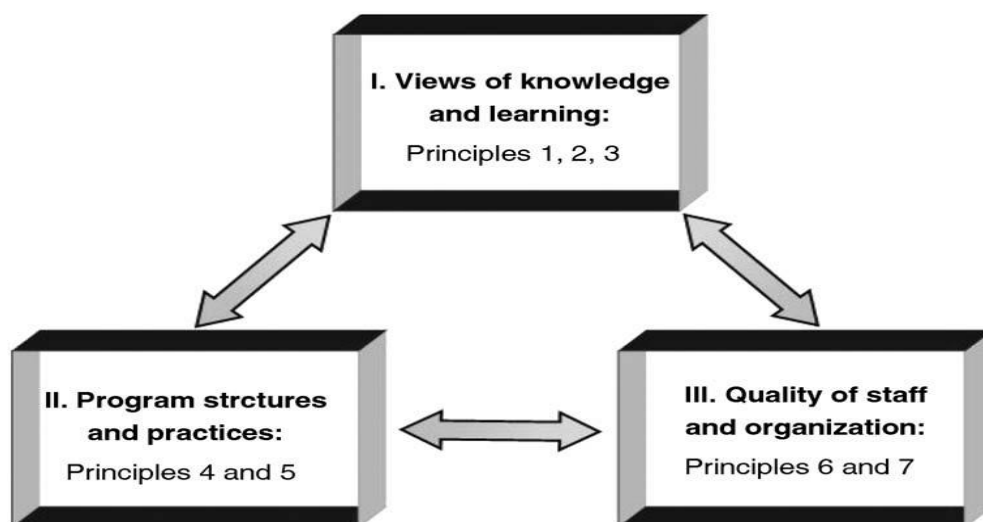


Figure 4.1: Clustering of the seven principles into components of programs and program change (Korthagen et al., 2006, p. 1027).

According to Korthagen et al. (2006), the three principles that are grouped into views of knowledge and learning are: i) learning about teaching involves continuously conflicting and competing demands; ii) learning about teaching requires a view of knowledge as a subject to be created rather than as a created subject; and iii) learning about teaching requires a shift in focus from the curriculum to the learner. The second principle is what made me question my view that without theory in teacher education teachers will not be competent in the classroom. I say this because Korthagen et al. (2006) noted that in the 21st Century teacher education is being acknowledged as an “object of academic research” (p. 1020) and argued that teacher educators should create situations that encourage their students to build their own theories of teaching rather than to introduce theory into teacher education programmes.

This is in contrast to what Freeman (2002) noted about research leading up to the 1970s which positioned teachers as there to implement the ideas of others in a teacher centred way. Teachers who were starting out in their careers were seen as blank slates needing to be moulded (Freeman, 2002) and would be trained and then be expected to come into the classrooms and put into practice what they had been taught without any original thought. In teacher education programmes, student teachers were taught through the transmission of pedagogical and content knowledge, which was my experience. Yet, as early as in the 20th Century, Dewey (1933) was writing about teacher training institutions and the tendency to focus on the technical aspects of the classroom as being detrimental to the profession as well as to the learners.

Giroux (1988) referred to this mechanistic way of delivering content as the “proletarianisation of teacher work” (p. 122) which he explained as educators becoming nothing more than technicians who simply look after their classes whilst executing the prescribed curriculum. In this way schools become bureaucratic systems which maintain the status quo of the state. There is no autonomy in the training of pre-service teachers and all are trained to deliver their lessons using the same transmission methodology.

Freeman (2002) pointed out that as early as the 1970s education scholars were questioning this process-product model in which the process of teaching was expected to churn out a particular product and the thinking of the time was behaviourist in which certain stimuli would result in certain expected response. I think that the teachers in *Hard Times* epitomised this thinking, as did most of my primary school teachers and my mother as indicated in my personal narrative. Scholars such as Dunkin and Biddle (1974) were questioning whether attempts to understand teaching and learning should concentrate on the teaching methods of the time or whether it was more complex because to do this was to examine only the product.

The importance of ontology and epistemology of the teacher was beginning to be acknowledged. Teacher education should be more than following the curriculum and Loughran (2007) noted that in addition to teaching content, one must also be mindful that teacher educators must see into teaching. When pre-service teachers embark upon university studies, they do not arrive as empty vessels and Loughran is of the view that it is up to the teacher educators to ask their students questions that will elicit knowledge about what they know, and then go about encouraging them to analyse their existing knowledge and to consider alternatives. This is in line with constructivism, which is discussed in Chapter One.

It was during the time that Mr BP and Mr BR would have been studying that there was a shift away from researching teachers’ practice only and scholars such as Lortie (1975) started to focus on how teachers thought as well as on their experiences. Irvine (2009) noted that what was also important was that teacher education should be responsive to the cultural needs of the students as well as their pedagogic needs.

In addition to research moving toward examining the role of the teacher during the time that I was an education student in 1983, research on teaching in the United States of America and Britain (Heath 1983; Edwards & Furlong, 1978) moved to acknowledging that there were internal and external factors at play in a classroom and that learners’ contexts had to be considered in classroom practices. This thinking was in line with *Culturally Responsive*

Pedagogy (as explained in Chapter One) wherein teachers are acknowledging the diverse student population by meeting the academic, cultural and community needs of their students.

Kothagen et al. (2006) also alluded to this with their sixth principle of teacher education, which states that learning about teaching requires meaningful relationships between schools, universities and student teachers. In forming such relationships, factors outside of the classroom would come to the fore.

During my HDE year, I do not recall discussions around issues such as those discussed above. Why is it that with all of this research in the field of pre-service teacher education, I stated in my personal narrative that I do not recall studying scholars who were researching at that time? I admitted that I might have missed the sessions in which this was lectured and yet, on emailing a contemporary of mine who was far more conscientious than I, he stated that he has no recollection of discussions such as these (Figures 4.2, 4.3).

From: Bridget Campbell

Sent: 22 October 2015 10:36 AM

To:

Subject: QUESTIONS

Hi [REDACTED]

I hope that you have some time in which to consider these questions. Do you recall any of the modules from your HDE year and do you remember being told about the educational research that was new and innovative during the late 70s and early 80s? It was a time when educational research shifted from a positivist framework to an interpretivist, and the rhetoric was around concepts such as hidden curriculum, apprenticeship of observation and pedagogical content knowledge.

I do not recall being exposed to any of this, but perhaps it is because I did not attend many lectures.

When you entered the teaching profession and whilst you were teaching did you have sound theoretical knowledge? Did you strengthen your content knowledge with theoretical concepts or did you simply teach without any awareness as to **all** elements of pedagogic practice?

Are you able to recall any memorable “AHA moments” from your HDE year and/or from your own teaching practice? Did any lecturer or colleague model “good” or innovative teaching practices? Was there awareness of critical pedagogy or did you all simply go through the motions of teaching? Thanks

Figure 4.2: My Email to my Contemporary

Hi B.

Sure – for what it is worth!

To be honest, I cannot remember much about my HDE year. I am not sure if this is due to memory loss (it was in 1980) or because I never took much in.

A mitigating factor if the latter is the case, was the fact that I was going to the army for the next two years and an actual teaching job seemed a long time in the future.

My one memory was the concept of CNE – Christian National Education – that seemed very foreign to me given experience of being schooled at Marist Brothers. Not too much ‘National’ there.

As for the high-brow concepts of *hidden curriculum*, *apprenticeship of observation* and *pedagogical content knowledge*, they sound Greek to me.

When eventually starting my teaching career, I think it would be fair to say that I was influenced and ‘taught’ the practice of teaching by the good, experienced staff that I had the privilege to be guided by. I hope this helps.

Figure 4.3: The Response to my Questions

It is a pity that the students at the institution where I studied for my HDE were not exposed to what was going on in the global teacher education arena at that time as perhaps this would have had an impact on my pedagogy when I embarked upon my teaching career. At the very least, I would have been aware as to the importance of keeping abreast with what was current in the education world.

It comes as no surprise that when I started teaching in 1984 the transmission approach was what was familiar, as it had been modelled in my formative years and thereafter with an exception of one or two teachers as discussed in my personal narrative. The HDE course content had reinforced that teachers taught and learners sat and learnt. In examining this, I can better understand why I was never satisfied with the way in which I conducted my lessons and always felt that something was missing but did not know how to change my pedagogy as this is what had been modelled.

4.4.1 Swim against the Stream

This section continues the *Teacher Education* discussion and examines the concept of modelling and is titled *Swim against the stream* because, in my view, student teachers cannot expect to go into their own classrooms with a manual on pedagogy. They all need to find their

own way of being as teachers and to adapt what they know to suit every unique situation. The title for this section is taken from a phrase in *Dead Poets' Society* when Mr Keating takes his class outside to the courtyard and tells them to walk in any way that takes their fancy as they “find their own walk”. He is illustrating that they should not always conform but should trust their own beliefs and not worry about what others are thinking or saying. One of the learners, Charlie Dalton, leans against a pillar as an observer and the following conversation ensue:

Mr Keating: Mr Dalton, are you not joining us?

Charlie Dalton: Exercising the right to not walk.

Mr Keating: Thank you, Mr Dalton you have just illustrated the point. Swim against the stream.

Modelling was an aspect of pedagogy that is evident when talking about my mother and teachers and my own teaching in my personal history narrative. One of the things that I have learned from writing my personal history narrative is that teacher educators should encourage students to examine their existing knowledge, including what was modelled by their own teachers, and to challenge them to evaluate this and to combine their newly acquired knowledge with what they know already. Loughran (2007) advised that, for teacher educators, the subject content should not be confused with modelling what it is to teach and that we must be mindful of teaching sound content knowledge, as well as teaching how to teach along with modelling effective practice.

Loughran and Berry (2008) noted that for teacher educators to practice explicit modelling is to teach in a way in which we expect our students to teach in their own classrooms. “This means we must model the use of engaging and innovative teaching procedures for our students rather than “deliver” information about such practice through the traditional (and often expected) transmission approach” (Loughran & Berry, 2008, p. 4). The students need to be alerted that the expectation is not that they reproduce the pedagogy to which they are exposed but that they adapt what has been modelled to suit their own teaching contexts.

In writing about my personal history as a teacher educator, I appear to display awareness of how important it is to model good teaching practices. What I have come to realise is that modelling is not always positive and that the teacher-centered as well as the constructivist pedagogy that I was exposed to during my formative years influenced my pedagogy. An example of modelling behaviour detrimental to others is when I forced my two older boys to

rote learn and the fact that I had high, often unrealistic expectations of them. In this way, I could have been re-enacting my mother's behaviour in my role as a mother and as a teacher. The way in which I dealt with my older children and their learning, and the way in which I reacted when, for example, they came home with mediocre marks, was more subtle than my memory of my mother's ambition for me, but I was nonetheless guilty of similar behaviour.

Behaviour that is modelled soon becomes inculcated, which is apparent in *Hard Times* when Mr Gradgrind begs his star pupil Bitzer to turn a blind eye to breaking the law. When Bitzer refuses, Mr Gradgrind asks if his motives are driven by self-interest. Bitzer replies thus: ".....But I am sure that you know that the whole system is a question of self-interest....I was brought up in that catechism when I was very young Sir, as you are well aware" (p. 303). It is difficult to cast off the mantle of what has been ingrained because of constant reinforcement. Bitzer epitomises the type of student whom Mr Gradgrind has worked so hard to mould, and it is ironic that Mr Gradgrind begs him to disregard the mind and to find sympathy in the heart in order to help his son Tom escape arrest. Bitzer has been managed and moulded by Mr Gradgrind and it therefore does not come as a surprise that he refuses to help Mr Gradgrind who has reinforced that there is one way to teach and to learn and nothing but facts matter.

My personal history narrative has revealed that I identified two educators who modelled effective and innovative pedagogy for me. I chose to represent my experiences of the pedagogy that was modelled in the genre of a short story (Figure 4.4).

THE GIRL WHO BECAME A TEACHER

Once upon a time there was a little girl who attended a small village school. Her mother was a teacher and when she was learning she would have to know everything word for word or she would get a hiding and the book would be thrown at her. She would think that if she ever had children of her own she would not treat them like this but would teach them by explaining the work to them when they were studying. Her teachers at school treated her in the same way and they would stand in the front of the classroom and talk all day and she would have to sit quietly and listen and remember. Anybody who did not learn from the teachers or who spoke in class or asked too many questions would be punished. The girl would always think that if she ever became a teacher, she would allow the learners to ask questions and to work with each other and to sit in groups and work together in class. When she went to high school there was an English teacher and his name was Mr BP. He was enthusiastic and energetic and his classes were lively and interesting. The learners were allowed to voice their opinions and they worked in groups during their literature classes. The girl would think that if she ever became a teacher, she would want to be just like him. The little girl grew up and went to university and was training to be a teacher. She would sit in lectures and have to listen as the lecturer went on and on and on and she was not asked for an opinion or encouraged to discuss what was being taught with anybody else. She thought that if she ever became a lecturer, she would not want to be like this. Sometimes she would get bored and not listen to a word and it was just like being back at primary school. She had one lecturer, Mr BR, who reminded her of Mr BC and she really enjoyed his classes because he was interesting and dynamic and enthusiastic. He allowed the students to work together and to make sense of the content collaboratively. She would think that if she ever became a lecturer she would be just like Mr BR.

When she became a teacher, she tried to be like Mr BP but had not been trained how to do this and was unsure of herself so when the classes became too noisy or she felt that she was losing control, she taught as she had been taught at school. She became authoritarian and her teaching was teacher centred and the learners had to sit quietly in rows and listen to her. When she became a lecturer, she wanted to encourage her students to be collaborative and she wanted to encourage them to construct their own knowledge because she knew that these were good teaching practices and that she should model them. But she did not know how to do this. "I will have to learn to teach like that so that my students learn from me," she thought.

Figure 4.4: What was modelled? The Girl who Became a Teacher

The story above highlights a few key issues. Firstly, that as a learner I was exposed to teacher-centred methods and authoritarian teachers but that there was awareness that there were other

ways of teaching. Secondly, that the group work and collaboration, which are principles of constructivism, were enjoyed and were where learning took place and that there was awareness that this was how pedagogy could be. Thirdly, that even in my teacher education year much of the lecturing was teacher-centred and few innovative constructivist lectures were modelled.

As a teacher educator, I need to be very mindful of what I model in my pedagogy. It is so easy to revert to the role of authoritarian teacher when one is unsure of what to do next as socialisation as a teacher begins when one is a learner. An example of this that comes to mind with my students is an incident when I was supervising students' teaching practice in 2015. I was assessing a fourth year student and sitting at the back of his classroom as he taught a Ted Hughes poem titled "Old age gets up". His lesson plan indicated that he would begin the lesson by asking that the learners talk to those around them about their interactions with old people. His next step would be to ask that learners tell the class about their experiences before he divided the learners into groups and asked that they read the poem and write, in no more than three sentences what it was about. I could see from the lesson plan that his lesson should have been constructivist and that he planned to scaffold the learners as they made sense of the poem. The lesson began and the student asked that learners chat to each other about their interactions with old people. The learners started talking and were discussing everything but what they were asked to.

The student then stopped the activity and read the poem to the class after which he told them to write down what he was saying as he gave a line-by-line analysis of the poem. At the end of the lesson I asked why he had deviated from his lesson plan and his response was that he had panicked when the learners did not discuss their experiences as asked and he had then recalled how he was taught poetry when he was a learner and reverted to what he knew. Lortie (1975, p. 61) referred to such pedagogy as "apprenticeship of observation theory" wherein he stated that students spend thousands of hours observing their teachers which means that by the time they enter teacher educator programmes they have preconceptions about all aspects of pedagogy. After this incident I made a mental note to talk to the students about this and to remind them that when things are not going as planned, they must try not to revert to teacher centred ways that they were probably exposed to whilst they were learners.

Knezevic and Scholl (1996) maintained that it is logical to assume that we are products of our education, which is substantiated by research. In analysing my personal history narrative this

is most certainly so in my case as I attempted to model my pedagogy on those who had impressed me as a learner and a student and on those from whom I garnered the most information. Korthagen et al. (2006) also acknowledged the importance of modelling and their second principle of teacher education that falls within quality of staff and education is that learning is enhanced when the teaching and learning approaches advocated in the programme are modelled by the teacher educators in their own practice. My personal history made me aware of the importance of not only modelling pedagogy that I advocate in my classes but that I also need to create awareness by explicitly stating why I am doing what I do when teaching. As Korthagen et al. (2006) went on to state, “so long as teacher educators advocate innovative practices that they do not model, illustrate and read as text in their own teacher education classrooms, teacher education reform will continue to elude us” (p. 1036). Berry (2008) in discussing modelling agreed with Korthagen et al. (2006) about practicing what we preach. She argued that teacher educators should make our teaching explicit. Berry also wrote of moving from being an authoritative teacher who tells. She explained that modelling is also important, as it is not about insisting that students learn to copy the teacher educator but rather that teacher educators model what it is to respond to the needs of the students.

In making the pedagogical reasoning for practice clear, explicit and understandable, the principle is that student teachers will see into the teacher educators’ thinking about teaching so that they can access the ideas and feelings associated with the pedagogy (Korthagen et al., 2006). Korthagen et al. (2006) acknowledged internal and external issues in teacher education and their first principle states that learning about teaching involves continuously conflicting and competing demands that must be solved by the students themselves. This was not a principle instilled in me during my HDE year. My understanding of the thinking behind the suggestion that students solve the demands is that if students focus on their own practical problems, they will relate to them better. Students should be encouraged to reflect on their experiences and concerns and to work in groups in order to develop their own professional knowledge, as knowledge about teaching is not externally constructed (Berry, 2008; Korthagen et al., 2006).

Working in collaboration with others was not encouraged during my teacher education year. To encourage collaborative work in teacher education is to encourage active co-construction of knowledge and the building of relationships, which are tenets of constructivism (Chapter One).

In my personal history narrative, I stated that I attempted to teach in a constructivist rather than teacher-centred way because this methodology is what I responded well to at school and university when taught by Mr BP and Mr BR. An example of this is that the collaborative learning that I enjoyed as a learner has been my preferred methodology in all phases and arenas in which I have taught. However, what is noteworthy is that when things did not go as planned and the noise levels became too much, I reverted to the default position of “I am in charge, listen to me or be punished” which is what I had experienced with Mrs SC. My personal history narrative reveals how easy it is to revert to authoritarian teacher centred methods when one is unsure of what to do next.

The third principle of Korthagen et al. for teacher education is that to learn about teaching must include a shift in focus from the curriculum to the learner. In teacher education there should thus be a relationship between teaching and learning. Dinkelman (2003) stated that in examining ourselves as teacher educators, we should be challenging those who view teaching as telling and that when one has an idea about what should be happening in the classroom, it should be brought to fruition immediately in order to test the idea. I think that after testing the idea it is advisable to take the time to reflect on the efficacy of the changes. Reflective practice is discussed in Chapter One of this thesis and Dinkelman (2003) noted that to be reflective means to critically review our teaching so as to gain understanding of the contexts in which we teach. Reflection can also take place before teaching a lesson because to reflect on our experiences empowers people to know themselves before taking action (Dewey, 1910/1933). To reflect before and after teaching is a process that should uncover possibilities for pedagogy.

Dinkelman (2003) noted that one’s pedagogy as a teacher educator is constructed over time and that it is a process. This process entails, firstly, being a good teacher. The word “good” intrigues me as I question what it is that makes one a “good teacher”. In a sense Dinkelman answered this when he went on to state that one should be theorising one’s pedagogy and in doing so, questions about the why, how and what of teaching should be addressed through what one is experiencing in the classroom which is what I have been doing in writing and analysing my personal narrative. Pedagogy should be more than arbitrarily trying out new ideas, which is what writing my personal history narrative revealed about my attempts at changing my pedagogy.

The seven principles for teacher education developed by Korthagen et al. (2016) attempt to support the link between experience and theory in ways that are responsive to the needs and

practices of teacher education and student teachers, which is what I am attempting to achieve through examining influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy. Likewise, Berry (2008) noted that as teacher educators we need to pay attention to the needs of our students but that in order to do this effectively we need to know and understand ourselves, and then put our thoughts aside and focus on how we can use what we have discovered about ourselves to cater to our students' needs.

4.5 Conclusion

The question being examined in writing my personal history narrative was: “*What has influenced my pedagogy?*” and the story and analysis pointed to constructive and destructive influences. The destructive influences contributed to feelings such as fear, anxiety and those feelings of inadequacy, which I now realise, have always affected my pedagogy. Characters who contributed to these feelings are my mother and Mrs SC. In my first layer of analysis, it became obvious to me that my lived experience of teacher centred methodologies and authoritarianism influenced the way in which I taught and still sometimes teach as I model the pedagogic practices to which I was exposed. In contrast, to this is a caring attitude, an awareness that good teaching practices must be modelled, an awareness that collaborative approaches can enhance learning and a belief that it is important to understand what the students' experiences are and to build on those. Characters who contributed to these influences are Mr BP and Mr BR.

My first layer of analysis also revealed to me that I needed to write my personal history narrative in depth and this was achieved through juxtaposition with my disciplinary knowledge. In the second layer of analysis, the juxtaposition of my personal history narrative with *Hard Times* led to the identification of 28 themes which were collapsed into what I choose to refer to as dimensions of influence on my pedagogy, which were: a) *Fear*; b) *The Importance of Reading*; and c) *Teacher Education*. I would have thought that my own pre-service teacher education programme would have equipped me in becoming a teacher and yet writing and analysing my personal history narrative has revealed that I am of the opinion that I learned very little during that year.

The chapter that follows narrates how I examined the possibilities for purposeful pedagogies (Samaras, 2011) presented in *Reaping Influences* and enacted them in my pedagogy with the under-graduate student teachers. It is in Chapter Five that through my personal voice, I begin

to explain my attempts at closing the “knowing - doing gap” (Ball, 2012, p. 283) in a concrete way. I narrate the ways in which I encouraged the students to expand their critical thinking and to be reflective as I enacted the possibilities with reference to the concepts of: Pedagogy; *Critical Pedagogy*; *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Constructivism*; *Purposeful Pedagogies*; and *Reflection and Reflexivity* (as described in Chapter One).

CHAPTER FIVE: TURN ON A SMALL LIGHT IN A DARK ROOM: POSSIBILITIES FOR PURPOSEFUL PEDAGOGIES FOR MY UNDERGRADUATE MODULES

5.1 Introduction

The layered literary analysis of my personal history narrative as presented in the preceding chapter revealed possibilities for purposeful pedagogies (Samaras, 2011) and in this chapter, I report on how what I revealed as possibilities were enacted in my pedagogy in my undergraduate modules.

The title of this chapter – *Turn on a Light in a Small Dark Room* – has been borrowed from Ms Gruwell in *Freedom Writers* (LaGravense, 2007) as she practices purposeful pedagogies that are culturally responsive and designed to empower her students. In my case, the light is being turned on to improve my pedagogy and in turn benefit my students. This chapter narrates how, with my undergraduate modules, I examined the opportunities presented in the analysis of my personal history narrative with the aim of encouraging my students to expand their critical thinking, to be reflective, to find their voices and not to simply accept what they are told by those in positions of authority.

The first section, *Give Them the Opportunity to Expand*, discusses possibilities that I enacted in my 2015 and 2016 fourth year classes. In the second section, *Change* I describe and reflect on the 2015 and 2016 third year possibilities. What follows in *You Don't Know Nothing* examines a 2014 poetry incident with my second year English Major students and then how in 2016 the possibilities that I had identified for my pedagogy were implemented in my teaching of poetry. I then report on how I engaged with my critical friends during the course of this study. The conclusion of the chapter examines how what I learned in developing my layered analysis of my personal history narrative fed into my pedagogy, which was extended and deepened by my engagement with purposeful pedagogies.

5.2 Give Them the Opportunity to Expand: Possibilities for Fourth Year Students

During the second semester of 2015, I was into my second year of this self-study narrative research and was slowly formulating ideas as to what needed to change in my current pedagogy because of interrogating my past and current pedagogic practice. I researched ways in which to make my pedagogy more purposeful in a manner that espoused critical pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy and constructivism and I then explored these pedagogies with my

students. I was lecturing and tutoring the novel *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854/1973) and started the first lecture with an historical background of England during the 1800s. I showed two short YouTube clips – one of which focussed on the life of Charles Dickens²² and the other on the social conditions in England during the Industrial Revolution²³. I chose the second clip because *Hard Times* highlights the negative social effects that the Industrial Revolution had on Britain.

A tutorial is the forum during which students are encouraged to respond to questions about the texts under discussion and the lecturer's role is to facilitate the discussions. During the first tutorial the students sat in groups of four to six and I started by asking the students to work alone to list the issues with which they grapple in the 21st Century. After they had written their lists, they spoke to their group members about the issues in their lives that were problematic. Thereafter every group gave feedback as to their discussions. I then used this as the starting point for the tutorial by stating that although the novel was written in 1854, the issues that Dickens raised about education, social conditions, women, poverty and relationships can be related to their lives 160 years later.

The purpose of this exercise was three-fold. Firstly, I wanted the students to reflect on their lives. This is based on constructivism wherein students are building on what they already know (Vygotsky, 1962). To have started with students reflecting on their experiences was the start of the linking of students' contexts with what they are learning which is advocated by critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1988). Secondly, I was encouraging students to relate their experiences to the experiences of the characters in the novel because in culturally responsive pedagogy educators teach content in meaningful and engaging ways with which the students can connect (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Thirdly, this was my way of getting to know something about my students' lives, which is important to culturally responsive pedagogy (Villegas & Lucas, 2007), and critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1988).

I was taking the advice of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) in trying to understand the cultural backgrounds that the students were bringing to class so as to be aware not to emphasise events to which I could relate but to adapt my pedagogy so as to make it more relevant to the lives of the students. This 15 minute exercise in which students listed issues of concern was invaluable for me as I then knew what to stress in future lectures and I also learned which relationships and events had to be dealt with sensitively. I learned, amongst other things, that some of the

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AB9poWDeDs>

²³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_tFFQyEu_Q

students come from really poor homes as did the Hands²⁴ in *Hard Times* and the miners who worked in Durnacol where I grew up and that some students have relationship problems, as did the characters in *Hard Times*. There were students who complained that their parents were very controlling and a young female student who is married stated that she is in an arranged marriage and could therefore relate to Louisa in the novel when her father Mr Gradgrind arranged for her to marry Mr Bounderby.

The discussion at the start of the tutorial is what Dougiamis (1998) advised should be happening in a classroom that is constructivist. He explained that students come to class with a worldview that has been formed by years of experience and so this was my way of getting to know something of their world views. Nash (2004) noted that constructivists question the inner meaning and how the story can best be told whilst objectivists ask about the meaning outside of you and how it can be proved. I was initially of the opinion that this exercise was constructivist because I was asking that the students work from the inside out, but Nash convinced me that in this exercise I was asking that the students examine what is inside of them as well as that which is outside.

The exercise was also very telling for me as I came to know a great deal about my students' lives and experiences outside of the classroom. The activity was underpinned by Edwards and Edick's (2012) principles of interaction, accommodation, ownership and opportunity (as discussed in Chapter One). I was allowing the students to interact with the text of the novel and with each other as they accommodated new knowledge within their existing frames of reference and in doing so, I hoped that they would take ownership of the new knowledge. During the interactions I was getting to know the students as individuals.

In addition to getting to know the students, what I was attempting to do was to get the students to relate their world view with that of *Hard Times*. This was to encourage realisation that the problems that they face have been around for centuries and that the characters in *Hard Times* were facing much the same issues with parents, school, relationships, and poverty and so on in 1854. In using students' experiences and opinions as the starting point for the lecture, I was getting to know my students and their experiences and I felt that in knowing more about them and their circumstances I could better facilitate their growth. The small group discussions then

²⁴ Hands was a term used to collectively to describe those who worked in the factories in England during the Victorian period

became a large group sharing session as we discussed what the students knew about *Hard Times* from their reading of the novel and from the first lecture.

During the discussions, I was encouraging all students to work at gathering new information by being active, which are tenets of constructivism identified by Dougiamis (1998). I anticipated that as they were active in the learning, the students would be motivated to learn and to commit the new knowledge to long term memory, as explained by Lassmann (2006). Lassmann also stated that when students are engaged in active learning, they get excited, thus stimulating their motivation to learn more about something that they are able to relate to their world. Lassmann is also of the opinion that students will try harder as they are confronted with questions that are open-ended.

In encouraging students to participate in the lectures and tutorials, I was trying to move away from dominating the sessions. In the same way that I was trying not to dominate in my classes, Mr Keating in *Dead Poets Society* wanted to give learners the opportunity to take control of their own learning, which is something that I experienced at school with Mr BP, my English teacher and at university with Mr BR. As recorded in Chapter Four, in *Dead Poets Society* Mr Keating took the boys outside in order that they find their own “walk”. He asked that three boys march around the quad and then commented on the fact that the three had their own stride and pace. When the three boys stopped walking Mr Keating asked that the class join them and they all walked around, in order that they all find their own walk and “swim against the stream”. This thinking is underpinned by constructivism in which one is encouraged to express all aspects of the self in making sense of new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). However, as Mr Keating explained to the class, it is difficult to keep one’s own beliefs when all we want is to be accepted. Mr Keating was most certainly “swimming against the stream” in the conservative school. In doing so, he was modelling what it is to teach in a constructivist manner that is not the mainstream transmission mode of teaching, which is in contrast to Mr Gradgrind’s pedagogy in *Hard Times* and to the pedagogy of my mother and Mrs SC who taught me in primary school (Chapter Three).

In keeping with asking open-ended questions and moving away from transmission pedagogy, wherein the teacher teaches and the learners sit passively and listen, at the start of the next two tutorials I asked that every student fill in a slip of paper on which they had written a sentence that started with the words “I wonder....”. I told them to place themselves in the shoes of the characters in *Hard Times* and then to wonder about anything. What I was attempting to do was

to encourage students to relate to characters and events in *Hard Times* and also to get them thinking about the novel and to consider what they had read. In addition, I was encouraging them to think critically as their wonderings would force them to engage closely with the novel. The students were also told that every week would start in this way and I hoped that this would encourage them to keep up with their reading, as everybody had to wonder about something.

When the slips of paper were submitted, I opened every slip and gave my thoughts on their wonderings before we worked on the set tutorial questions. The students were also encouraged to respond to the wonderings, and at times lively discussion ensued. To start by addressing their wonderings, was to place the students at the centre of the learning process right from the beginning. In reflecting on this exercise I realise that perhaps I dominated the sessions by giving my opinions first. Perhaps I should have asked that the students responded to the wonderings before telling them my responses. Some of the students' wonderings have been written in the text box below. The originals were scanned but the documents are not clear enough to include here, so these have been transcribed (Figure 5.1).

I wonder why Mr Gradgrind pressurised Louisa into marrying Mr Bounderby

I wonder if Louisa was ever happy

I wonder why Tom was such a rotten apple

I WONDER WHY MRS GRADGRIND DID NOT PROTECT HER CHILDREN

I wonder why Bitzer refused to help Mr Gradgrind in the end

I wonder why we can't learn from History

I wonder why Mr Gradgrind nushed his children so hard

Figure 5.1 Students' Wonderings.

The students had already started the discussions with their introductory tutorial exercises and were thus starting from a position of knowledge and those who had read the chapters in the novel that were prescribed for the week, should have been confident. Prawat (as cited in Eggen & Kauchak, 2001) argued that for real learning to happen, the learners need to be involved in constructing their own knowledge rather than simply regurgitating what has been taught. I view this as being a balancing act for the teacher because what the learners say needs to be

acknowledged but the learners also need guidance so as to cope with the lesson content and come to an understanding that is mature.

An example of the way in which I attempted to guide the class toward an understanding was when I picked up that a group seemed to be deviating from issues that I thought were important and that they needed to expand their thinking. I could have stepped in and taken control of these interactions, but chose to open up the small group discussions to the class. Everybody listened to the groups' opinions about the issue at hand and they were then invited to comment. In this example, to open up the discussion brought different perspectives to what had started out as a narrow view. In describing constructivist teaching, Schreiber and Valle (2013, p. 397) stated: "...constructivist teaching assumes that students are capable of their own knowledge production as long as they are provided with meaningful experiences and guidance from an instructor or a more knowledgeable peer". Dougiamas (1998) is in agreement and argued that students learn from each other as well as the teacher. From my personal history analysis (Chapter Four) I learned that this will probably not happen if one is teaching in a teacher centred manner but is more likely to occur when the teacher is facilitating sessions as the students collaborate which is what happens in the classroom.

In the second tutorial, it struck me that a group of students in the front dominated all class discussions. I tried to split up the group but they refused to move. In a journal entry reflection, I stated that I was curious about those who dominated and those who were quiet in the tutorials. I also remarked on two students who only ever responded when I asked them directly and yet they both had interesting insights and much to add to the discussions. I knew that I wanted to do something about a problem that I had identified in a particular class. Hostetler (2010) proposed that success in a lecture room can be understood as increasing student engagement, ensuring student interest and finding ways to combat student resistance. Similarly, I wanted to encourage students to become interested and for all to engage and needed to find ways of doing this with the students' cooperation.

As noted in the analysis of my personal narrative, I had not reflected on my pedagogy in the past and in reflecting I had identified a problem and needed to intervene. The problem was that I was not succeeding in getting all in the room to cooperate, and now I needed to be reflexive, but first I had to reflect on how to go about this as I needed to intervene from a position of knowledge. Payne (2002) makes it clear that in reflection one gathers evidence needed to change and in being reflexive the changes are tried out and questioned.

To feed into my reflexivity, on the 3 April 2015, I held a discussion with four students about their experiences of English at university. When I wanted students to engage in discussion with me, I asked that anybody who was keen must please come and see me. As my study progressed, I noticed that students who were engaging with me outside of the lectures about their experiences and their lives were far more motivated and cooperative during the lectures. Likewise, in her 2016 study on the professional development of teachers in a changing world, Ball commented that her students who were participating in the study were more committed to their studies than those who were not involved in her research. In talking about tutorials and group work, one of my students who chose to participate in the discussion said:

Do you know how encouraging it is when the lecturer says: “Mmmmm that is good, I like your point”. So, you [talking to me] have to motivate us to think critically. When you say “It is very good. We get motivated that we are on the right track. But now since we are in those straight lines sitting and cannot look left or right and some are doing their own thing so you can’t reach others to hear their point. In a group of 6 or 7 you don’t only get to hear 1 or 2 responses, you get to hear different perspectives. (Student group discussion, 3 April 2015)

In my opinion, the student was highlighting the importance of positive comments from me, the lecturer. She also stated that students learn from each other and appeared to enjoy working in collaboration with peers in a small group.

In the extract below, a student expressed unhappiness that some class members dominated sessions. This confirmed what I had noted in my own lecture reflections. In the extract that follows this student also stated that she enjoyed working in smaller groups:

Uuuuuh.... What I would like in lectures is ummmmmmm.....sometimes we have those students who are shy and those who are not just pop up [sic] and answer. To ask these who are shy you [talking to me] can just point. I would like it if you point me [sic] and demand an answer. Using what I know about me [sic] with the knowledge that you have taught me, I will be able to give you an answer. Honestly, my answers will never be correct but it is a learning experience. That is how I feel in terms of how it should be, but sometimes when a lecturer does this some students think that they are out in a hot spot [sic]. We could also have our own groups without a lecturer to dominate those. Like we can talk together. I have groups that I go to so that is where I get to talk, so we

study together as well, that it where I can talk because I am comfortable with those people. (Student group discussion, 3 April 2015)

One of the students whom I had taught since her first year was always very quiet in class and never voluntarily offered her opinion during discussions. When pushed to respond, she always had valuable insights and it was obvious to me that she was a thinker. She did not volunteer to be part of the discussion group but came to speak to me privately the day after my group discussion (4. April 2015) and gave me permission to audio tape the conversation and to share her thoughts in my thesis. I wanted Angel's story to be told as I suspect that what she had to say represents many other young people who ponder on issues such as their racial, cultural and sexual identities.

I have chosen to represent what she had to say through the genre of a short story because a short story that has a strong plot, theme, character, conflict and setting should make an impact. The short story, *I Want to be White*, is a relevant field text for my research text as the initial setting is in an underprivileged community and then moves into the university setting; in terms of conflict, there is conflict between Angel's reality and the fictional stories that she loved to read; her character is interesting and the reader sees her development as the story is told; the theme is one of identity – Angel asks, “Who am I as a black South African?” “Why can't I be white?” “What is my sexual identity?” Finally, the plot fits neatly into this research text as it illustrates the complexity of teaching English in an underprivileged South African community and the impact that pedagogy can have on the learners from those communities who get to university.

I WANT TO BE WHITE

I read novels about white people, I watch movies about white people and I want to be white. That is not possible so I must marry a white man as he will love me and cherish me because black relationships are not like those experienced by whites. I will never be white and I will never marry a white man. My name is Angel and I am a teacher of English who is not white, heterosexual or English speaking. I was born into a poor family in a black township outside Pietermaritzburg where I went to the local school. The only time that I was exposed to English was at school and even there the English teacher taught English through the medium of isiZulu. When I read English books in

class, the teacher would ask questions in isiZulu and we replied in the same – I once responded in English and everybody laughed at me.

I was always different to the other young members of the community and isolated myself from them. I joined a library and started reading romantic novels written in English and watching English movies. I dreamed of being white, speaking English well, having a white husband and living a life of luxury. I wanted it so badly that I started to write my thoughts down and years later, realised that what I had penned were poems.

When I was in grade 10, a new English teacher Ms T came to our school and she noticed that I was always reading and that I wrote well, so she took me under her wing and mentored me. She asked that I submit a weekly book review to her and with all of this extra reading and writing, my English really improved. I passed matric and my English mark was high which motivated me to study to become an English teacher. The day of my new life dawned and I walked into the university gates with more confidence than I had had at school but this only lasted for the short walk from the gate to my first lecture. There were many Indians²⁵ in my class and there were many blacks who had attended Model C schools²⁶ so I withdrew and did not engage with many people because they all spoke English well. I often knew the answers but kept quiet because I felt intimidated. It was at university that I realised that I was not different because I wanted to be white – I was different because I am a lesbian and this confused me more than I had been at school and home.

The university culture was different to that of my school – everybody spoke English, the people talked differently, walked differently, behaved differently and the teaching was different. When my lecturers asked me to talk in class, I was shy and could not find the words and the people who laughed at me were my black brothers and sisters. And then I would remember Ms T and I had the courage to take a deep breath and to believe in myself because I knew that I could do it. I wish that I had been encouraged to engage more in lectures throughout my university career but that cannot change.

²⁵ Refers to South Africans of Indian descent.

²⁶ During Apartheid in South Africa the white, well-resourced government schools were referred to as Model C schools. The parents and governing bodies of the schools were partially responsible for the administration and funding thereof.

I will become a teacher of English; I now believe that what I have to say is worthwhile because I proved it to myself and to others during the Hard Times lectures; I will be confident because I was given opportunities to do so in English 420; I will get to know my learners, and treat them all equally as I have been treated. I will do all of this because that is what I have learned this year in English 420. Thank you for getting to know me, to understand me and to include me in the discussions.

I read novels about white people, I watch movies about white people and I no longer want to be white. I no longer want to marry a white man because he will love me and cherish me. I know now that black relationships are the same as those experienced by whites. I will never be white and I will never marry a white man. My name is Angel and I am a teacher of English who is proud to be black, homosexual and isiZulu speaking.

I recall feeling very emotional as Angel related her tale in a very matter-of-fact manner and I suspect that one of the reasons why I felt so emotional is because

...to engage with our students as persons is to affirm our own incompleteness, our consciousness of spaces still to be explored, desires still to be tapped, possibilities still to be opened and pursued. At once it is to rediscover the value of care, to reach back to experiences of caring and being cared for as sources of an ethical idea. (Greene, 2009, p. 95)

I got the sense that after years of being confused and unhappy, Angel had dealt with her issues and that she is going to be an empathetic teacher of English who will be caring and not model the way in which she was taught at school. I felt privileged that she trusted me enough to give me insight into her life, the challenges therein and her hopes and dreams.

Our conversation was very informative for my pedagogy and I learned the importance of responding positively to what students have to say in class. I had never given any thought to how group work can intimidate students who are not confident or competent when talking in English. What is of utmost importance is to make it my business to know as much as I can about students as individuals in an attempt to accommodate all in class accordingly. Perhaps Angel responded positively because in my class she felt valued as an individual?

In *Dead Poets Society* when Mr Keating called Todd to the front and scaffolded him as he composed and recited a poem (as discussed in Chapter Four), Mr Keating started by asking that

Todd give a loud, barbaric “YAWP”. Greene (2009) wrote that the poet Walt Whitman calls himself the “poet of the barbaric yawp” and that he is “the poet of the child going forth, of the grass, of comradeship and communion and the ‘en masse’. And of noticing, naming, caring, feeling” (p. 85). What I noted in watching the film is that there is a photograph of Walt Whitman on Mr Keating’s classroom wall. When Todd finally recited his poem, he was able to do so because Mr Keating had recognised his insecurities and had worked with him in a constructivist manner as Todd constructed his own understanding of his world in order to compose the poem. The exercise was instrumental in giving Todd confidence and allaying his fear of being in the spotlight.

Greene (2009) stated that poets such as Whitman arouse our imaginations, broaden the scope of our experiences and encourage us to extend ourselves. As teachers, we cannot expect that to extend ourselves will solve the problems of critical pedagogy but we could be encouraged to reflect on what we could have done differently in our pedagogy and my encounter with Angel encouraged me to reflect on my past and future pedagogy. In the same way as certain poets encourage reflection and create spaces wherein teachers can reflect on what we could do differently, I hoped that composing and analysing my personal history narrative would enlighten me as I reflected on my past pedagogic experiences and moved toward the possibilities.

5.3 Success

My response to what I had learned from the students in the discussion group along with what Angel had told me was purposeful as I had spent time planning how to address the issue of students who dominated. I arrived in class the following week with slips of pink, yellow and blue paper. Without informing the students as to the purpose of the coloured slips of paper, I walked around and handed these out whilst the groups were discussing. When it came to sharing their answers with the class, the students with the pink slips were told that they were not permitted to speak at all, the people with the blue slips had to be the first to answer whilst the yellow slips were permitted to give their answers and to discuss what had been said by the blue slip students. The students with the pink slips were furious and stated that I was silencing them and that this was unfair. But, after much muttering, they agreed to wait until asked for

their opinions. Their reactions are captured in the cinquan poem²⁷ (Figure 5.2) which I composed to express a conversation between students and me.

When the blue and yellow slip students had spoken, the pinks were asked to comment on what had been said. It was interesting to note that at the end of the exercise, the domineering students acknowledged that the students with the blue slips had often had opinions that they had not considered and they had then rethought their responses. In previous sessions the pink slips students had simply started talking without giving much thought to the issues and they had simply taken over all discussions and had silenced the others with this domineering behaviour. Their contributions to the discussions had been purposeful because other students had forced them to rethink their initial reactions. This exercise in momentarily suppressing the dominant group members and in creating a democratic classroom is one of the principles of constructivism espoused by Dougiamis (1998) who advised that all students must have a voice in order to construct new ideas. I had made a choice that I knew would upset some students but I took a chance.

Split up?
We refuse to!
Then I will silence you.
We are furious about this!!!!
.....
It worked!

Figure 5.2: An Intervention: Nothing's Impossible

What was highlighted for me after this exercise is that as important as peer interaction and discussion are in learning (Driver, 1995; von Glasersfeld, 1995), it is equally important that as a teacher I do not assume that all are engaged in the discussions and that learning is happening for all students. I realised that I needed to be innovative in my pedagogy in order to encourage all students in the class to contribute to, and learn from, discussions. The importance of getting to know the students was also reinforced as was the importance of

²⁷ A cinquan poem is a non-rhyming poem with 5 lines. Structured with 2 syllables in line 1; 4 in line 2; 6 in line 3; 8 in line 4 and back to 2 in line 5.

reflexive teaching. I say this because it was a student who initially alerted me to the issue that some students dominated discussions.

I was moving toward being less instructive and wanted to know more about the students and their experiences of being in that tutorial group. In another discussion group with four students, talk turned to the way in which I interact with the students and an extract from this conversation follows (Figure 5.3):

Student A: I would love the English language lecturers to debate like discussions something like that to enable me to express myself. Something like that.

Bridget: Are you saying debates and discussion during the lecture and/or outside of lecture times? Let's follow that because it is something that you are saying to me that you I feel I should do, so how do you envisage this happening?

Students A: Mmmmm ok during the lectures give them a topic ummmm and then they debate about it. Just then you guide the support them and correct you know.....

Student B: If every lecturer tried to get discussion going in the classroom but in most cases we find that not everyone participates. Some lecturers try but give up.

Student A: That is exactly what happens in our class. [I lecture this group.]

Student B: People will discuss in Zulu and somebody who is strong will report and speak out. There are few learners willing to speak up in the classroom.

Bridget: Why not?

Student D: I am nervous. She trained us to talk to a partner. The way that she [refers to me] did it is to change us. Let's say I am talking in Zulu with Dlamuka – next time she will change us so I think she do that to make a balance ummmm cause if I sit with someone speaking Zulu we will end up discussing in Zulu. I am quiet in class.

Student B: The more you hide under the umbrella of “shy” the more you will not express yourself in the classroom situation. It will become harder. You must try – don't ignore it – try every day. You will see it is not so bad. We all need to be noticed and encouraged by the lecturers

Figure 5.3: Notice Me

When listening to the recording of this discussion group, the importance of including all members of the class was reinforced and I realised that I need to be mindful not to exclude anybody in all of my future interactions with students.

In a small class such as in a tutorial group, it is possible to have that camaraderie but is it possible in a large lecture room with hundreds of students? To replicate such an event with the coloured bits of paper might not be possible in a large lecture room, but that does not mean that in a large group it is impossible to be supportive and innovative. It is through activities such as these that one gets to know individual strengths and weaknesses. I have made a note that in 2017 I will involve the students and ask them for suggestions as to how to encourage all students in the class to interact with their peers and to respond to questions.

5.4 Film Study: Dead Poets Society

In semester 1 of 2016, I lectured on the film *Dead Poets Society* to English Major 4th year students for three weeks and was scheduled to meet the group of 125 students six times over this period. However due to protest action²⁸, I met with the students five times and thus had to adjust my planned programme. It was required that the students watch the film before the first lecture. At the start of the first lecture, I asked that:

- (1) The students anonymously write any thoughts or observations that they had about the film.
It could be about a character or an event.
- (2) The students write down anything in the film with which they felt they could identify.
- (3) The students write down any wondering that they had about the film.

After these had been submitted, I told them that my wondering was whether or not Neil would have stood up to his father if Mr Keating had not arrived at the school. The students then discussed my wondering with those seated around them for a few minutes and they could not reach consensus as to what Neil would have done. This was not unexpected as there was never going to be an answer with which all agreed. I used the observation that we agreed to disagree as an occasion for learning for the students because I took the opportunity to stress that not everybody will have the same interpretations of incidents in novels but that it is important to justify one's opinions with references to the text. I also stressed that it is not a case of anything and everything being acceptable. I then started to discuss the film and the responses to the three

²⁸ Due to dissatisfaction with issues at the university the students were boycotting lectures.

things that I had asked at the start were set aside until the following session because I needed to read them. At the start of the first tutorial, I put some of the students' responses onto the overhead screen and we discussed these as a big group. The discussions were designed to respond to the students' observations and questions about the film.

The purpose of tutorials is to allow students to interrogate what they know and to respond critically to questions. I divided the class into three groups and the tutorial questions were distributed amongst the groups. All questions had to be answered and once all groups had completed the task, feedback to the entire class took place along with discussion. I informed students that as the discussion was underway they should listen carefully and link what was said by their peers to what had been delivered in the lecture.

The second lecture started by recapping what had been covered thus far. I had selected YouTube clips²⁹ that depicted what had been discussed in the lecture and the students watched the clips and then chatted to those around them in order to link what they had seen to what they had learned in the first lecture. The discussions were loud and rich and when walking around, I noted that most of the students were engaging with their peers. There were students who admitted that they had not yet watched the film and some stated that they had realised the consequences of coming to class unprepared. I had two power-point slide presentations and the first started by listing the themes and symbols from the lecture before and then moved into YouTube clips that were used to discuss the pedagogic practices of the main characters in the film.

I encouraged the students to relate their classroom experiences and the contexts in which they were schooled to what was seen in the short clips. Discussion around their experiences of pedagogy at school and which of the educators they related to and why ensued. Welton Academy, which is the school wherein the film is set, is a well-resourced privileged school and there were also discussions around the fact that some schools in South Africa are very well resourced whilst others have very few resources and I took the opportunity to discuss how the students could approach their teaching to accommodate all learners. I suggested that they model their teaching on what they admired about Mr Keating. I stressed that they could not expect to

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LjHORRHXtyI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8fu-hq3S7A>

model his pedagogy in exactly the same way but that they were to adapt his teaching to suit the contexts in which they would be teaching.

The second power-point slide presentation started with a few still pictures from the film and then linked these to how camera shots and angles work alongside the story to shape meaning (Figures 5.4 and 5.5). I chose the still pictures carefully as they depicted different ways of delivering lesson content with one depicting constructivist pedagogy and the others depicting teacher-centred pedagogy. I constantly engaged the students by asking that they link what was being said to what had been delivered in the first lecture and the questions that they had discussed in tutorial one. I did not want the sessions to be viewed in isolation and conversations about the importance of innovative pedagogy had to be continuous which was contrary to my experiences as a student and to the way in which I had often conducted my classes as a teacher and a teacher educator. Innovative pedagogy was not practiced in *Hard Times*, by teachers other than Mr Keating in *Dead Poet's Society* or by teachers other than Ms Gruwell in *Freedom Writers*.

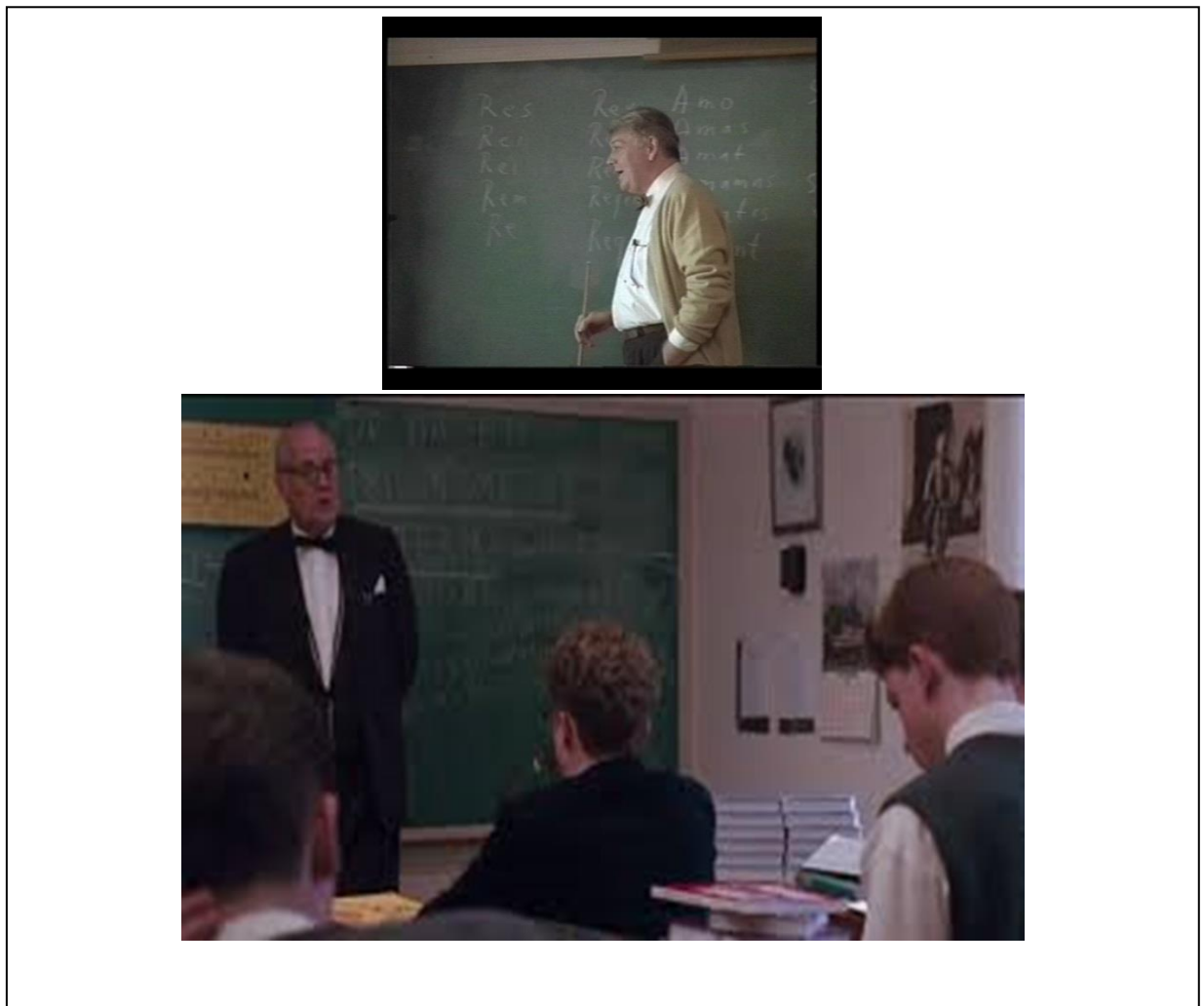


Figure 5.4. Still Shots Depicting Pedagogy in Dead Poets Society



Figure 5.5: Constructivism at Play

I was pleased that my hard work had paid off and that the lectures elicited lively student discussion and participation. However, what I had to say about the tutorials in my reflective journal paints a different picture as can be seen below (Figure 5.6):

For me, the negatives about the module have been the tutorials as there are 125 students in the class and the way in which I worked the first tut was to divide the group into 3 big groups and to allocate certain questions to every group. Within the big groups they then chatted to those around them and in the last 30 minutes we had whole class report backs. I had to repeat everything that the students said as not everybody in the class could hear and the students refused to talk into the microphone. For the second tut, I divided the class into many smaller groups and each group dealt with one question and reported back but I felt that the session was flat. For tut three, I incorporated the questions into the lecture as explained, and it is my feeling that this worked best. Perhaps it is because I felt more in control which is not a good thing as it could mean that I am most comfortable when I am the authority who is coordinating the sessions. I am interested in what the students and my colleagues have to say when I see their reviews of the lectures and tuts.

Figure 5.6: Negative Reflection (Journal entry 27.04.2016)

In reflection, we need to take a conscious look at emotions, experiences, actions and responses and to then use that to add to what we know in order to find new knowledge, meaning and have a higher level of understanding (Chapman, 2013). In revisiting these journal reflections for my study, I realised that they really did not tell me much. I needed to be more purposeful in the future and to include the aspects suggested by Chapman.

With self-reflection, one is looking inward and it concerned me that nobody was challenging my views. I thus requested that a colleague who served as a critical friend sit in on two of my sessions and I requested that he formally peer review the middle lecture. After the lecture, I wrote my reflections and then compared what we had to say about the session. The reason for choosing this middle session in particular was that my colleague had attended sessions prior to the formal peer review lecture and it had given him a good idea as to my approach. It also meant that I had a lecture after the peer review session in which to implement his suggested changes. To conduct my reflection in this way is in line with what Smyth (1989) suggested about the process of reflection. He wrote of a cycle in which step one is to describe and I followed this as I described how the lecture was conducted, along with a description of the participants and how I perceived their responses to the activities. The next step is what Smyth referred to as informing which is inclusive of interpretive and critical reflection.

In as much as my reflections were instrumental as I was wanting to know if the lecturing had been an effective means to an end which was to impart the relevant knowledge, I honed in on the critical reflection for this activity as it includes interrogating who has agency in the lecture room. Step three is where my colleague came into it as I had to confront his opinions about my pedagogy and to compare them with what I claimed to have delivered and achieved. Reconstruction is the final step and it is here that I had the opportunity to plan the final lecture and tutorial with his recommendations. Different people participating in the same event will give it different meanings and I took cognisance of these and made changes accordingly. The feedback from my colleague was favourable on all counts and some of the things that he noted were that I was well prepared, interacted with the students, had a pleasant manner, knew my content and delivered an interesting session. What he also noted was that the feedback from the students was not effective because not everybody could hear and that those who could hear were exposed to the answers twice as I repeated them, which was also a waste of time. He also noted that during the feedback periods those who could hear the first time seemed a bit bored and were chatting to others and being disruptive which I had failed to notice.

His suggestion was that every group appoint a spokesperson beforehand to give the feedback from the front of the room whilst I move to the back. He wanted me to be at the back because he felt that this would allow the students to be in control, as I tended to take over the sessions. The lecture reflections below indicates that I took heed of my colleagues' advice and tried not to dominate. As it was a lecture and not a tutorial, I did not have a chance to put his other suggestions into effect but will do so in 2017.

In order to explain the third *Dead Poets Society* lecture, I have included what I reflected after the session, which is below (Figure 5.7):

For me, the third lecture was the most successful. I informed the students that I did not know if the session would be a success or chaotic as I moved from their wonderings to the power point to YouTube clips and also incorporated the tutorial questions. I informed them that the intention was to build a puzzle with them and to pull all of the pieces in and get them into the right place with the exception of the last piece which is the exam, and that the onus was on them to slot this last piece in. In planning the lecture, I was concerned about the session as I was drawing so many different elements together and I thought that it could be chaotic. However, I am pleased with the way in which it worked out and the students were very engaged. What I noticed was that students who had been quiet in previous lectures were responding to questions, asking questions and even offering their own opinions. Maybe this is because I took heed of the peer review and tried not to dominate the session.

Figure 5.7: Positive Lecture Reflection (Journal entry 20.04.16): High

5.4.1 Effective Teachers: The Future

Being mindful that this group of fourth year students would be starting their teaching careers within a few months, I was chatting informally to a group of students in my office about the way in which I had conducted the lectures. I asked that they brainstorm their ideas about traits that the ideal English teacher should possess and they came up with the following: (Figure 5.8).

To be an effective educator of English:

Be a critical thinker and encourage this in your students.
Allow freedom of speech and ideas.
Practice cooperative learning and group work.
Encourage debate and discussion.
Allow for multiple interpretations of texts – fresh ideas will follow.
Be approachable.
Encourage reading.
Be a reader.
Be energetic.
Good time-management skills.
Manage your class well
Understand township/indigenous culture and life.
Question those who raise their hands.
Do not be too strict.
Be creative.
Do not force anybody to participate.
Avoid sarcasm.

Figure 5.8: An Effective English Teacher

What is useful for me is that the students' list of strategies dealt with what I have termed macro, micro, and mini issues. The macro being that a teacher of English should be aware of the issues that are outside of the classroom and should know the students and where they are coming from. An example of this is the suggestion that a teacher of English should understand township/indigenous culture and life if dealing with those issues when teaching literature. This is one of the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy. It is my opinion that all of the issues around methodology are micro issues and they deal with classroom practice whilst the mini issues are more about the lecturer and addresses issues such as being enthusiastic, approachable, well prepared, interesting and so on. What interests me that there is no mention that teachers should have sound conceptual and technical knowledge. What is also missing is something about how to assess. In terms of assessment, I took cognisance of the suggestions that a teacher of English should be creative and designed an assessment that I considered to be creative.

A colleague set an assignment in which groups of students had to produce a visual representation of their ideal English teacher and the only stipulation was that it had to be presented on an A4 sheet of paper. I assessed the tasks and have included one of the visual representations (Figure 5.9) for discussion. I had chosen three for inclusion but unfortunately, the other two are not very clear and thus difficult to read.

I was of the opinion that *Figure 5.9* is an apt depiction because the drawing of a tree acknowledges that teachers and their learners need to grow. I recalled that in the group's explanation on the back they wrote about the tree of knowledge and they stated that the teacher and learners grow together. What I found encouraging is that I also lecture this class and since the start of my study, I had been talking to the students about the importance of being reflective, energetic and knowledgeable as well as passionate about their teaching. In my view, what is missing from this visual representation is the importance of getting to know the learners and teaching to what is familiar, which are in line with the concepts of culturally responsive pedagogy and constructivism. I awarded a high mark for this assignment but now that I have revisited the visual representation, I am of the opinion that it is not a fitting depiction of my vision of the ideal teacher.

Whilst teachers should be passionate, knowledgeable, creative, consistent, inspiring, humorous and energetic this study has alerted me to possibilities for my pedagogy that I did not see depicted in the students' visual representation. What it is missing is any mention of critical pedagogy in which teachers of English empower the students (Giroux, 1988) and there is no mention that the teacher should have some understanding of their learners' contexts. It is my opinion that in my future practice, culturally responsive pedagogy, critical pedagogy and constructivism should be included in discussions about the ideal English teacher.

The students would not have known this as it was not the focus of what they had been lectured, and three years ago, I was also ignorant of the issues that make this visual depiction deficient from my perspective. What I have learnt from this is that I must ensure that the students have the necessary concepts incorporated into their lectures and these should form part of all discussions so as to empower them to practice more purposeful pedagogy in their classrooms. The possibilities that I am identifying for my own pedagogy are just as important for the students as they are going to be teachers. However, I do not expect that the students adopt my possibilities but that they take, from me, those that will suit the contexts in which they are teaching in addition to identifying their own possibilities.

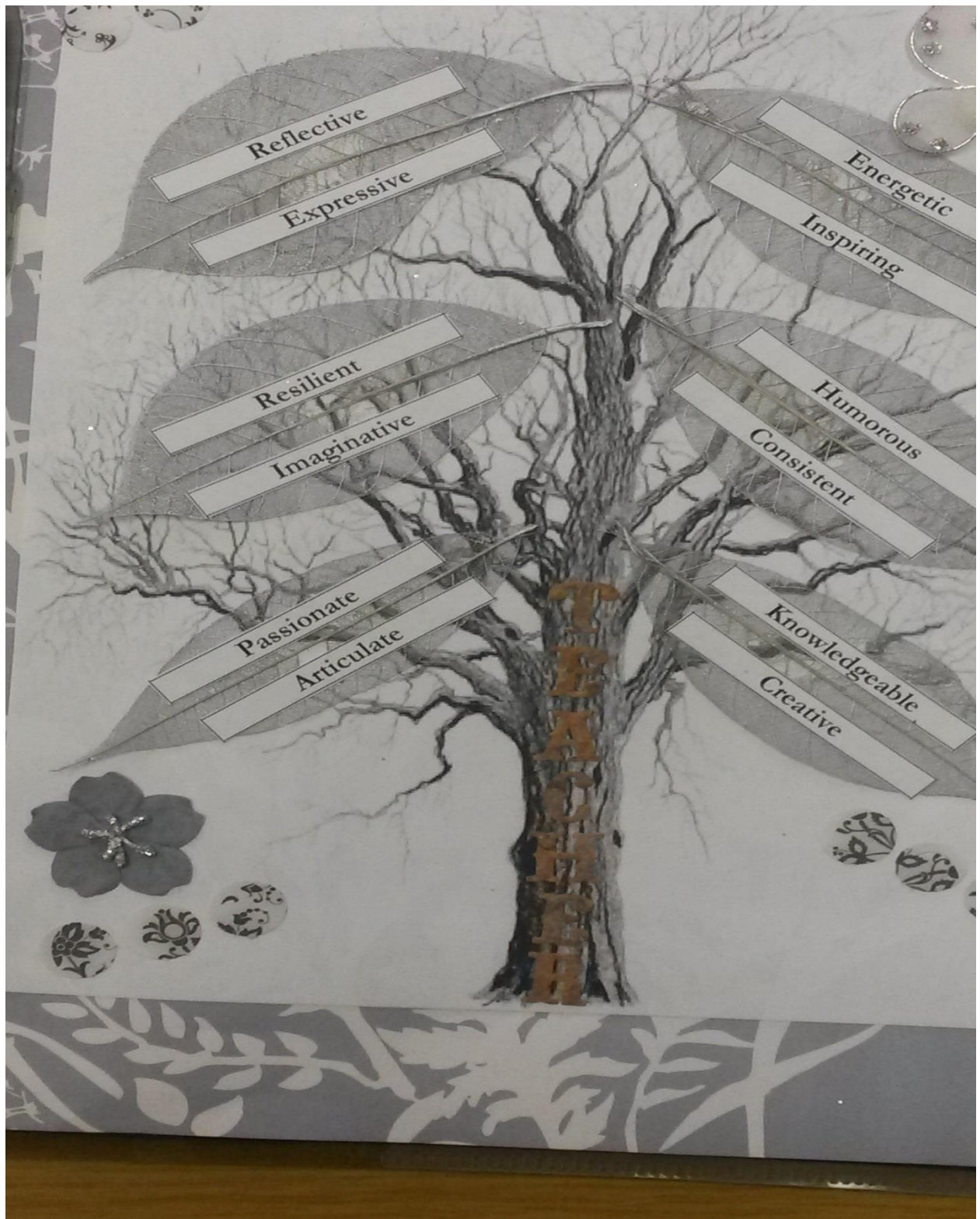


Figure 5.9: Growing English Teachers

5.5 Change

Change is the title of a song from the soundtrack of *Freedom Writers* and I have borrowed it as the title for my discussion of the purposeful pedagogies with pre-service English teacher educators in their third year of study.

5.5.1 Do Things Differently

What I learned in interrogating my pedagogic experiences is that Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times* never allows his learners or his children to read novels as they are not factual and are far too fanciful. Three novels that I recall studying as a learner are *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy (1886), *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (1945) and *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (1954). I should imagine that the novels were prescribed by the Department of Education and I do not recall much about the way in which *Animal Farm* and the *Mayor of Casterbridge* were taught. Mr BP taught *Lord of the Flies* and through his constructivist pedagogy, I learnt about the characters, themes and events in the novel as we discussed these in small groups (Chapter Three).

Perhaps when learners do not understand or enjoy novels, the problem lies not so much in the choice of the novel as in the teacher's pedagogy. In all of these novels, it was possible to identify themes and events with which we, the learners, could have connected, so as to make the links between the characters' lives and our own. All that I can recall is that *Animal Farm* and the *Mayor of Casterbridge* were approached in a very mechanical way with character sketches being drawn and events discussed.

5.5.2 Think for Yourself

In 2015 I selected the novel *Dog Eat Dog* by Niq Mhlongo (2004) as the South African text to be studied by the third year English Major students.³⁰ I read four South African novels before making the selection and settled on *Dog Eat Dog* because the novel is centred on university

³⁰ I am in a position where I am able to make my own choices about which novels to prescribe. However, I am mindful of the fact that my students will not have the luxury of making their own choices and they will, in all likelihood, be teaching prescribed novels. It is thus important for me to model ways in which they can make students aware of the link between their lives and the novel before they start teaching the novel.

students in post-apartheid South Africa. The protagonist³¹ is a university student who comes from a poor family and has not been awarded a bursary. Amongst other issues, it revolves around the anger and frustration of the situation and the ways in which the student found to deal with the problem. Themes include student life and relationships as well as poverty. Many of the students whom I teach face the same battles as the characters in the novel and in discussions around the potential of fiction as a pedagogical tool, Leavy (2016) made the point that when learning is relevant to people's lives it is more likely to engage them. The only time that I recall teaching and learning at school being relevant to my life was when in Mr BP's classes and it was this aspect of his pedagogy that I attempted to model when I first started teaching. He was the only teacher who ever showed us as learners a glimpse of his private life and who encouraged us to connect with the characters in our prescribed novels and this must have made an impact on me.

However, this narrative self-study has brought me to the realisation that I did not have a clue as to how to go about encouraging my students to make the connections and I needed to spend time reflecting on the possibilities for my pedagogy that were revealed in this study. When I selected *Dog Eat Dog* I was very aware that I had to be wary of offending the students as illustrated in the following incident from *Freedom Writers* where Mr Gilford, who teaches the high achievers, is introducing a novel entitled *The Color Purple* written by Alice Walker (1982).

Mr Gilford: So, you have all summer to read and consider this book and you know, I thought it would be most valuable to begin with Victoria to ummmmmm, give us the Black perspective.

Victoria (thinks): Do I have a stamp on my forehead that says I am the national spokesperson for Black people? How the hell should I know the perspective of the Black people of the color Purple? That's it! If I don't change classes, I'm gonna hurt this fool. Teachers treat me like I'm some sort of Rosetta Stone for African Americans. What? Black people learn to read and we all miraculously come to the same conclusions?!

Victoria (says): At that point I decided to check out my friend Brandy's English class.

³¹ In literature, the protagonist is the main character

I knew that in introducing *Dog Eat Dog* I could not risk offending my students in the same way as Mr Gilford had offended Victoria, as I would then run the risk of losing the students for the duration of the course. I could also not risk making them anxious and I knew that I needed to build on the students' experiences and to understand their socio-historical contexts, which is a principle of critical pedagogy.

Van Amerom (2005) made a number of suggestions as to how to involve students in class and all revolve around active learning which is constructivist. Mulravn-Kyne (2010) is in agreement that to be more active is to address some of the problems arising in lecturing to large classes. Bonwell and Eison (1991) advised that it is the students and not the lecturer who should be involved in the construction of meaning and students should do this by engaging with the content on their own. In addition, they advised that students must be doing things during the lectures and thirdly, they must be encouraged to think whilst they are doing. Wilkinson (2004) offered suggestions as to how active learning could be promoted and the first is that the lecturer deliver the lecture and then asks for verbal feedback from the students. I tried this in my lectures and experienced that the same students tended to offer feedback whilst others sat back and did not participate, thus making it difficult to ascertain how many of the students had engaged with the lecture content. Wilkinson's (2004) second suggestion is to lecture for about twenty minutes and not to allow the students to take notes. After the lecture, the students are encouraged to reflect on what has been said and to explain their understanding to those sitting around them. This is a possibility that I will try out in a lecture in 2017.

Clarke (2011) observed that when one is teaching large groups a way in which to engage the students in reflecting on what has been taught is to get them to verbalise their ideas. I would add another step to this process wherein after students have reflected on what the lecturer has delivered, and explained their understanding to their peers, they are given the opportunity to ask questions about what is not clear to them. This is in contrast to my school experiences, the experiences of the learners in *Hard Times* and the way in which many of the older teachers in *Dead Poets Society* taught, wherein the class members were seated in rows and expected to listen quietly as the teacher spoke. In delivering the content and then allowing students to make sense of it, one is working from the known to the unknown and from the simple to the complex, which is in line with constructivist pedagogy (Vygotsky, 1978). When I lectured in this manner and the students were working in their small groups in discussing what they understood, they were engaging in co-operative learning and because I was walking around engaging with the groups, I was practising what von Amerom (2005) referred to as co-ordinating collaborative

activities. What I tended to do in the large group tutorials was to divide the group up by means of lecture rows and to give every third row a different question on which to work. The students were permitted to engage with anybody seated in their three rows. The feedback session thereafter encouraged discussion about the responses to questions. The students were working from the known because the questions related to what was lectured in the session before and constructivist teaching was thus evident.

To build on the session that has gone before is an important aspect of pedagogy that I have identified through this study as in reading my journal reflections, I usually spent time planning a lecture and was happy with what I intended doing. However, the reflections after the session often stated that I did not account for something such as the group dynamics or the fact that the students did not have the necessary background and I had not scaffolded the lecture content adequately.

5.5.3 An Intervention: Understand our Situation.

In Freedom Writers Ms Gruwell tries to teach in a way that includes all students and a member of the class accuses her of acting as if she understands their situation. A cornerstone of culturally responsive pedagogy is to have awareness of our students' cultural backgrounds so as to translate what we know into meaningful experiences for the students (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Prior to the first 2016 *Dog Eat Dog* lecture, I contacted the students and informed them that the first four chapters of the novel had to be read before we met for the first time. I introduced the first lecture by asking students to chat to those around them about their experiences of the awarding of bursaries at our university. They were to discuss whether they had applied for study bursaries: How did they feel when they were accepted or rejected? They were then encouraged to discuss their experiences of university life and how these differed from their school experiences and home circumstances. The intention with starting in this manner was to allow the students to link the experiences of the protagonist to their own lives. In making my point of departure a discussion in which the students spoke about themselves, I was aiming to make their learning authentic because knowledge that connects home and school is more likely to be retained as it becomes more tangible to the students (Adams, 2007).

For the students to be actively involved as they work in collaboration with others is to teach in a constructivist way (as explained in Chapter One). The possibilities that I identified through

my personal history narrative made me mindful of the benefits of collaboration in the classroom and more so after realising that when I started out as a teacher I did not encourage collaboration in class and neither did most of my teachers or Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times* and those of his ilk. Writing my personal history narrative brought to mind how collaborative learning really worked for me and for my students when I was teaching adult education and I was alerted to the effectiveness of encouraging students to interact with their peers in class. Whilst I believe that interaction with peers and with the lecturer is to be encouraged, I am mindful of the fact that, during these discussions, there are students who hide behind others as I discovered in the fourth year class (Chapter One).

After the discussion that connected the students' home lives and experiences to the life of the protagonist in the novel, I requested that the students work individually. They were asked to identify any incidents in the novel that resonated with their own lives. They did not have to share this with anybody else. The reason for this exercise was to encourage the students to reflect about what they had read, and to find a personal link to the novel.

After these discussions, the lecture moved into the themes that had been uncovered during the interactions. Racism features prominently in the novel and the students identified this as one of the major themes. I then asked that they share their experiences of racism with the people around them and those who volunteered then shared their stories with the entire group. Rather than standing in the front of the lecture hall informing the students as to the themes, characters and events in the novel, I was aiming for them to construct their own knowledge in collaboration with their peers as they drew from their individual experiences. My intention was that the way in which the lecture was conducted would be in line with characteristics of constructivism because of the collaboration; culturally responsive pedagogy because the students were drawing on their own cultural experiences and backgrounds. I also wanted it to be in line with critical pedagogy because cultural differences were acknowledged and not ignored and I was trying not to impose my thoughts on the students.

When I addressed the class after the discussions I started by reading aloud carefully selected passages from the novel that dealt with racist incidents in the 1960s and 1970s. Thereafter, I gave my experiences and perspectives as a white middle-aged South African woman who was privileged during apartheid. The students then gave accounts of racist incidents that their parents and grandparents had told them and in this way, we jointly constructed the scene for the discussion around racism in South Africa during the apartheid years. This discussion led to

talk of what was happening within the South African arena in 2015. Students are likely to see novels, if selected well, as relevant to their lives (Irvine, 2009) and perhaps my choice of novel had something to do with the fact that some of the students opened up and related their personal experiences of racism to the class. As a group, we discussed how these incidents could have been handled differently by all parties involved. Throughout the discussions, I was mindful of the fact that I am a privileged white middle aged woman who grew up in apartheid South Africa and I acknowledged my sentiments around this to the group.

Before the lecture ended, I asked that the students write down any “wondering” that they had about the novel and that they submit these on the way out.

I then selected a few wonderings that were put onto an overhead projector and the next two lectures started with discussion around these wonderings. Figure 5.10 is a copy of the authentic wonderings and because the copy is not that clear, I have transcribed them (Figure 5.11).

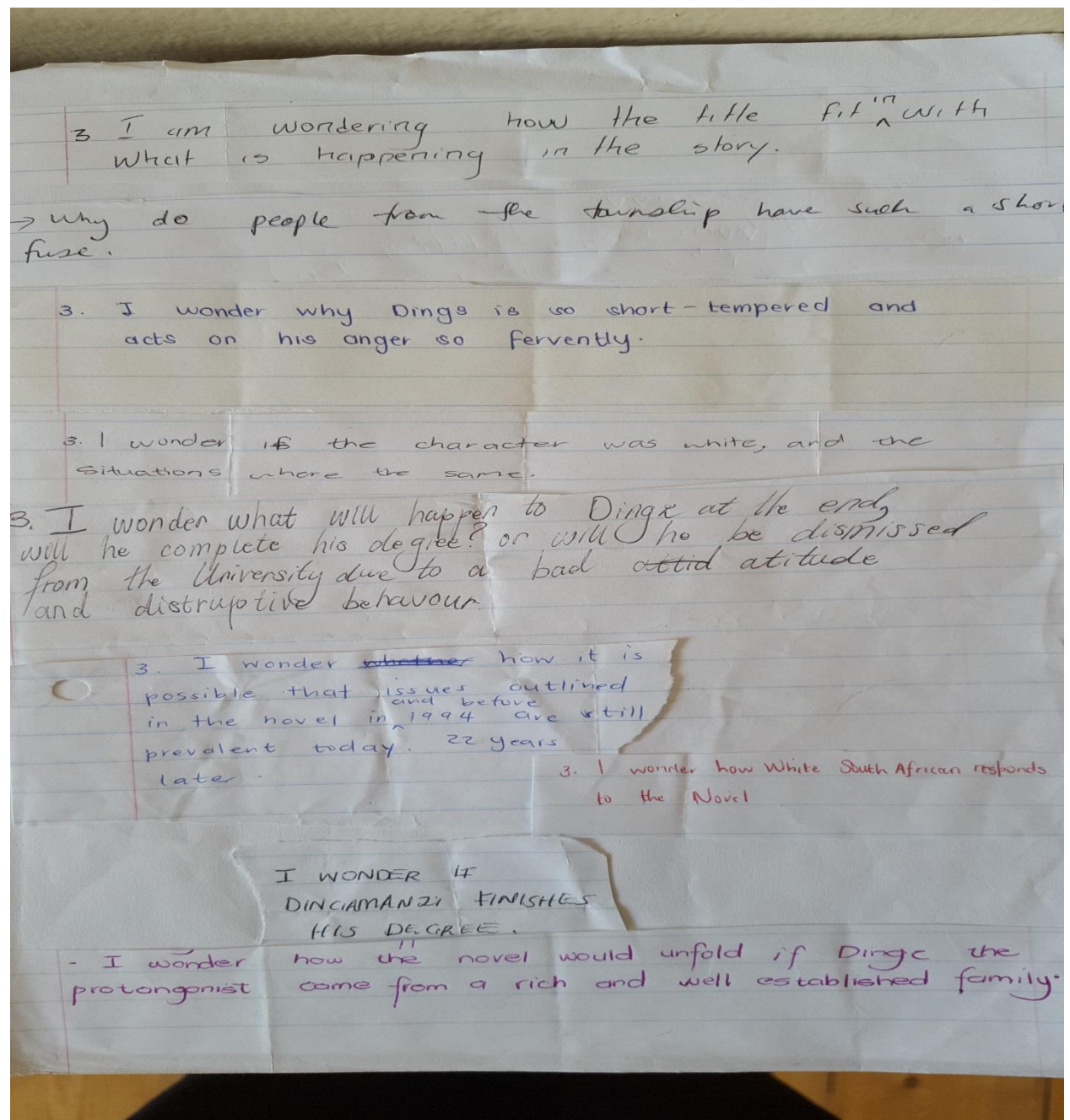


Figure 5.10: I wonder

I am wondering how the title fit (*sic*) in with what is happening in the story.

Why do people from the township have such a short fuse?

I wonder why Dings (*sic*) is so short tempered and acts on his anger so fervently.

I wonder if the character was white, and the situations was (*sic*) the same.

I wonder what will happen to Dingz at the end, will he complete his degree? Or will he be dismissed from the university due to a bad attitude (*sic*) and disruptive behavior.

I wonder how it is possible that issues outlined in the novel in and before 1994 are still prevalent today. 22 years later.

I wonder how white South African (*sic*) responds to the novel

I wonder if Dingamanzi finishes his degree

I wonder how the novel would unfold if Dingz the protagonist came from a rich and well established family.

Figure: 5.11 Transcription of “I Wonder”

When the students arrived in the lecture venue for the following session, their wonderings were on an overhead projector and without a word from me, they sat down and started discussing their opinions on what had been posed by their peers. This exercise served as an icebreaker to the lecture and when the session began the students were very responsive when asked questions. On leaving the lecture room, a student commented that he had not yet read the novel and he felt left out of the discussions. He stated that he was off to the library to see if he could find a copy, as he did not have money to purchase the book.

The students who had read knew the plot and characters and were able to have conversations with others and in doing so the novel was analysed. I was encouraged that the students did not always agree amongst themselves or with me and that when wanting to make a point they knew to substantiate their interpretations with reference to the text. The most exciting lecture for me was the final session. There had been student protests³² during the semester and as a result, I had lost a session and had to round off the novel with less time than anticipated.

³² Our students were demonstrating about issues that they were not happy with at the university and were boycotting lectures

For the final lecture/tutorial I had a lecture prepared and started the session by requesting that the students write down the name of the character that they would most like to meet, a question that they would ask the character, as well as what advice they would give to any of the characters in the novel (Figure: 5.12). As with the last students' wonderings, I have transcribed these as they are not all clear (Figure: 5.13).

The feedback session was so rich and started off so many pair, small group and large group discussions that I abandoned what I was going to lecture and simply facilitated the discussions. I was so thrilled that the students displayed knowledge of the characters, the themes and the issues in the novel. The session ended with a girl who was sitting in the front row asking her question which was directed at Dingz who is the protagonist in the novel. I then turned the tables and asked the question of her as if she were Dingz. She realised what I was doing and she played the role and responded with reference to the text as the conversation progressed. Unfortunately, I did not capture this conversation immediately after the session as reflection in my journal, as to reflect directly after the lecture would have been invaluable for my future pedagogy. This lecture has brought me to the realisation that in as much as it is important to plan pedagogy that is purposeful, one also needs to be flexible enough to allow the students to drive the lecture when they are responding and displaying critical thinking.

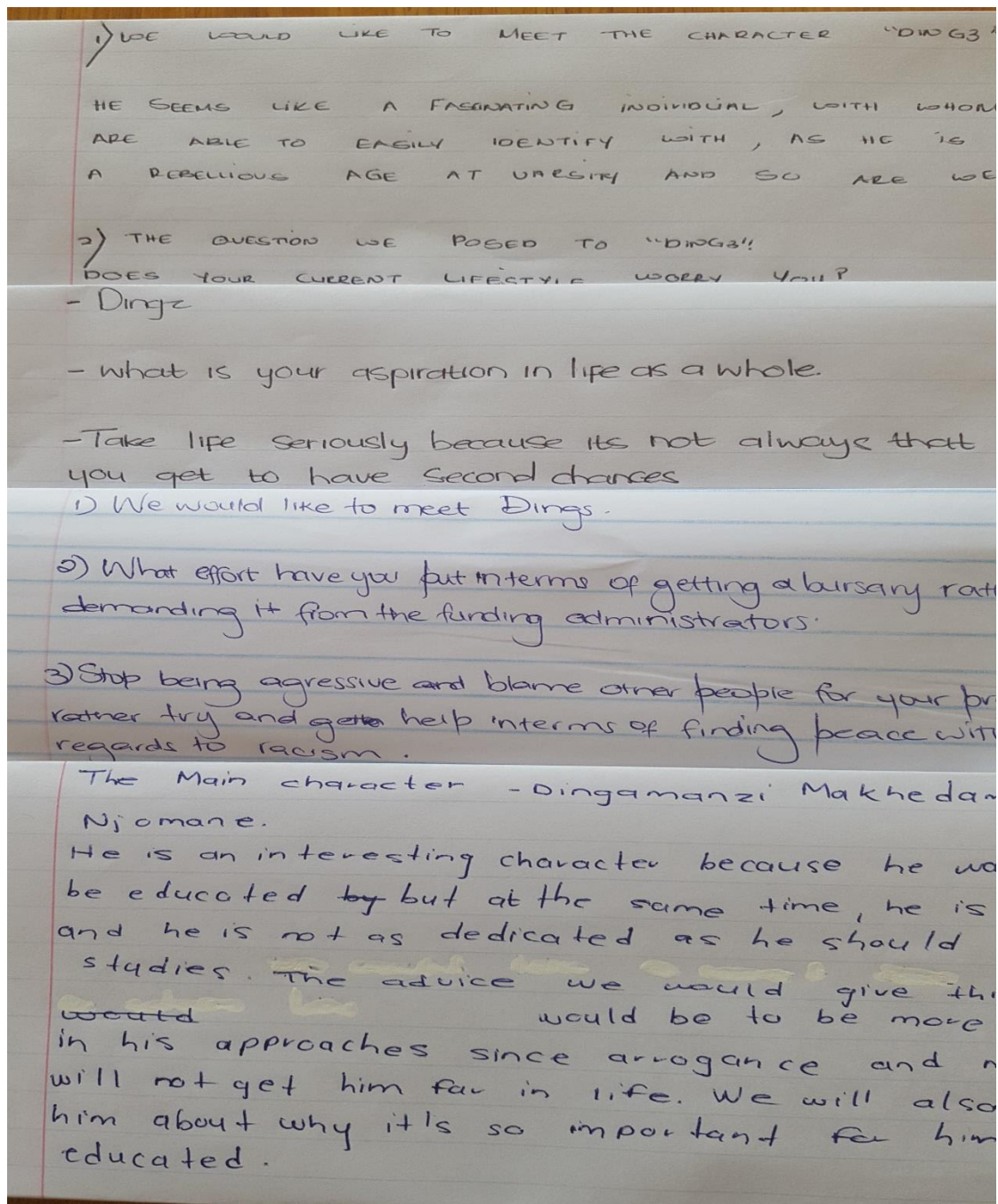


Figure 5.12: Students' Advice

We would like to meet the character Dingz. He seems like a fascinating individual with who we are able to easily identify with, as he is at a rebellious age at varsity and so are we.

The question we posed to Dunga.

- Does your current lifestyle worry you?

Dingz

- What is your aspiration in life as a whole
- Take life seriously because it's not always that you get to have second chances.

We would like to meet Dings (*sic*)

- What effort have you put in terms of getting a bursary rather than demanding it from the funding administrators.
- Stop being aggressive (*sic*) and blame other people for your problems rather try and get help in terms (*sic*) of finding peace with regards to racism.

The main character Dingamanzi Makhedane Njomane

- He is an interesting character because he was be educated (*sic*) but at the same time, he is lazy and he is not as dedicated as he should be in studies.
- The advice we would give them would be to be more

Figure 5.13: Transcription of Students' Advice

In keeping with my growing awareness that teacher educators need to be modelling that which they feel will be appropriate for students to take to their classrooms when they begin teaching, I constantly stressed that they could draw strategies such as those that I was practicing in their classrooms. However, I was mindful to inform the students that using innovative pedagogic practices will not always be well received within the schools and that my students needed to adapt my pedagogy to suit the situations in which they would be teaching.

Before interrogating my pedagogic history, I had lectured the students in a very teacher-centred manner, in which I had named the themes and had chosen the characters and events that were to be discussed and the students' role was to sit and listen and to then work in groups of four and respond to questions. I was under the impression that I was doing well in that I thought that this was a very constructivist activity. What I was ignorant about was that students should have been encouraged to relate what they had read to their own contexts, as that would enrich their discussions. I am of the opinion that the way in which I approached *Dog Eat Dog* was

well received by the students because I was enacting the possibilities gleaned from my personal history narrative. My pedagogy was becoming more constructivist and I was aware of concepts such as critical pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and reflection and the students appeared to be responding to my purposeful pedagogy. In reflecting on the possibilities that had been identified and the changes that I had made to my pedagogy, I think that what I now need to do is to make my pedagogy more explicit to the students. I should constantly inform them about why I approach my lectures as I do and what I think that they could consider taking into their own classrooms. However, I must also be mindful that I solicit their opinions relating to my suggestions.

5.6 You Don't Know Nothing

I chose to title this section “*You Don't Know Nothing*” because in *Freedom Writers* Ms Gruwell passes judgement on the racial divide and the gang violence related to this, and one of the girls in the class angrily responds thus:

You don't know nothing. You don't know the pain we feel. You don't know what we gotta do. You got no respect for how we live. You got us here teaching this grammar shit and then we gotta go out there and get it. What are you telling me about that? What are you doing that makes a difference in my life.

In order to illustrate my growing awareness of practicing constructivist pedagogy, as well as reflective practice and culturally responsive pedagogy, in 2016, I juxtaposed my teaching of poetry with the English Major second year students with the way in which John Keating, the English teacher who teaches poetry in the film *Dead Poets Society*, teaches.

The first shot of the film *Dead Poets Society* is a close-up of past learners and the camera then pans to show the assembly preparations before going to the assembly where the camera shots and the assembly itself reinforce the tradition of the school. The prevailing pedagogy is all rather stiff and formal until the arrival of Mr Keating whose pedagogic practices deviate from the traditional. The following extract from a review of the film gives an indication as to the teaching methods that had always been practiced and were encouraged at Welton Academy and those practiced by Mr Keating:

There was a clear clash between the traditional and conservative values espoused by Welton Academy as an institution, and the progressive teaching methods of John Keating. Welton Academy's ethos of “tradition, honor, discipline, and excellence” not

only discourages but makes it a crime for a student to exercise a critical political consciousness. John Keating, on the other hand, is concerned with the political and moral quality of his students. He challenges them to question the social and political norms that defines their lives at Welton. ...By the end of the film, it was clear that what transpires at Welton Academy is not true learning, but rather an insidious form of social and political control in which the dynamics of the dominant, established society. In this type of society, children are treated as mere objects or *tabulae rasae*, without feelings, without desires, without willpower, without dignity, without knowledge. They are to remain docile, unthinking, predetermined automatons subject to the moldings of wiser adults who are the creators, possessors, and dispensers of all necessary knowledge. They are the passive receptacles of information, the *Oppressed*, in Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*. They are the sufferers of Welton Academy's most hateful and repressive representation of Freire's "Banking" method of education. (Anon, 2013)

The pedagogy to which the reviewer refers is reminiscent of the pedagogy in *Hard Times* as well as the pedagogy through which I was taught. The majority of the influences on my pedagogy meant that I was not very familiar with pedagogy such as Mr Keating's. Mr Keating was trying to encourage his learners to see things differently and to have their own opinions. Having written my personal history narrative and identifying the influences that my lived experiences had on my own teaching, in my lecturing of poetry to second year English Major students in 2014, I tried to break away from this conventional way of teaching as portrayed in vignette 1 below (Figure 5.13). My portrayal of this poetry lecture as a vignette³³ allowed me to "convey powerful, multi-faceted and multi-sensory representations of research data, analysis and interpretations" (Kirk, 2005, p. 234). I say this because through the vignette genre I was able to depict my layered lecture reflections as I examined my initial reflections and reflected on these in what then became another layer of reflection.

³³ A vignette in literature is a short scene that focusses on a particular moment or incident.

Which era of poetry would you like to lecture? They say

Mmmmmmm I have not taught poetry for twenty years. Contemporary?

And so it came about that I was to lecture the contemporary poetry era. I looked for a definition of contemporary poetry in the Oxford dictionary and felt pleased that I could choose poems that were penned in the students' lifetime. The poems were chosen with care and consultation with colleagues. Maya Angelou was an African American poet writing about her experiences, freedom, slavery, African Americans, racism.....

The students will identify with her poems I think.

Many hours were spent planning the lectures and tutorials. I wanted to do it differently to my memories of having been taught poetry and of teaching it at a high school level. I am no longer a teacher. I am a lecturer. I do not want to impose my interpretations of the poems on my students. I want to be dynamic and interesting. I want to model teaching practices that will encourage enthusiasm and creativity in my students and I do not want to approach poetry in a teacher centred manner.

I am going to be enthusiastic and teach emulate Mr BP in lecturing this session. What I will also take from him is that there are many interpretations to a poem and I do not want to impose my views on my students.

I have worked hard. I feel prepared. I deliver the first lecture. I do not feel entirely satisfied. I will write in my reflective journal.

Figure 5.14: Vignette 1: Thoroughly prepared?

Feeling well prepared for the first lecture, I delivered it and thereafter wrote the following in my reflective diary:

The last time that I taught poetry was when I was a high school teacher and I felt very nervous about it. I am teaching contemporary poetry and had to research a lot beforehand. I spent time making my choice of poems and was happy with my choices and with the course book. HOWEVER, I SUSPECT THAT I CHOSE POEMS THAT I LOVE AND WITH WHICH THE STUDENTS DID NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY.

Perhaps I spoke too much? Perhaps I relied too heavily on my power point?

The lecture went reasonably well but I did not get to the analysis of any of the poems that I had set for the day. I think that I got carried away and spoke about the poets too much. Perhaps I also relied heavily on my pp and next year I will teach without it.

Figure 5.15: Self Doubt: Lecture Reflection (Journal entry, 12.03.2014)

In analysing vignette 1 the pedagogic possibilities that I had identified after the analysis of my personal history narrative became evident as did my awareness of how these influenced me to try to do things differently in my pedagogy. Within the apartheid education system, there was a fixed way of doing things and learners were supposed to accept what was taught without questioning their teachers. In vignette 1, I explicitly stated that I wanted to model my teaching on people such as my former teacher Mr BP. It is clear to me that I wanted to do things differently to what I experienced and had practiced. In *Freedom Writers*, Ms Gruwell also wants to do things differently. When Ms Campbell, who is her superior, thwarts her efforts, Ms Gruwell is not deterred and goes to a higher authority. Ms Gruwell has the confidence to challenge the status quo. In contrast to the teachers in *Hard Times* who did not dare experiment or challenge the status quo, Mr Keating in *Dead Poets Society* and Ms Gruwell in *Freedom Writers*, had the confidence to experiment with their pedagogies and to challenge authority.

In the analysis of my personal history narrative, what is evident to me is my lack of confidence in my abilities. This is probably largely because as discussed in my personal history narrative, I was always expected to achieve good results in primary school, which made me very tense and unable to relax. Because praise was seldom forthcoming, I was left with the fear that whatever I did would not be good enough and I can see how this carried over into my work as an English teacher-educator. Whilst in my personal narrative I acknowledged that I worked hard, I then stated that I was not satisfied. The reflection reiterates my lack of confidence. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing as I always feel that there is room for improvement. Having identified influences on my pedagogy, I was exploring possibilities for my pedagogy.

Welton Academy has much the same philosophy as the apartheid education system, and when the headmaster, Mr Nolan, is talking to Mr Keating about his teaching methods, the conversation follows thus:

In response to a question about why the boys were walking around the courtyard and flapping their arms, the following conversation takes place:

Mr Keating: It was an exercise on the dangers of conformity.

Mr Nolan: The curriculum here is set. It's proven....it works....if you question it, what is there to prevent them from doing the same?

Mr Keating: I always thought the idea of education was to learn to think for yourself.

Mr Nolan: Tradition John. Discipline.....prepare them for college and the rest will take care of itself.

I had reflected on how I wanted to teach my poetry session and vignette 2 expresses how I analysed the reflexivity of my reflections (Kirk, 2005). Like Mr Keating, I wanted to encourage the students to think for themselves as indicated in vignette 2 below in which I reflect on coming to the realisation that I needed to change my pedagogic practices.

However what the vignette below (Figure 5.15) also clearly indicates is that in spite of having the best of intentions, the intervention did not turn out as I had expected.

The reason why I engage in reflective writing after a lecture is to examine my practice and to do things differently in order to improve my practice. I have read my reflections and do not like what I have written. I will do things differently. I must talk less and encourage the students to engage with the poems in this session. I will walk around and be enthusiastic. I will ensure that all are involved. Poetry lecture time - I am excited!

Bridget: "What do you think?....."

Bridget: " Come on, just try!Don't be shy?.....Excellent."

Bridget: " You must have an opinion. WOW! Well done.....I had not thought of that."

Not all students respond. Some dominate. Some seem shy but I keep encouraging them to participate.

I am happy with my lecture.

I was unaware that a student was thinking:

"I do not like the way that she is treating us. I feel uncomfortable. I will write a letter of complaint."

The complaint:

Mrs Campbell is extremely racist and she thinks black students don't see it because they are stupid. At one point when a student came up with an answer and I quote: " oh my I didn't think of that" as if to say how come you thought of that and I didn't since I am so brilliant. She has a tendency of embarrassing students in class by picking on them, especially if it is clear that the student does not have an answer.

Figure 5.16: Vignette 2: Satisfaction to distress.

In vignette 2, I make the observation that not all of the students responded and that not all were comfortable being in the spotlight. It is also clear that I had engaged with the students and was

happy with the way in which I had delivered the lecture. The letter of complaint indicates how one of the students felt about the way in which the lecture was conducted. My reflections about the influences on my teaching had alerted me that I needed to teach differently and unlike when I intervened with the Fourth year group when I handed out the coloured pieces of paper, I jumped right in when I saw constructivist pedagogy as a possibility. The difference with the two interventions is that with the 2015 fourth year students, I had spent time getting to know the students and the dynamics within the class and gaining their trust, and I did not do the same with the second year students in 2014.

I was devastated by the student's accusation of racism and the incident reinforced that to change one's pedagogy requires research, theoretical knowledge, and perhaps most importantly knowledge of who the students are. It is not enough to walk in and to attempt different ways of doing from a position of ignorance. Likewise, Samaras (2011) maintained that it is important to choose a "manageable and purposeful inquiry given the time you have to work on it. Do not be tempted to just choose something to get it done. Choose an inquiry that matters to you and your students" (p. 136). This realisation was very significant, as it forced me to think of ways in which I could make my teaching more relevant to my students and their everyday lives and to give thought to purposeful inquiry. I realised that I needed to know more about the students and to acknowledge their experiences and thus needed to research and practice culturally responsive pedagogy so that I would implement strategies related to this in an effective way rather than in an ad hoc manner.

Having an awareness of the life experiences of those in our classrooms is a cornerstone of culturally responsive pedagogy. As Irvine (2009, para. 12) explained:

Culturally [responsive] pedagogy has theoretical roots in the notion that learning is a socially mediated process and related to students' cultural experiences. Culture is an important survival strategy that is passed down from one generation to another through the processes of enculturation and socialisation, a type of roadmap that guides and shapes behavior. If new information is *not* relevant to those frameworks of culture and cognition, people will never remember it. If the information *is* relevant, they will never forget it. If effective culturally [responsive] pedagogy is to be practiced, it is obvious that in order to translate cultural backgrounds into knowledge, the educator, must be aware of the cultural practices in the classroom.

Shor (1987) noted, however, that not all learners would react in a positive way to a change in pedagogical practices and it not always easy to know if the right decision was made in choosing to teach in an unconventional way. I think that sometimes it could happen that the teachers have a sense of owning the knowledge and they simply transfer it to the learners, which means that there is a danger of no critical reflection, curiosity, or demanding inquiry.

Perhaps many of my students had come through a school system wherein they were not permitted to question what was taught and simply accepted what the teacher was saying. If this was the case, I was forcing them to act differently. I failed to take cognisance of the fact that learners arrive with their own frames of reference that is influenced by their circumstances. Yes, their voices should be heard in the classroom, but I should have encouraged this in a manner that was not threatening. Rather than simply transferring knowledge to the students, I wanted them to be part of the knowledge production and to empower them, but what I did not account for is that some students might find it a stressful exercise. In a study on mobilising and modalising poetry in a school in Soweto, Newfield and Maungedzo (2006) stated, “poetry is a defunct genre in most South African English second language classrooms” (p. 71). They went on to observe, “students were not interested in any form of literature. They did not read the prescribed books....It is not a question simply of relevance....” (p. 72). I think that this comment is relevant to many of the students whom I teach. Some of my students have admitted that they do not enjoy reading and that they do not always read the prescribed novels and poems in preparation for their lectures.

I am of the opinion that teacher educators should be modelling fitting teacher practices and stressing the importance of reading in order to break this culture of not having an interest in literature. As teachers, we need to be aware of the inequality within our own classrooms by providing for students who have not gained the pre-requisite orientation. We need to work toward creating classrooms, in which all learners’ social and cultural backgrounds are acknowledged. Teacher educators of English in particular must think of ways in which to encourage students not only to read but also to read with enjoyment. What I have learned about the reading challenges that many of the students faced when they were at school has brought me to the realisation that this will be a difficult task.

In my 2014 poetry lecture, I had attempted to engage the students through constructivist pedagogy but this had unanticipated consequences. In *Dead Poet’s Society*, Mr Keating conducts his classes in a way that is not familiar to his learners. When we first meet the learners

in *Dead Poets Society*, they are all seated in rows and their teacher is walking around and talking whilst they sit passively and are not expected to respond. We then meet Mr Keating who walks in whistling, walks around the room, then leaves again and asks that the learners follow him as he goes to the foyer of the school. He stands in front of the portraits of the teachers who used to teach at the school and starts to teach. This act takes the learners out of their comfort zones and they are uncomfortable and confused as is evident by their puzzled expressions. In my view, the confusion is because they have no idea what is expected of them and they have no experience of such behaviour from a teacher. In scaffolding, which is a term coined by Bruner during the 1960s, teachers assist learners as knowledge is built. When the boys go outside of the classroom and start to examine the portraits, Mr Keating is scaffolding as he makes the link between the students in years gone by and the current students. He then uses this as the foundation on which to teach poetry as he assists the learners from the unknown through to the known. In doing this, he is working within what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (as explained in Chapter One).

My students must have had much the same feeling in my class as Mr Keating's class felt initially. My students more than likely expected me to transmit the meaning and analysis of the poems, which is the way in which I was taught poetry and this would also have been what many of the students experienced whilst at school (Newfield & Maungedzo, 2006). I was attempting to help the students to comprehend new concepts and ideas by eliciting the students' voices and perspectives (Irvine, 2009). However, I now realise that to practice culturally responsive pedagogy one also has to be cognisant of students' previous learning experiences and I was not privy to these, as I had not made it my business to find out. Had I been practicing culturally responsive pedagogy would I not have ascertained this first?

After the racist accusation, which had greatly upset me, I emailed the students and apologised and many students emailed back with messages of support, which stated that they did not find me racist. A student asked for permission to address the class and in the following lecture, he informed his peers that he disagreed with the accusation because he had known me for three years and in his opinion, I treated all as equals. However, as much as I appreciated the support, I was of the opinion that even if one student construed my pedagogy as racist, I needed to take purposeful action in order to avoid this from happening again.

Samaras (2011) explained that planning for a self-study inquiry that is manageable, involves thinking carefully about the pedagogy and activities that will be presented. She advised that

“activities and data collection must be manageable” (p. 136). In order to generate data that I could use in planning a more purposeful activity, I asked that five volunteers sit in my office and talk to each other about their experiences of having been taught poetry at school. The point of this exercise was to get to know the students’ lived experiences and to approach future lectures in a different way. Comments such as: “*The way in which poetry was taught was that the teacher took control; the lesson was basically spoon-feeding us the content of the entire poem; we took whatever the teacher taught us and passed our assessments; we had to learn notes off by heart and learners were not given the opportunity to analyse the poems or have our own thoughts*” lead me to believe that the learners were passive recipients of the teachers’ interpretations of the poems or that there was little or no teaching of poetry in some of the schools. Many of the students who sat in my poetry lectures would have had little or no knowledge of how to go about the analysis of a poem or any literary text. This is illustrated in Maungedzo’s (Newfield & Maungedzo, 2006) account of how, when he is teaching English literature to his class, the learners’ only interest is that the teacher names the characters and the themes of the literary text under discussion.

My way of engaging with a poem was very different to what many of the students had experienced at school as I expected the students to make sense of the poem through discussion and in this way to analyse the poem themselves. I had chosen a poem titled *Five Ways to Kill a Man* by Edwin Brock (1972). I started the lecture by informing the students that I had spoken to some of their contemporaries about their experiences of having been taught poetry at school. I then gave a synopsis of what I had been told. The majority of those in the class were nodding and agreeing and seemed to have been taught in the same way. I then alerted them to the fact that I was going to approach their poetry lectures differently.

There are five stanzas in the poem *Five Ways to Kill a Man* and they take the reader through the ages from the crucifixion of Christ through to the 20th Century with each stanza explaining what killed man during that period in history. The class had to read the poem and discuss with the people around them what core message the poet was giving the reader. I gave no guidance whatsoever and after the students had read and discussed the poem in their groups, I walked around and asked that random people respond to my questions. When students could not or would not respond to my questions, I cajoled them to respond by posing more questions. In hindsight, what I regarded as gentle prodding was probably seen as stressful harassment by students who were at a loss as to the meaning of the poem and were most likely embarrassed.

Listening to descriptions of past experiences as I engaged with students over the course of my study has helped me to understand why some of the students might have felt threatened during my lecture. Through the group discussion with students in 2015, I realised that I needed to orientate the students to my way of lecturing poetry. On reflection, it is no surprise that the 2014 students felt that I was setting them up to fail as I was putting them under pressure to do something which they had never experienced in poetry classes, or indeed possibly in any of their school experiences.

For me, what was confirmed in this incident is that I need to get to know my students and their backgrounds. Freire (1970) made the point that education is a key way for those who are oppressed to liberate themselves. Many of the students on our campus are from families termed previously disadvantaged meaning that during apartheid, they were discriminated against because they were not white. Many of them could not afford to go to ex-Model C schools and were schooled in rural schools, which put them at a disadvantage from the outset of their school careers (as explained in Chapter One). To teach in a culturally responsive way is to acknowledge the students' backgrounds and to ensure that they are able to relate the content of lectures to their personal contexts.

In the same way that Codrington (2013) proposed that culturally responsive pedagogy should extend into the lived experiences of the oppressed, I am working toward my students using what they learn in their English lectures to enact culturally responsive pedagogy by getting to know their own learners first and to teach from the known. I have become conscious that I should be modelling that when something unfamiliar is being practiced the learners should be orientated to this. I hope that to be encouraged to think critically about the course content will encourage critical thinking and problem solving in all spheres of my students' lives. Codrington (2013) highlighted the importance of ensuring that students leave a classroom with knowledge of how to improve the quality of their lives as well as knowledge that would have contributed to academic success. To illustrate, in *Freedom Writers*, Ms Gruwell took her learners to the local Holocaust museum and then arranged that they meet a survivor of the Holocaust. This motivated the learners to take control of their own learning and to work hard. To expose students to events in history with which they can identify could motivate them to work toward positive change in their own lives as well as the lives of their learners.

The extract that follows (*Figure 5.16*) has been taken from what I wrote in my reflective journal after the racial accusation and what is evident to me is that my reflections were more insightful than they had been prior to the self-study research.

In reflecting on what I can learn from the racism accusation, I realise that for future pedagogic experiences I can use the incident as an example in an English Major method lecture which is where we deal with the “how to” of being a teacher of English. I will use the incident as a case study and allow the students to sit in groups and to discuss where I went wrong and how I should have approached the lecture. After the discussion about the case study, the students will be given an individual task which will be to examine their own thought processes during the exercise in order to establish the steps that they took in coming to their conclusions. They will thus examine suggestions that they made, how these were received by the group and the reasons for their acceptance or rejection by group members. In an exercise such as this, I will be modelling teaching practices that are constructivist and collaborative.

Figure: 5.17 Reflection: The Way Forward (Journal Entry, 20.03.14)

In 2015, which was the year following the racism complaint, I reflected after every lecture and tweaked a few things in my pedagogy, but I was still tentative and reverted to teacher-centred pedagogy in some of the lectures. By 2016, I felt confident to make changes to my pedagogy as I learnt more about the possibilities that had presented themselves in the analysis of my personal history narrative. Before I taught poetry in 2016, I revisited the complaint and reflected on what I could have done differently. I realised that I had been under the misguided impression that I had been reflective and that my way of approaching the poems would be favourably received by the students, but I had failed to get to know my students’ experiences of learning poetry at school. To request that the students reflect on their experiences of having been taught poetry at school was enlightening for me as it gave me an indication as to why my teaching of poetry had been construed as racism.

When I taught poetry in 2016, I made a few adjustments to my approach. Before teaching the first poem, *The Cinnamon Peeler* (1982) by Michael Ondaatje, I showed a YouTube clip of the

poem being read by the poet as dancers performed behind him³⁴. The students responded enthusiastically to the combination of the audio reading along with the visual.

Before I started on the analysis of the poem, I asked the group to reflect on how they were taught poetry at school and I then informed them that I would approach poetry differently and explained my approach which was constructivist. I stressed that the intention was to encourage all class members to participate and not to embarrass anybody. I also made it clear that there are many interpretations of a poem and that I would not impose my interpretation onto them provided that they could justify what they were saying with reference to the poem. This minor intervention made such a difference and the group responded very positively.

The post-lecture comments from students (see Figure 5.17) point to how my learning had helped me to improve my pedagogy. The students also seemed to recognise that I was facilitating the sessions and guiding them rather than dominating the classroom and I believe that they felt relaxed about this because I had asked them to confront how they had been taught poetry and alerted them that my approach was different. The student comments made me more confident that I had found the space between telling and growth as identified by Berry (2008) and also that my methodology had elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy as espoused by Van Boxtel (2000), Hall and Murphy (2009) and Zeki and Guneyli (2014). The comments were positive and the students appeared to enjoy the lectures, and to appreciate that what was discussed was related to their lived experiences.

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaomFGobVuE>

- I liked that you walked around and spoke to us all the time
- She [*presumably me*] helped me to understand
- The session was very interactive
- Created interesting discussions
- I liked the fact that we could discuss and participate in lectures
- I like that she facilitates the lecture and is not in charge
- The teaching style gave me the chance to be critical of the text in different ways

[The above comments indicate that my pedagogy was constructivist and that students were not left to make sense of the poem on their own. They acknowledged that I was available to assist the groups and the final comment leads me to believe that this student enjoyed the freedom to find meaning in the poem.]

- I will apply your teaching methods in my classroom
- I had fun

[The above comments pleased me because I wanted to model pedagogy that students responded positively to and that they felt they could attempt in their own classrooms. To have had fun when analysing poetry, was a bonus for me as there is often a very negative reaction to poetry as it is seen as difficult.]

- Well done - as a white woman you dealt well with the realities in the township

Figure 5.18: Students' Post-Lecture Comments Layered with my Reflections

In my post-lecture reflections, I noted that what pleased me was the observation that, as a white woman, I dealt well with the realities of the township and perhaps I had displayed that I was interested in, and valued the students' experiences. It is important to me that I connect with the students and bridge the gap between them and me. To ask the students about their experiences and to orientate them to my way of dealing with poetry meant that I had made it my business to explore their contexts. The students come from very diverse backgrounds and I could plan the lectures with their experiences in mind once I better understood their experiences. My post-lecture reflections reported that the students and I had engaged in the collaborative exercise the year before, and that I had the benefit of their input for the 2016 lecture. I am of the opinion

that this was key to the improved lectures. I do not know that I would have made the changes had I not connected to the students' contexts beforehand.³⁵

5.7 Critical Friends: Are You Making Fun of Me?

This section is titled “*Are You Making Fun of Me?*” because in *Freedom Writers* Ms Gruwell approaches a colleague for advice when Ms Campbell will not give her class novels to read and he responds with a sarcastic comment. Ms Gruwell asks if he is making fun of her and he responds that he is. I am fortunate to have a supportive critical friend group. Up to this point in my thesis, I have only once mentioned the specific role that any of my critical friends played in my pedagogy with the *Dead Poets Society* example. This section outlines an encounter with a colleague who served as one of my critical friends.

The first such encounter was around an assessment task that I had set and that I considered to be a fair assessment. In an informal chat with a colleague who teaches the language of isiZulu, I requested that she give me feedback about the assignment that I had set for a third year class. The ensuing discussion led me to the realisation that I could achieve so much more with the assignment and I listened to what she had done with her students in the past and then adapted this to suit the purposes of my assignment.

Through this conversation, I was able to firstly assess my assignment, then adapt it, and plan one that would have far more impact on the students' learning than what I had initially planned. The assignment also allowed for student creativity. Samaras and Roberts (2011) emphasised that self-study research is about examining our practice and assessing our strategies in collaboration with colleagues and what I realised with this exercise is that the process can be both informal and very valuable. The module that is under discussion is a third year English method module that is compulsory for students who teach in the early childhood and senior intermediate phases. The section of the module on which I set the assignment is entitled visual literacy and it is basically a method course as to how students can use visual literacy in their own classrooms.

³⁵ In the year following the incident I wrote a journal article about the incident.

This section of Chapter Five is developed from that journal article out of my PHD research: Campbell, B. (2015) Rethinking my poetry pedagogy: an autoethnographic self-study. *SAJHE*, 30(1), 42-56

The revised assignment question is as follows:

2015 VISUAL LITERACY GROUP ASSIGNMENT .

THIS IS A GROUP ASSIGNMENT AND YOU WILL WORK IN PAIRS OR IN GROUPS OF THREE.

STEP 1 – CHOOSE ANY LANGUAGE AREA THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO TEACH.

STEP 2 – CHOOSE A THEME THAT IS RELATED TO THIS LANGUAGE AREA.

STEP 3 – THINK OF A CENTRAL MESSAGE THAT YOU WANT TO TEACH IN YOUR THEME.

STEP 4 – DESIGN A COLLAGE OR ANY OTHER VISUAL REPRESENTATION THAT YOU WILL USE IN YOUR CLASSROOM IN ORDER TO GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS TO THE LEARNERS.

STEP 5 – DESIGN A LESSON PLAN THAT CLEARLY EXPLAINS HOW YOU WILL USE THE COLLAGE TO TEACH YOUR CHOSEN MESSAGE.

STEP 6 – THE LESSON PLAN MUST INCLUDE THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER, THE ROLE OF THE LEARNERS, ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THE LEARNERS WILL ENGAGE, HOW THESE ACTIVITIES WILL BE EXECUTED (FOR EXAMPLE, GROUP WORK/PAIR WORK/INDIVIDUAL) AS WELL AS ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES.

Figure 5.19: Revised Assignment

The objective with this assignment was firstly, to get the students to work collaboratively. Secondly, I wanted them to choose to teach something in an area in which they felt comfortable. Choosing the central message themselves rather than having one imposed upon them was to allow them to choose something with which they could relate. My subject allowed for an assignment in which the students could draw on their own contexts because “English is a subject that allows [one] to reflect on life” (Ball, 2016, p. 16). After submission of the assignment, the students and I discussed the collage and how the students could be creative with their assessment tasks in their own practice as teachers.

Had it not been for a chance conversation as my colleague walked past my office this assignment would not have been set. It was through my isiZulu colleague soliciting questions, being encouraging and offering alternative perspectives (Samaras & Roberts, 2011) that my view on the task changed. This conversation with my colleague also yielded some very interesting information about what the students who take isiZulu and English as a major say about English. Apparently, the students state that isiZulu is very intense and grammar centred and English teaches them little other than literature. We are in the business of English teacher education and it is worrying to me that the students are of the opinion that they go into the schools feeling ill-equipped to be teachers of English language. This was exactly how I felt

when I started out as a teacher and yet, 30 odd years later I was teaching in the same way that I was lectured at university. To try to do things differently, the way in which the assignment was structured was an attempt to merge what happens in the real world with what happens in the classroom in order to encourage the students to make the link between what they were learning at university and the schools in which they would be teaching one day.

I did not assess the assignments and contacted two of the markers in order to get their opinions on the tasks and their responses follow: (Figure 5.19).

Colleague 1.

For the assignment, I think it was excellent to engage the students in group work. It seems they performed very well because they assisted each other in the interpretation of the visual. Various perspectives and contributions of students assisted students who were lagging behind to cope with the task. Asking for a visual demonstration made students to have an explicit idea about what they intended learners to take out of their proposed lessons. I remember in my marking, I observed that the lesson plan activities was perfectly stated. Therefore, it helped to ask for a visual representation before asking for lesson plan because when students had to work on a lesson plan they knew what the teaching and learning activities should look like. There was creativity and I think that was due to students being able to pick and choose what would make each group's work excellent. Group work activated a competition atmosphere.

What I noticed about the assignment was that its instructions were loud and clear. I was impressed by the notion of listing the steps chronologically. I think the SIX STEPS afforded the students clear objectives of the task. Finally, instructions were clearly set out.

Colleague 2.

I think maybe the assignment needs to explicitly state that the visual part is to be used as a teaching tool. (If you know what I mean?)

I think maybe it would be more helpful to ask for the teaching plan before the visual. That way, instead for them trying to fit their teaching to match the visual, they will have to create the visual with the teaching in mind from their already constructed teaching plans. If I was doing this, I might have a section where they roughly outline the visual so that they have a good idea already, but then they can alter this for the final product at their teaching plans develop.

Figure 5.20: Critical Friend Feedback

After reflecting on the way in which I asked for feedback from my colleagues, I would do it differently if I had to use this assignment again. I would involve colleagues in the planning stages of the assignment; I would engage with them whilst they are marking and at the end of the marking have a look at the assignments to see what the students produced and what comments were made by the markers. Most importantly, I would ask that students include a short reflective piece on how they viewed the assignment. To include all stakeholders should make the reflection much more meaningful.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored some of the possibilities for purposeful pedagogies (Samaras, 2011) that had been revealed in the layered literary analysis of my personal history narrative. The first section discussed some of the possibilities that I had enacted with the 2015 and 2016 fourth year classes. I then explored purposeful possibilities with the 2015 and 2016 third year pre-service English teacher educator groups. In planning purposeful pedagogies with the second year students, I re-examined my 2014 lecture reflections in an exercise that became another layer of analysis to my lecture reflections. In 2015, I solicited students' opinions and these added a third layer of analysis, which was used in the planning of my 2016 purposeful pedagogy with the second year students.

This chapter has revealed some purposeful changes to my pedagogy with the pre-service teacher educators. I was not making ad hoc changes from a position of ignorance but was able to draw on the possibilities for my pedagogy that had been revealed through the influences I had become aware of in composing and analysing my personal history narrative. Awareness of the importance of the key concepts of *Critical Pedagogy*, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and *Constructivism*, and *Reflective and Reflexive Practice* facilitated manageable action that mattered to me and to my students (Samaras, 2011).

A lot of my key learning in this chapter revolved around relationships. I learned to consider relationships and events from my past as possibilities for my pedagogy. In my current relationships with students, I needed to foster mutual trust between the students and myself and I learned that this is possible through interaction inside and outside of the classroom as I came to know about the students backgrounds. I also learned that reflection is as important for the students as it is for me and that our reflections should be shared and considered on different levels and from different angles. This sharing and interaction led to layering of the reflections, which deepened my understanding of my pedagogy. Another learning was that reflections become useful in preparing for purposeful pedagogic interactions that are based on possibilities. The value of collaborating with colleagues and critical friend feedback in identifying possibilities for my pedagogy was also key to what I learned in this chapter.

The chapter that follows gives a reflective account of my purposeful pedagogies with my 2015 and 2016 Language in Education postgraduate students.

CHAPTER SIX: POST-GRADUATE PURPOSEFUL PEDAGOGIES: GARNERING

6.1 Introduction: Take the Opportunity to Expand

In this chapter I portray how I planned, put into practice and reflected on “purposeful pedagogies” (Samaras, 2011, p. 136) with my 2015 and 2016 Language in Education students. In my personal history narrative (Chapter Three) I identified significant influences on my pedagogy. The analysis thereof (Chapter Four) gave me an understanding of the role that these influences have played and could play in my classroom practice. Chapter Five examined possibilities for purposeful pedagogies with my 2014, 2015 and 2016 pre-service students. In the chapter, I discussed possibilities that I enacted in my 2015 and 2016 fourth year classes before I gave an account of the 2015 and 2016 third year possibilities. What followed examined a 2014 poetry incident with my second year English Major students and how in 2016 the possibilities that I had identified for my pedagogy were enacted in my teaching of second year poetry. The conclusion of the chapter examined how what I learned in my layered analysis of my personal history narrative fed into my pedagogy, which was extended and deepened by my engagement with purposeful pedagogies.

I chose to split my representation of my post-graduate and under-graduate pedagogies because the students are at different stages in their careers. Many of the post-graduate students are part-time students who are employed as teachers and are thus bringing to our classroom influences from their exposure to pedagogy, background knowledge about their learners as well as their teaching experiences.

This chapter gives an account of the purposeful pedagogies in my Language in Education honours classes and follows my pedagogy from 2014 when I was dabbling with reflective practice through to 2016 where I was more purposefully engaged with the constraining and generative influences on my pedagogy.

6.2 Toast for Change.

In *Freedom Writers*, when Ms Gruwell arrived at the school she had no idea what to expect of her students who were initially uncooperative and she soon realised that she had to get to know them. Once she knew more about her the students and their contexts, she adjusted her approach to make her pedagogy more relevant to their lives. The students began to co-operate when they realised that to graduate would be likely to give them a way out of their challenging situations.

This section deals with some of the changes in my postgraduate pedagogy. I have chosen to title it *Toast for Change* as in a scene from *Freedom Writers* Ms Gruwell and her class have a celebration where everybody has something to say about the changes that they would like to see in their lives and they drink a toast to that. In introducing the exercise to her students, Ms Gruwell says the following: “The person you were before this moment. That person’s turn is over. Now it is your turn.” A student steps up and her toast is as follows:

Nobody ever listens to a teenager. Everybody thinks you should be happy just because you are young and they don’t see the way you fight every single day and one day my world will end and I will not die and I will not tolerate abuse from anyone.

Another toast states:

My Mom kicked me out when I got into gang life and I would like her to see me graduate. I would like to be 18.

My toast for change is:

Now that I have a better understanding of the influences that have informed my pedagogy and have identified possibilities for future pedagogic practices, I will not lose sight of the change that I would like to see in my pedagogy.

The possibilities that I had identified were linked to the key concepts of *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Constructivism*, *Critical Pedagogy*, *Purposeful Pedagogies* and *Reflective and Reflexive Practice*. (as discussed in chapter One.)

6.2.1 Interventions: Can You Teach Honours Students?

This section is titled thus because in the film *Freedom Writers*, Ms Gruwell’s class is responding well to her pedagogy and a student in the distinguished honours group, which is taught by Mr Gilford, requests a transfer to her class. Ms Gruwell goes home and excitedly informs her husband who sarcastically asks if she is able to teach honours students.

I have lectured the Language in Education honours module for five years from 2012 – 2016 and when I was first approached about teaching the group I had the thought “Am I able to teach honours students?” For the first three years, I shared the module with another lecturer and we each took responsibility for six weeks of the twelve-week course. For the past two years, I have been responsible for the module in its entirety, which includes developing the teaching and

learning content as well as the coordination of the module. In 2014 and 2015, I was reflecting on my pedagogy with the honours students and considering the possibilities but did not really start to implement these. It was through this narrative self-study that I was attempting to formulate a manageable inquiry and brainstorming purposeful activities for the module (Samaras, 2011). On reflection I have realised that I was scratching the surface of the possibilities that were presenting themselves and that I had effected very few changes before 2016.

An example of my dabbling is in the 2014 reflection below which indicates to me that I was thinking about my *Toast for Change*. The lecture to which the reflection pertains was one of the earlier sessions in which I stressed that as teachers of English it is important that the students know the history of Language in Education in South Africa. I explained to students that knowledge of this would assist them in understanding their learners but that this was not enough on its own. I stressed that it was also important that learners' cultural backgrounds be acknowledged so as to assist them in making links between the course content and their lives. In my lecture, I used an example of my choice of poetry and how it related to the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy and constructivism.

22. May 2014

For the language teaching session last year, I discussed a few methods of teaching English and concentrated on communicative language teaching. I made a few changes to the lecture, but planned to teach much the same this year. However, I have been reading about culturally responsive pedagogy which led me to thinking of ways in which my English poetry sessions had been taught (also as a result of my reading) and I decided to talk about culturally responsive teaching and how awareness of this will lead one to teaching in a way that is communicative and relevant to the context of the learners' lives. The session was very interactive and throughout the lecture I asked about my students' learners and how the students responded to their learners' needs. In some cases, I asked how they would have conducted a lesson differently and much discussion ensued. I also used the example of how I had taught Maya Angelou's Caged Bird and Equality and related them to apartheid South Africa. We went way over the allocated time and nobody had any complaints. I left feeling that the session would make a difference to their teaching.

Figure 6.1 Extract From My Reflective Journal³⁶(Journal Entry, 22.05.14)

³⁶ Maya Angelou was an author and an American contemporary poet. The poems Caged Bird and Equality highlight the plight of African Americans in an unequal society. I used these poems as examples because South

As I now reflect on my lecture reflection, I realise that I was really pleased with the lecture but I am no longer sure that there was anything purposeful about my pedagogy. I was learning about culturally responsive pedagogy and was excited about the concept that I wanted to share with my students so simply added it to a session without giving the students the necessary background to the pedagogy. I could see that they were interested in *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* at the time but I am of the opinion that I was misguided in thinking that the two-hour session would make much difference to their teaching. What I had not considered and only recalled in reflecting on my reflection was that a student in the group who teaches in an underprivileged school with minimal facilities informed me that I come up with what sounds like such lovely classroom interventions but that I am clueless about the contexts within which the teachers are working.

I received the following emails (Figures 6.2; 6.3) in response to this lecture and at the time was pleased with the communicate.

RE: Just saying goodnight to a wonderful teacher

Thanks for the scaffold, the advise, [sic] the love showered both in and outside the classroom and for everything. Thanks a lot for being there ma, I cannot ever thank you enough. Have really learnt a lot from you. Have the best of the night ma.

F

Figure 6.2: An email of thanks

I initially thought that thanking me for the scaffold was with reference to the link that I had made between our classroom and what many of the students and their learners encountered on a daily basis. In retrospect, the student could have been thanking me for anything. The email went on to thank me for the advice and love, which have nothing to do with his learning in the classroom. What these thanks now tell me is that I really care for my students, as was revealed in the analysis of my personal narrative (Chapter Four). In reviewing the email through the self that has grown because of this study, I question if the email really says anything. To have

African students are able to relate to them due to our apartheid history and the unequal society in which we still live.

come to this realisation and be willing to admit to it is, for me, evidence of my growth as a reflective practitioner.

The second email that I received after the lecture follows (Figure 6.3). I recall that on receipt of this email, I was pleased that the student had taken the time to source the poem and that she trusted me enough to send me the poetry that she had penned.

Dear Ms.Campbell. Please find attached my task two. The lecture we had yesterday got me thinking, so I researched the poem 'Inequality' by Maya Angelou. I am glad I am not alone and that others like me find solace in writing. I have attached the poems I have written this year as well. I don't know if they any good. But it doesn't matter because writing keeps me alive, it enables me to breathe when I feel like the world is suffocating me. Kind regards A

Figure 6.3: I Can Relate To The Lecture Content.

Reflecting on the email above revealed to me that I could see that this student made a connection between what I said and her life, which is what I had intended. But from her email I now see no indication that she will take what she learned into her own classroom, which was my second objective in the lecture.

On receipt of these emails, I wrote the following in my reflective journal (Figure 6.4):

In terms of my research, I feel that at this very early stage of my writing and research I have started answering my research question 2 as what I read inspires me to try new methods in class and I am using what I am learning to inform my current teaching. A positive spin-off is starting to show already and it is informing my current teaching rather than waiting to see how the influences can inform my current pedagogy.

Figure 6.4: Possibilities In Motion....(Journal Entry, 21.03.15).

Over the course of this study, my pedagogy has become more purposeful and this reflection now reveals to me that my 2014 reflections were not adequate as there was no discussion or

critical reflection as to how my pedagogy could become more purposeful. There is not much else that I can write about 2014, as the changes that I effected during that year were minimal but I would like to think that during that year, I was planning my purposeful pedagogy and reflecting on possibilities that would make my inquiry manageable. As I now reflect purposefully on my pedagogy what I realise is that in the next lecture I should have taught about culturally responsive pedagogy in order to scaffold the students. The lectures following this could then have built on the known.

6.3 I Want To Do More With Them

The title “*I Want To Do More With Them*” has been taken from what Ms Gruwell in *Freedom Writers* says to the education superintendent when she seeks permission to take her learners on a field trip as they have never been taken on such outings. In the same way as Ms Gruwell wants to do more for her learners by using their real life contexts as the starting point in getting them to learn, I wanted to do more with my honours students, many of whom are teaching in schools.

I want to do more with them describes my purposeful pedagogy in my Language in Education honours module in 2015 and 2016. Because many of the students who enrol for this module are employed as teachers, they bring with them knowledge of the South African school contexts. Our classroom discussions about their pedagogy often indicated that the students were reluctant to change what they were doing in their classrooms because they were of the opinion that what they were doing was working. I kept stressing that teaching and learning English should be fun and suggested activities in which the learners would be engaged and through which the students would get to know their learners better. The majority of the students who are currently teaching stated that my suggestions would not work due to factors such as large classes and having to complete the prescribed curriculum. They also stated that some of my pedagogic suggestions such as group work/pair work and projects in which the learners constructed their own knowledge with guidance from the teacher would not be effective within the contexts in which they are currently teaching. I realised that I needed to acknowledge what the students brought with them from their communities and the schools within which they taught. I also needed to know what cultural backgrounds and resources the students were bringing to class.

In 2015, I felt that I was ready to make changes but the following reflections (Figure 6.5) indicate that I still did not really know where I was going with the module and if I am entirely honest, not much happened in terms of the possibilities in 2015. The following extracts from my lecture reflections reveal my uncertainty in 2015 and I can now see that it is only in 2016 that I started becoming more purposeful in my pedagogy.

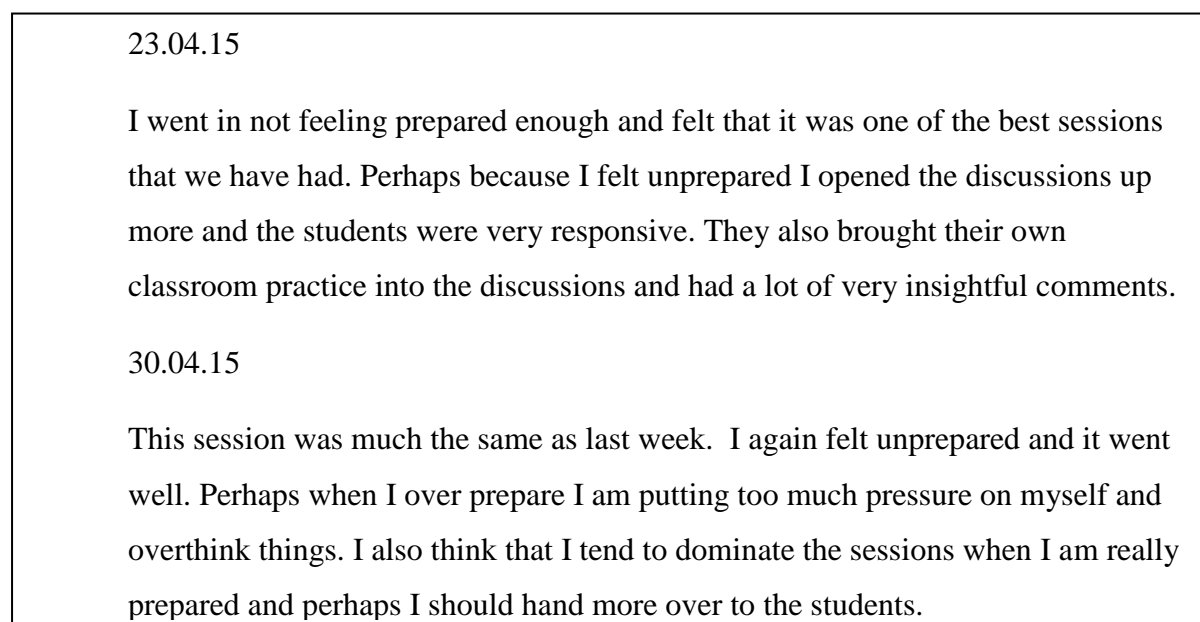


Figure 6.5: *What Should I Be Doing?* (Journal Entries, 23.04.15 and 30.04.15)

6.4 Revise your Lessons

The title “*Revise your Lessons*” has been taken from a scene in *Freedom Writers* when Ms Gruwell asks that Ms Campbell to whom she reports, look over her lesson plans. Ms Campbell glances at them and then states that they will have to be revised because they appear too difficult for the learners’ scholastic abilities. I needed to revise my pedagogy not because the students could not cope but because I wanted to become more purposeful in my pedagogy and to include concepts and content that would resonate with the students and that they could take into their own classrooms.

Whilst planning for the module in 2016, I followed up on my own suggestion and made the effort to become less domineering (Figure 6.5) which was a pedagogic practice that had not been modelled extensively when I was a student, as noted in my personal narrative. Similarly, the learners in *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854/1973) had not been exposed to pedagogy that was in any way constructivist and neither had the *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) learners prior to Mr Keating’s arrival at the school. I was aware that when practicing constructivism I had to

be involved with the students because “constructivism does not remove the need for the teacher; rather it redirects teacher activity towards the provision of a safe environment in which student knowledge construction and social mediation are paramount” (Adams, 2007, p. 250).

In 2016, I felt much more confident about Language in Education because it was the fifth year that I was teaching the module. My self-study narrative inquiry had empowered me because I had made meaning of my experiences (Kitchen, 2009) and identified possibilities for my pedagogy. Because self-study is not only about the self, I needed to make changes that were not only about me but also about my students and their learners. In 2016, I consciously encouraged the students to examine the relationship between language, power and pedagogy and to relate what they were learning to their classroom situations. In becoming more constructivist and purposeful with my honours group, I resolved to keep the sessions simple and yet not to under-estimate the students (Ball, 2016). Part of my strategy was to hand more responsibility for their learning over to the students.

Revising my pedagogy with the honours’ students was not a case of walking in and implementing something new. I felt that it was important that I knew the conditions under which the students taught so as to relate the course content to their contexts. To this end, in my first encounter with the students, I divided the class into groups of three and asked that they discuss their current teaching conditions. Rather than my asking the students in a general way about the teaching and learning conditions in South Africa and why, the group work encouraged them to explain to others “what they think, why, and how such changes seem to fit with the requirements of the socio-cultural context” (Adams, 2007, p. 252). Those students not working in schools examined the power relations within the university. The students were also encouraged to reflect on their own experiences as learners and to compare notes about the power relations within their schools.

I gleaned much about their working and schooling conditions by listening to the student engagements and at the end of the lecture, in keeping with my resolve to bring the students contexts into my teaching, I asked that they email me about the contexts within which they work.

6.4.1 Can You Deal With What We Face Here?

This section examines what I learned from the students about the schools in which they work and the title is taken from the discussion in *Freedom Writers* in which Ms Campbell informs

Ms Gruwell that as the head of department she has to be confident that Ms Gruwell is capable of what they have to deal with at the school. When I realised what the teachers faced with their learners every day, I wondered if they were equipped to deal with the issues they confronted on a daily basis.

I used the emails and discussions to compile the following synopsis of the conditions under which many of my students work. In terms of social conditions comments such as the following were forthcoming: *Poverty is an issue because many of the students live in informal settlements³⁷; the children are hungry; learners come from extremely poor homes; 40% of school enrolment are orphaned learners³⁸; many learners are HIV positive and due to the strong medication they take, they fall asleep during class time; many learners come from child-headed homes and as a result, they struggle with the work being done at school as they do not receive any additional help at home.* These comments gave me insight into the conditions in which the students taught and I realised that some of them were teaching in contexts wherein survival was a daily battle for their learners.

None of the students in the class taught in well-resourced schools and in class discussions there was talk around the disadvantaged communities in South Africa and how little had changed for the poor in the democratic South Africa. In addition to talking about their learners, the students also observed: a shortage of teachers; lack of electricity; large classes; no functioning timetable and no first aid. Students complained that theft of resources was a problem; lack of hygiene was a major issue and that learners lacked basic ‘common skills’ such as putting litter into a dustbin and keeping their surroundings clean.

Many of the comments about the conditions under which the students worked revolved around their colleagues. These included comments such as: *teachers are not enthusiastic; staff politics is a problem; some teachers do the bare minimum and offer no extra support to the learners; some of my colleagues do not come to school; there are colleagues who will not teach in English; some have poor English skills and there is a shortage of teachers.*

What I learned about the conditions in which the students were teaching reinforced what I had written about the problems within the schools in South Africa as discussed in the opening

³⁷ Informal settlements make reference to shack houses that have sprung up without government approval. These settlements lack basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation.

³⁸ Lepheana (2010) explains child-headed households as consisting as children only or children and grandparents as a result of parental deaths from various causes

chapter of this thesis. I realised that planning purposeful pedagogy around the opportunities that had been presented had to take into consideration the conditions under which the students worked into consideration.

The group discussions about the schools in which the honours students worked also revealed issues around reading with comments such as: *reading books often have to be shared during English lessons; we had a small library but it was burned down and never replaced; in the foundation phase³⁹ shelves are provided for a library corner, but it is the responsibility of the teacher to stock it with books which leads to many of the classrooms not having any books; many of the children do not understand what they are reading and many of the care-givers are not literate*. A problem that I found concerning is that students reported that many of the children do not seem to understand what they are reading.

I am particularly interested in the comments around books and reading because in my personal narrative (Chapter Three) reading was uncovered as having a major influence in my formative years. I noted that the Gradgrind children in *Hard Times* and I were privileged to have had exposure to books and also mentioned that learners in rural communities who had been exposed to reading projects started school at an advantage. If learners struggle to read, how can they read with understanding? Not to be able to read impacts on all areas of learning and this was noted by one of the members of the class, a teacher of maths, who selected Language in Education as an elective. She was lamenting that because many of her learners are unable to read they cannot do mathematics, as reading is important in order to grasp the basic mathematical concepts. Mathematics is not limited to performing calculations in isolation but also depends on the English language as learners must read and solve word problems, talk about their mathematical thinking, and cooperate with their peers to complete a task (Abedi & Lord, 2001). This student blamed the teachers of English and those in the class who teach English were very defensive and stated that they are aware of the problems around reading but they have a prescribed curriculum to complete and there is no time to teach their learners the basics. They explained that what happens is that those who struggle to read get left behind in all learning areas. Some of the students in my class who were teaching in the Further Education and Training phase⁴⁰ (FET) said there were learners in their classes who were struggling to

³⁹ In South Africa the first three years of formal schooling (grades 1-3) are referred to as the Foundation Phase.

⁴⁰ FET phase refers to the last three years of formal schooling in South Africa (Grades 10, 11 and 12).

read. Knowing this, I could better understand why some of the students were of the opinion that my suggestions about classroom activities were not suitable in their contexts.

The exercise in which the students discussed their school contexts indicated to me that they are working under difficult conditions. I realised that I needed to take heed of the conditions under which the students lived and worked when making links with the course content and their teaching contexts.

6.4.2 I Have a Lot to Learn as a Teacher

The title of this section is taken from a comment that Ms Gruwell makes about her pedagogy. I realised that I needed to model pedagogy that the teachers could adapt for their own classrooms rather than making grandiose suggestions about what they could and should be doing in their classrooms. To know about my students' learners and to teach accordingly is to practice *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and *Critical Pedagogy*, which are concepts that were identified as being key to this study. In the same way as Ms Gruwell feels that she had a lot to learn about being a teacher, I knew that I had much to learn as did my students.

In the 2016 class, there were some particularly conscientious students, who had enquiring minds and did not accept all course content without questioning and I found the robust discussions stimulating. When I asked that students respond to questions, I was careful not to badger individuals and in cases where students looked uncomfortable, I would invite anybody who wanted to, to respond. I tried out what was practiced by Adrianna, a teacher participant in Ball's (2016) research, who repeated the learner's responses and invited others in the class to discuss the responses. On doing this myself, it was my experience that interesting discussion often followed. The way in which I structured the 12-week course was to lecture one week and then prescribe articles that had to be read for the following week. In my lecturing, I tried to be creative, innovative and enthusiastic which are traits of English teaching practiced by Adrianna (Ball, 2016) and were also traits identified by the pre-service teachers (Chapter Five).

A short written piece about the prescribed article was submitted every other week. In week one, after the discussions about the contexts in which the students worked, I handed the following questions to the students:

WEEK ONE DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is your understanding of the terms language acquisition and language learning?
- 2 With a partner, brainstorm for a few minutes and draw up a list of methods according to which you think languages can be taught.
- 3 Which particular method has predominated in your own experience as a student and/or as an educator?
- 4 Which approaches to language teaching are you familiar with?
- 5 Which approach to language teaching do you think is predominant at present in South African classrooms?
- 6 Are there good teachers or good methods? Are there good learners or good methods?
- 8 List a series of factors affecting language teaching. Which ones are the most relevant?
- 9 It makes no sense to spend time and effort on theoretical discussions. Discuss this statement.

Figure 6.6: What Do You Know?

What struck me is that the students, the majority of whom are teachers of English, had little or no idea as to language teaching approaches and seemed unaware of the significant role that they, as teachers of English played in the lives of their learners.

From the outset of the 2016 course, I realised that teachers are under pressure to complete the prescribed curriculum and that many seem to be of the opinion that their role is to walk in and teach to a class of passive learners in an instrumental way in order to get the job done. “Why do we need to know about different methods?” seemed to be a common attitude in the discussions. To illustrate: one of the students whom I had taught when she was an undergraduate student had been teaching for three years and had enrolled for her honours degree as a part-time student. In that first session she stated that as a pre-service teacher educator she had been excited to teach English because I had made it sound exciting and had given her ideas as to what she could do in class. I was rather pleased until she added that I have no idea as to what it is like to teach in South African schools as they are under-resourced, the teachers are disinterested, the learners are poor and hungry and many of them cannot even

speak English. Her parting shot was that my ideas would never work. The student was disillusioned and disappointed with the real world of teaching.

From this, I realised that there was disjuncture between the student's expectations, what I had been saying in my pre-service lectures and the reality of teaching. The student's comment made me feel that I had not prepared the pre-service teachers for the real world of teaching and Ladson-Billing (2009) reinforced this notion with her comment that "no single course or set of field experiences is capable of preparing pre-service students to meet the needs of diverse learners" (p. 463). I realised that in future practice I needed to take the diversity of the school population into consideration when making the link between lecture content and the context of South African schools.

I had learnt much about the honours students and the conditions under which they worked in the opening lecture and from their emails. Because of what the student had said about the disjuncture between my suggestions for their pedagogy and the reality of their teaching contexts, I stressed from the outset that the students were to think of their target audience and the contexts in which they taught as the course progressed. I urged the students that in their practice they should not be depositors of knowledge (Freire, 2009) but jointly construct knowledge with their learners and to link what they taught to social reform thus creating "agendas of possibilities in their classrooms" (McLaren, 2009, p. 80).

Giroux (1988) noted that critical educational theorists make a strong case for traditional educational theory as oppressive and emphasises that schools are designed to perpetuate the inequality in societies and I wanted to create awareness of this in my students. I wanted the students to realise that rather than immersing the learners into the existing status quo, they should give them the wherewithal to change their circumstances, which is a tenet of critical pedagogy.

I wanted my students to take ownership of their learning. In addition, I wanted the students to do the same in their own classrooms and to encourage their learners to take ownership of their learning. However, I do think that one needs to explain to the learners why they are expected to get more involved in the classroom as well as the expectations as to their roles. *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* is about providing strong support to learners by approaching teaching and learning through a cultural lens. I believe that many diverse students fail in schools not because their teachers do not know their content, but because the connection has not been made

between the content and their learners' existing mental schemes, prior knowledge and cultural perspectives.

I always encouraged the students to refer to their own experiences as well as to the content of the lectures and of the articles that had been read in preparation for the discussions that we had in our lectures. My intention was to encourage the students to be actively involved in their learning with my guidance. It is important to note that the students' learning was carefully scaffolded and my intention was that our lecture discussions would emanate from a position of knowledge and not ignorance because of the lecture, their reading of an article and submission of a written response. In exercises such as these the students were encouraged to engage in meaningful discussion as "meta-learning encourages pupils to examine thought processes, thereby avoiding overly simplistic acceptance and/or the adoption of 'fact': the thinking in which students engage is seen as vital to the learning process" (Adams, 2007, p. 245).

When working on classroom tasks students were either paired or they worked in groups no larger than four, but they were never to work with the same people twice. This was because I did not want the students to become comfortable with each other and to adopt the habit of relying on the same group members to lead discussions and give their opinions. I wanted all students to feel obliged to participate. I felt that the students would feel that they had to cooperate, when they had no idea as to who would be willing to take control of the group and to dominate discussions. I hoped that the students would grow academically through this.

The tasks that the students were expected to produce every alternate week took the form of discussions/poster presentations/debates and, in all tasks, the students had to explain how they had taken the learners' contexts into consideration. In my view, teachers need to be critical thinkers who are able to work with others in incorporating multi-perspectives into their teaching and the place where this has to happen is in pre-service teacher education preparation

The activities were very varied and the first theme that we covered in the course was language acquisition. I lectured first language acquisition in week one and second language acquisition came thereafter. In my understanding, it is important that teachers of English who are teaching first and second language learners have an idea as to how people acquire language. Because many of the learners in our South African schools are either taking English as a second language or are second language speakers of English who have elected to study it as their first language I concentrated more on second language acquisition.

After the language acquisition lectures, the students were tasked with developing their own theory of language acquisition, which they had to present in an arts based form on an A1 sheet of paper that clearly depicted what they knew about language acquisition. The poster had to stand on its own without any verbal explanation. Initially there was much confusion and then the students worked out that the starting point was to discuss what they had been taught and what they had read around the issue of acquiring language. I awarded 100% to one poster, as it was very creative and displayed that the group members had understood my lecture and that they had taken the time to read and process the prescribed article. This poster has been included below (Figure 6.7).



Figure 6.7: Let's construct knowledge collaboratively

The poster indicated that a toolbox is needed in order to “build” First Language Acquisition and that the school is the place where what has been learned is reinforced. The bricks of the school depicted interaction, drilling to learn, love and attention, the community – both school and outside of this, and reading. A mirror was drawn upside down on the bottom of the page and this indicated that the tools that are needed in order to acquire a second language are a mirror image of those used for first language acquisition. The idea is that it cannot be achieved alone and needs a community. In the lecture, I had stressed the importance of critically responsive pedagogy and of critical pedagogy and the role that educators play in communities. This was not the only poster that indicated an understanding of the role of the schools within communities. I was pleased that the students had made the link between teachers, learners and

communities and that they had acknowledged that learning is building. Unfortunately I only kept this one poster and therefore cannot display and comment on what other students produced. In future, I will make copies of all of the students' work to aid my own reflections.

The second theme was the Language in Education Policy and I delivered a lecture on this topic. Students then read two articles at home and in the following session, they were paired and had to identify the contradictions and ironies in the articles that revolved around the Language in Education policy. A synopsis thereof then had to be presented and not all of the students fared well in this task. On reflection, I now realise that I was partly to blame for this. I say this because many of the students are working full-time and they had to read and make sense of two relatively long academic articles in a week. We did not discuss the articles before they started with the task and I thus had no idea as to their understanding of the Language in Education Policy. In the future, I will need to allocate some class time to discussions about the articles so as to make meaning collaboratively. Having reflected on it, I now realise that I need to spend more time unpacking the policy and discussing it with the students. I would like to discuss the gap that exists between the policy and the implementation thereof with reference to their classroom experiences.

This task did not require a visual depiction, but a group requested a piece of paper and presented their understanding of Language Policy and how it favours the privileged in society as the Ying and Yang in policy (Figure 6.8). After their presentation, I made a point of referring to their classroom practice and we discussed how they could engage their learners in similar activities in order to reinforce what has been taught and to ascertain how much the learners had learned in their lessons.

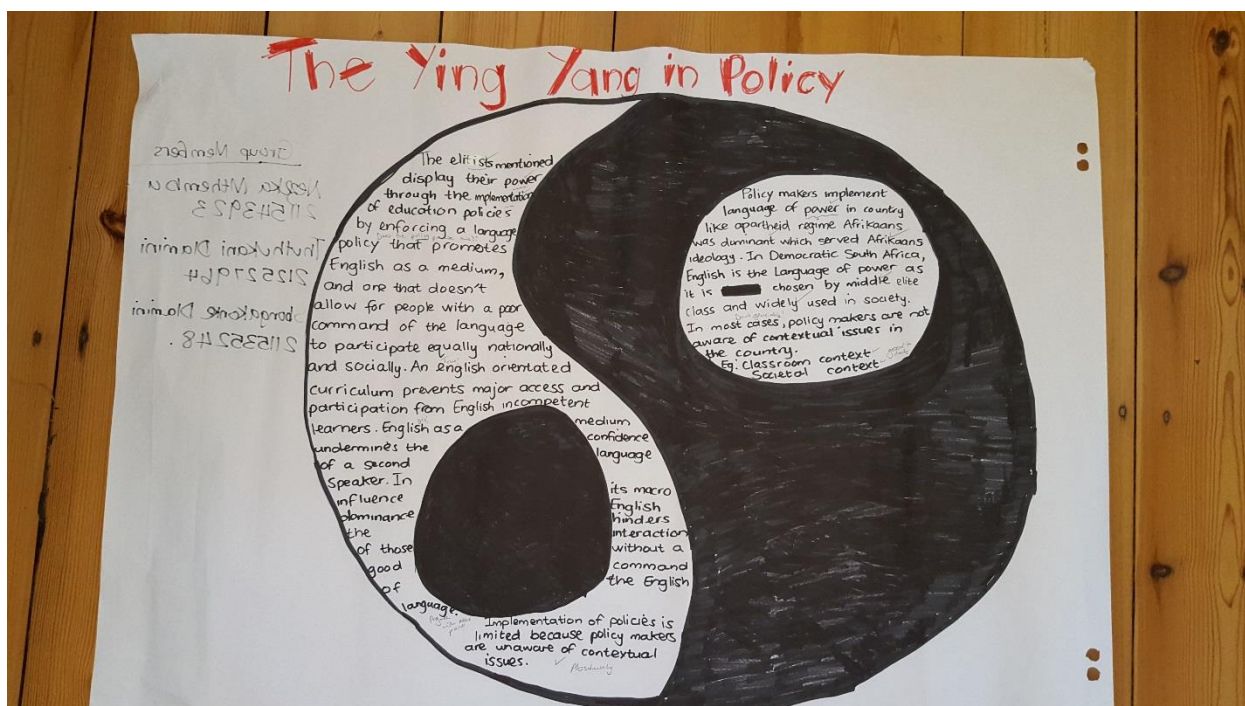


Figure 6.8: Ying and Yang of the Language Policy.

The third theme was Language Learning Approaches and the lecture content covered language teaching methods. I stressed the importance of purposefully eclectic methods rather than just choosing one method and sticking to it. In the lecture, I made links to the students' contexts constantly and was mindful to stress that suggestions about language teaching needed to be adapted to suit the contexts within which the students were teaching. I also suggested that the students reflect on their own experiences of having been taught English and how they were currently approaching the teaching of English. To be reflective and reflexive are concepts central to this study (as discussed in Chapter One) and in the lectures and discussions about their teaching I kept making reference to the importance of reflection.

The students were required to read an article titled: *Autobiographical narrative in a language classroom: a case study in a South African school* by Msila (2012) and in the week thereafter they had to submit the following task (Figure 6.9).

Read the article by Msila (2012) and with **reference to your own classroom practices**, write a 1 page narrative in which you **comment** about what is said about the value of autobiographical narrative.

Note: those of you who have never taught in a school, can refer to your teaching practice experiences during your undergraduate degree.

Figure 6.9: Read and respond – 2016 individual task one.

At the time, I was quite happy with the task but on reflection realise that I should have spent time explaining narrative inquiry and linking it with their practice. Nash (2004) identified the constructivist cycle in which he stated that “all narratives are as much about their adherents as they are by their adherent....the stories we construct turn around and construct us, and we them....forever” (p. 26). It would not have been clear to the students why I had selected this article and asked that they complete the task above. It now seems to me that there was a disjuncture between the lecture content and the article. I wanted to highlight the value of knowing oneself through reflection and how this would benefit classroom practice and I can see the link between the lecture, the article and the task but I now realise that I had not made the connection clear to my students and the exercise was not constructivist, neither was it purposeful pedagogy. I should have taken the advice of Samaras (2011) and organised my strategies by planning better because “it is critical to reflect on the impact of your planned pedagogies before enacting them” (p. 137). Shepard (2000) made the point that open-ended activities demand that the students think critically and are able to solve problems that are complex within their own contexts and I imagine that this is what I had intended with the assignment but I should have taken the following advice on purposeful pedagogies from Samaras (2011):

Consider the rationale for each strategy and the possible positive and negative consequences of the strategies you are planning. Reflect on the implications of your pedagogical strategies for your students, your school, and the community. Incorporate any theoretical research evidence that supports the solution strategies you are proposing. (p. 138)

Nevertheless, something that really pleased me is that a student responded to the Msila article by sending me the following email on the eve of a lecture (Figure 6.10).

From: [REDACTED] >

Sent: 06 April 2016 18:36

To: Bridget Campbell

Subject:

I couldn't help but feel overwhelmingly disappointed as I neared the conclusion of Msila's article I just feel it was poorly written as I was reading I kept jotting down the discrepancies if I can put it that way that I kept discovering in it I don't know maybe I'm being too judgemental its (sic) just that I've recently read another article called 'Co-Characters in an immigration story sixth-grade students' narrative interpretations of Literature and life' and I really enjoyed it. It was so well written and the research findings were interesting to read as well. But we'll talk tomorrow maybe you'll enlighten me perhaps I'm missing the whole point of the article. Goodnight :-)

Kind regards

S

Figure 6.10: Choose your Articles with Care

My response was as follows (Figure 6.11).

From: Bridget Campbell

Sent: 06 April 2016 18:43

To:

Subject: Re:

Wow. Thank you for this response to the article. Please mail the article that you have read and we will discuss the two tomorrow. Yes you are correct in that it is not a literary masterpiece but in my mind the message is clear.

I am certain that you have not missed the point and am pleased with your criticism of the article.

See you tomorrow.

Figure 6.11: Thank You – Point Taken

I was pleased that the student had taken the time to engage with the article and that he was really thinking critically. The fact that he had sourced another reading with which to draw a comparison was very exciting for me because he was taking responsibility for his learning and providing evidence for his claims and I had stressed the importance of evidence to substantiate claims. The other factor that made me thrilled was that he had emailed me his thoughts on my

choice of article. The email really made me feel that I have come a long way since my early years as a teacher and a teacher educator and that understanding my pedagogic journey had changed me to such an extent that students felt comfortable to challenge me.

In years gone by, I was an authoritarian as were most of my teachers, and we would never have entertained the idea of allowing students to question our choices. Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times* and the older teachers in *Dead Poets Society* would not have welcomed comment or criticism from their learners. In the past, my relationship with my students was not such that they would have felt comfortable to email me – they would have completed the task and submitted it without question.

The third task was an oral presentation that took place over two weeks. The brief was that the students were to work in pairs and prepare a presentation on any aspect of the course. They could choose any theme and in presenting it, had to make links with their own pedagogy. I found many of these presentations disappointing and it seemed that not all students took the time to research or to prepare adequately. They relied on what I had taught them along with the prescribed articles. In hindsight, I was to blame because the brief was rather vague and the students were probably a little confused by what they had been instructed to present. To illustrate: two of the students who had worked together scored 64% for their presentation and they were angry with me. They accused me of “moving the goalposts” when I criticised them for simply regurgitating what I had taught during the lectures. In future, it will be a good idea to furnish the students with the assessment rubric as this will give them an idea as to my expectations for their presentations. The rubric should be aligned to that specific task and be developed along with the assignment. It might also be a good idea to guide the students as to scholars to whom they can refer so as to encourage them to research for the oral presentations.

My recollection of this assignment bothered me and I recently managed to contact one of the students who scored 64% to have a conversation about the task. The topic for their presentation was Communicative Language Teaching and they simply presented what it was about without any critique thereof. There was no indication to me that they were aware that language teaching is best taught using an eclectic approach and borrowing from various methods when teaching.

When she was talking to me about the presentation the student stated that when members of the class questioned me about what the task entailed because they needed more details, I seemed unsure of what I wanted and led them to believe that anything to do with Language in Education would suffice. Her criticism was justified and it reinforced that I need to become

more purposeful in my pedagogy. I will have to be a lot more explicit about the expectations and will furnish the students with the marking rubric so that they can see the criteria against which they will be measured. Becoming purposeful means that I will need to charter my lecture plans with care in the future. Samaras (2011) gives an example of a plan of action table (p. 137) and I will develop one when planning for 2017.

6.4.3 Assessment: Students' Voices

In comparing the final assessment that I set in 2015 with the 2016 assessment task I can see the growth in my thinking. In 2015, the task was as follows (figure 6.12):

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION ESSAY TOPICS.

SUBMISSION DATE: THURSDAY 21ST MAY 2015.

CHOOSE **ONE** OF THE TOPICS BELOW AND WRITE AN ESSAY IN RESPONSE TO YOUR CHOSEN TOPIC.

Write an essay of 3 000 – 3 500 words in which you critique approaches to the development of literacy and discuss, with reasons, which is most relevant within the South African context.

OR

Write an essay of 3 000 – 3 500 words in which you critically discuss Language across the Curriculum (LAC). Your essay must include the principles and practices of LAC as well as the challenges and opportunities associated with this method of literacy teaching.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Your essay must be typed.
- Times New Roman – font size 12.
- All references must be acknowledged.
- YOU MUST CONSULT AT LEAST 8 REFERENCES.
- Late submissions will be penalized.

Figure 6.12: 2015 Assignment: A mediocre effort

At the time, I was quite pleased with the topics but in re-visiting them, I realise that they were really narrow and covered very little of the course content. They were not challenging topics and did not demand any critical thought of the students. The assignment was presented to the students in exactly the same way as I have presented it above. It was not very aesthetically pleasing and at the time, I did not give it a second thought. It is only through this study that as I am reflecting and becoming reflexive that I am stepping outside of my work and looking in which has enabled me to notice possibilities for my pedagogy.

My awareness of purposeful pedagogy and the importance of taking time and planning every aspect of my pedagogy was growing. I appeared to have taken a lot more care with the 2016 assignment topic that follows (Figure 6.13):

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION ASSIGNMENT – 2016.

Language in education in South Africa is complex due to issues such as the language policy, literacy development and approaches to the teaching of language in very diverse classrooms, as well as other factors.

Critically discuss this statement with reference to the issues around language teaching in South Africa.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Your essay must be typed.
- Length: 3000 - 3500 words (8-9 pages).
- Times New Roman – font size 12. Spacing – 1.5.
- Reference using APA 6th.
- All references must be acknowledged.
- YOU MUST CONSULT AT LEAST 8 REFERENCES.
- Late submissions will be penalized.
- The official University cover page must be used.
- **SUBMISSION DATE: THURSDAY 19 MAY 2016**

Figure 6.13: Much improved: 2016 Assignment

I took the time to devise a topic that would encompass all that had been covered in the course. I developed the topic and then consulted with a colleague who made suggestions that I heeded before settling on a final topic. It was a more challenging assignment than the 2015 topic and the students were expected to draw on the entire course in writing their essays. The students were afforded the opportunity to write a draft of their essay and to then sit with me and to discuss what they had produced. To sit with the students meant that I could ask questions around their thinking and explain reasons for my suggested changes for their final assignment.

The moderator's⁴¹ comment on this assignment was: "The question was broad, encompassing, and those who had attended regularly and read the course pack would have coped". About the way in which I assessed, she wrote: "It was consistent, thorough and fair. Good feedback provided." I used the rubric that is used for all English Major marking and the moderator had the following to say about it: "My feeling is that the marking grid results in students getting higher marks than I would ordinarily give". What I had not considered in my planning for 2016 was the way in which I assessed and the moderator's report alerted me that I needed to design a new assessment rubric for the honours module.

6.5 You Failed Not Them

In *Freedom Writers* Ms Gruwell's students request that she teaches them the following year but because she is a junior teacher she cannot move up with them. They are in the superintendent's office discussing the issue and the following conversation ensues:

Ms Campbell: Believe it or not Ms Gruwell there are other capable teachers in the school. If you have made the progress you say you have the students should be ready to move on. They might even gain something from me.

Ms Gruwell: You can't teach them. You don't even like them.

Mr Gilford: What does that have to do with teaching?

Ms Campbell: I have been an educator for over 30 years....I know what it is to be loved by a classroom. You have no idea how many battles I have had fighting to be a better teacher....now suddenly I am incapable of teaching your students. If they move on and fail it will be because you weren't prepared. It will be because you failed – not them.

I have chosen to title this section thus because there is an element of truth in the statement and I think that if I do not take heed of the possibilities that have been presented for my pedagogy and my students do not achieve I, rather than (or along with) them am responsible.

When I lecture the honours course in 2017, I will be more purposeful with my assessment tasks as well as with my lectures and this will include requesting that the moderator give input into the assignment question as well as the assessment rubric. The fact that I am planning to work with the moderator, is for me, an indication that I have learnt the value of collaborating with

⁴¹ Our university appoints an external moderator for all exit modules. The 2016 Language in Education moderator is a lecturer at WITS University.

colleagues. In her final report, the moderator wrote: “Perhaps some time could be spent helping students to interrogate readings.” My initial response was to think that “Yes, perhaps time should be spent on understanding the articles, but the students meet for 2 hours a week over a period of 12 weeks and there is not time in which to do this.” The moderator was only sent the final essay question and marked scripts and I thought that had she been privy to the other work, perhaps she would have noted that the responses to the tasks indicate that the majority of the students coped well with unpacking and understanding the articles.

However, on reflection I have realised that she was responding to what she had seen when she viewed the students’ writing and that her suggestions need to be heeded. I acknowledged earlier that I should spend time assisting the students in making sense of the articles and this needs careful consideration in 2017.

The students’ voices needed to be heard and they thus underwent two evaluation exercises – one which I had compiled and the official online university evaluation⁴².

In my evaluation, I asked only two questions, the first being:

Comment on the way in which the module was structured. (Comment on whether or not you found it effective that I lectured one week, prescribed articles to read and then asked that you discuss/ answer questions and work on presentations related to the content.)

Question two was related to my practice and was as follows:

Comment on the delivery of the module. (Includes pedagogic practices/preparation/knowledge/interaction with students/anything else on which you would like to comment.)

Some of the comments pertaining to question one have been synthesised below and I have reflected on them and given my opinions based on my learning in this study:

The first two student opinions on which I will comment are:

“The structure has been precise from the beginning, because you first told us everything we should expect....we were not surprised by anything....It was easier to take the work

⁴² The university has an online learning site and I uploaded the official lecture evaluation form onto it and requested that students complete and submit the evaluation. I do not see the evaluation as it is sent directly to the university.

seriously because you were always prepared and kept the train moving. The 'teach one week' was very effective because we always knew what to expect. It gave everyone, us and yourself, to become superstars weakly (sic). Prescribed reading.....chance to come to lecture with a loaded gun and it made it easier to have critical discussions. ...the transparency of the module logistics and clarifying what you expected ...make (sic) the structure effective."

Another student commented "tasks were given and class discussions which also ensured that one understands what the article is about" and another as follows: ".....The idea of you lecturing, prescribing articles to me was a way you made an effort to say that if we didn't grasp enough in the lecture, then go read for more information".

At the time, I agreed with the students that to ask that they read articles at home was successful and in my answering of the questions I wrote:

"I feel that it was very effective to then consolidate what I had taught by asking that students read and respond to academic articles centred around the themes under discussion. I was also encouraging individual work and forcing students to form their own opinions so that they had something to bring to the following session when they discussed in groups".

I also noted the following:

"The responses to the task really impressed me as they confirmed that all students had gained an understanding of the work under discussion. I feel that the article that I prescribed for language acquisition could have been more current and succinct and I have made a note to source a different article for 2017. In examining what I commented on and what was noted by the students I think that the objectives pertaining to the course content were achieved although I will take cognisance of the suggestions made about sourcing more current articles."

I now think differently because of really interrogating the possibilities for my pedagogy and my opinion now is that. I agree that the students were alerted as to what to expect in terms of the structure of the module as I explained at the outset what would be studied every week. However, my reflections on the 2016 course and what I now know about the possibilities for

my purposeful pedagogy are what make me disagree with the comment about the prescribed readings. As discussed, I have reflected on the efficacy of asking that students read the articles and make sense of them on their own and have resolved to work collaboratively with them in the future to critically examine the prescribed readings.

The discussions in class about the themes were rich but there was little discussion around the articles. What the students say about how helpful the articles were is incongruent with what the moderator and I have stated about needing to find ways to assist the students in reading the articles with purpose. A telling comment from a student was “....*not everyone reads or brings things to the discussion...*”, and perhaps this is because not everybody understood the articles.

In terms of working collaboratively, which is a tenet of *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and *Constructivist Pedagogy* the students had the following to say:

“....the pair or group discussions and presentations was like [sic] hands-on practical work to examine how much your students have acquired learning from you. Group work assisted me to get involved and be practical and also enhanced my learning skills of the module from my peers: and so is the questions answering which kept me on my toes to my coarse [sic]. I really appreciate this and someday I will enlighten another and make them wiser than you made me”.

Another student wrote:

“....I enjoyed the fact that even during a lecture you were allowed to engage with the lecturer....the group activities have also been quite enjoyable because I am a creature of habit and we were ‘forced’ to alternate groups weekly which at times I wasn’t comfortable with but I saw how beneficial it was to bounce ideas off different people who think very differently (sic) to me”.

My reflections of the questions stated that I was of the opinion that the group work was effective. In answering the same questions that I had set for the students, I wrote:

“When they were working in their groups, I moved around and engaged with all and encouraged those who were not participating to get involved in the discussions. Perhaps they would have preferred that I stayed away but I kept reminding them that I was attempting to model good teaching practices and thus felt that I had to be engaged with them all of the time”.

My purposeful reflections in this study have now led me to the notion that to plan pedagogy that is more purposeful will mean that the discussions incorporate the articles and will be meaningful. What pleased me is that one of the students made a comment that she will enlighten others and perhaps this student is making the link between my pedagogy and hers and will model some of my collaborative activities.

In response to the question about my pedagogy, a student stated:

“.....she demonstrated knowledge and experience during her lectures.....this came out in the way she could explain the challenging content, yet involving us students to make sure that we are part of the learning.....she interacted very well with the students.....she has inspired me to take my studies further....her passion, dedication and zeal for her work propels me to work even harder....”.

Another student stated:

“....delivery is always spot-on and can always tell that the lecturer is always thoroughly prepared.....she displays immense knowledge when it comes to the subject matter...her teaching style relies heavily on student involvement and interaction.....a strategic teaching style because this allows her to assess students’ understanding as she drives the lecture forward.”

When answering the questions, I had the following to say about my lectures:

“As a result of my belief in constructivism, I decided to start every theme by delivering a lecture in order to have something on which to scaffold. The lectures were interactive as I encouraged students to relate what I was saying to their own contexts and experiences and to make comments and ask questions as the lectures commenced. In fact I should have taken control of discussions as I often allowed them to go on longer than necessary and did not get to complete the content of my lecture which I then emailed to them” .

In the feedback, a student commented on this with “...very prepared....emails regarding discussions in class and reporting back on my misunderstandings...”

The misunderstandings that the student wrote about should have been cleared up in class. Perhaps there were times when I could have cut student discussions short because in as much

as I encouraged student engagement, it is up to me to ensure that the important concepts relating to the topic are communicated to the students.

Other comments that were forthcoming about my pedagogy are:

“I must say that looking back at my lecturers at other institutions, Mrs Campbell is an amazing lecturer. The presentation makes the teaching/learning permanent.”

“Enjoyed the different ways tasks were given. The lecturer is extremely approachable and easy to communicate with....lecturer was extremely knowledgeable” and “.....she never pretended to know what she was not sure about. She was reliable and trustworthy, as she would come back to clarify a point as she would have promised.....she demonstrated knowledge and experience during her lectures.....this came out in the way she could explain the challenging content, yet involving us student to make sure that we are part of the learning.....she interacted very well with the students.....she has inspired me to take my studies further....her passion, dedication and zeal for her work propels me to work even harder...”

The above pleased me because I am a very enthusiastic lecturer and try to be well prepared for every lecture. Nevertheless, this does not mean that I can become complacent and confident that there are no further possibilities needing exploration.

The student comment below really made me think carefully about my pedagogy:

“.....I believe your way of lecturing is so practical and well understandable, but maybe I thought you were a bit fast with the powerpoint slides.....I enjoyed the discussions.....it was interesting and encouraging to learn that I am not the only one acknowledging that there is a serious challenge teaching language...”

I reflected on this when I answered the same questions that I had asked the students and my response follows:

“The way in which the lectures were delivered was very interactive but as stated in question one, I should have taken control of the discussions. I did not have much on the slides and spoke to the points but feel that I should have had more depth to the content of my lectures”. A student commented on my use of power point “.....maybe I thought you were a bit fast with the PowerPoint slides”.

If I take heed of the student's comment and of what I stated about in depth discussions, my lectures should be more purposeful. I delivered the lectures with enthusiasm and confidence which is noted in words such as, *"interesting, fun, knowledgeable and she drives the lectures forward"*, but in my reflection I noted that perhaps they did not cater for the students who were critical thinkers. I also noted that in the group was a young man who was a thinker and challenged me often and I felt that I was able to satisfy him with the responses.

This narrative self-study has made me confront the issue of the scholarship of some of my lectures and I now question if, perhaps this very critical student would have liked more from me. I spent a great deal of time preparing for the sessions and made sure that I knew the content but I now wonder if I should have given the students more at honours level.

How assessment tasks are structured and assessed are important to the students' success and about assessment the following comments were made by students: *".....assessment was fair but strict but what I appreciated was that we were informed of our short coming and criticism was given but that of constructive criticism: it helped us move forward in a positive manner"* and *"there was effective feedback on assessments"*.

I am in agreement with the comments relating to assessment because I always make copious comments and do not award high marks for work that is not deserving thereof and the external moderator also commented on my thorough marking. Students are aware that they are welcome to discuss their results with me at any stage and there have been occasions where I have reviewed my mark or have requested that a colleague moderate the assessment.

6.6 Scaffolding my Learning: Colleagues' Voices

I invited one of my colleagues to my 2016 honours class to conduct a peer-observation exercise as a critical friend.

The terms peer-observation and peer-review are often used interchangeably but Hendry and Thomson (2013) made a distinction between the processes. Whereas peer-observation is simply where a peer watches another in order to learn from the other, in peer-review the observer is commenting on the performance of the other in order to improve one's own practice as well as that of the colleague under observation. Hendry and Thomson (2013) argued that when peer reviewing, what is learnt by the observer will be hindered as one is there to be critical and to write a report. In my experience, this is the case, because a reviewer, is looking for specific

things and is filling in an evaluation form, and thus not focussing on what you can learn from the colleague. Rowe, Solomonides and Handal (2010) defined peer-observation as:

Peer observation of teaching (or POT) is where two or more colleagues collaborate in observing each other's teaching and then provide feedback and suggestions for improvement. It can provide a number of benefits to the teacher and the teaching institution (p.1).

They identified two main purposes in peer-observation: quality enhancement in which colleagues support each other and the range of teaching practices increases. Whilst participating, individuals are focussing on their development and should be critically reflecting on their practice. The second purpose is quality assurance, which is more of a peer-review exercise. In commenting on the benefits of collegial support, Pressick-Kilborn and te Riele (2008) commented that the feedback from others involved in our teaching can prompt reflection on certain issues that were discussed. This was the case in the peer-observation exercises in which my colleagues and I engaged. My post-lecture reflections were much richer because of peer feedback.

Peer-observation is a process and when embarking upon the exercise, one must have very clear objectives and Rowe et al. (2010) identify a cycle in which these objectives come into play. The first phase is to brief one's colleagues in terms of the expectations. I wanted my colleagues to observe the delivery of my lectures/teaching materials/course design/my presentation skills/how I used questioning in the lectures/how I gave feedback when the students responded to my questions/classroom management. The 'during observation' phase is when the observer attends the lecture and pays attention to the issues that have been outlined and the post-observation phase is where discussion about the lecture happens. When colleagues observed me and when I observed them, I wrote in my reflective journal before the feedback sessions and I could thus compare their observations with my own, which made the discussions much richer. After writing my reflections, the following questions were considered as outlined by Rowe et al. (2010): What aspects do I feel I ought to improve? What do I need to do this? Who can help? What challenges might I face? How do I measure my improvement or lack thereof?

Rowe et al. (2010) explained peer-observation as an exercise designed to improve teaching and learning and that it is about sharing good practice with colleagues in a quest for individual development that will benefit the students, which is what I hoped to achieve. Chester (2012) identified several defining factors in peer-observation and the first of these is that it must be a

voluntary process and in my study, all critical friends participated voluntarily. The second factor is that it is cross-disciplinary. Initially I only invited colleagues from my own discipline into my classroom, but I now realise that I also need to invite colleagues from other disciplines to gain different perspectives. Clem (2013) noted that to choose an observer from a discipline other than your own, is beneficial in that the observer is likely to focus on delivery rather than content. When the colleagues from my discipline visited my lectures, content as well as delivery were the focus of the visits. The fact that I all visited my colleagues in order to observe them, makes our process reciprocal which is the third defining factor identified by Chester (2012). Chester's (2013) final defining factor is confidentiality, which was adhered to by all participants as we agreed not to discuss our observations with anybody other than the person whom we observed.

In a peer-observation exercise such as this, it is important that colleagues are non-directive, developmental and collaborative, which are mentor roles as defined by Kullman (1998). The process was collaborative and in addition to completing the forms (Annexure Three) my colleagues also took notes.

I wanted the peer-observation visit to feed into my reflective journal. After the lectures, I wrote my reflections and my colleague and I then met and my colleague gave me feedback as to her observations. I compared her feedback with what I had written in my reflections. What was interesting is that in instances where I had commented positively on something, she was not always that complementary and vice versa. Hendry and Oliver (2012) identify four themes that emerged in their study of peer-observation and one of these was learning from feedback. Whilst I learned much from the feedback of my colleagues this was more beneficial when coupled with what I had noted in my reflective diary. An example of such learning was that the point was made that I do not treat all students in the class equitably. My colleague wrote: "... *the lecturer should find means and ways to engage students who do not respond to questions,*" and the other stated: "... *try not to ignore students whose hands are up.*" Contrary to this, my reflections about these this particular lecture makes sweeping statements such as: "*They are really a lovely interactive group of students, they were really interested and engaged and worked well and asked intelligent questions and a fun session in which there was a lot of interaction*" (Journal Entry, 3.05.16).

My colleague's observations forced me to confront this issue and when I read my reflections and critically examined them, what had been noted by my colleague was absolutely true as

contrary to what my comments suggested, I was only interacting with a handful of students. What I realised when reading these reflections and thinking back on the lectures is that I had written blanket comments that made it sound as if all in the group were participating. However, what generally happens is that the same students respond and I tend to leave the others to their own devices.

In a 2010 study at Macquarie University in Australia, Rowe et al. (2010) reported on a case study for professional development and the findings indicated that a peer-observation exercise highlighted aspects of practice that the participants had not noticed themselves and showed what needed to be improved, which was in line with my experience in this peer-observation exercise. Once I realised that I was ignoring some students, I made an effort in subsequent lectures to engage with different students in all of my classes and to encourage those who have been hiding behind others to interact. It is interesting that in my reflections following these sessions I commented that there was much less fidgeting going on and that most of the students seemed to be listening. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that the students noticed that I was engaging with many of their peers and they were more alert in case I called on them to answer questions. The increased responses could also have been because I took the time to ask questions clearly and also repeated students' responses so as to ensure that all heard what had been said. What is positive is that in contrast to my experiences of transmission mode pedagogy, I had realised that I needed to be more constructivist.

I have also realised that I did not always follow this student engagement mode of teaching through to the end, as another observation from my colleague was that I tend to ask questions and answer them myself without giving the students sufficient time to engage with the questions. I reflected on this, and made a conscious effort not to do this and in later reflections noted that the students were responding to my questions. As noted by Pressick- Kilborn and te Riel (2008), the observation by my colleague is what prompted me to reflect on what I could change and to take action. She also commented positively on the relaxed atmosphere in the room and the fact that learning seemed to be taking place as the majority of the students were engaged in meaningful discussions.

I learned a great deal about my own pedagogy when it was my turn to observe my colleagues. Some of the things that I had second-guessed about my lecturing were also done by colleagues. This is in line with a second theme identified by Hendry and Oliver (2012) and that is of peer-observation affirming one's practice. An example of this is that I had often wondered if I taught

anything at all and if it was necessary to give so much background information when teaching. I tended to second-guess myself. Sitting in on my colleagues' lectures made me realise that they sometimes have the same approach and that background information is vital. The students found the background interesting, as those who were sitting around me as I observed a session, were concentrating. As a class participant, I could see the value of spending time at the start of a lecture on the historical background to what was to come.

As stated in the examination of my post-graduate purposeful pedagogy, I attempt to engage with the students by asking questions and then discussing their responses. In reading my reflective journal entries, I realised that when I questioned whether I had actually taught the students anything it was related to this interactive way of lecturing. I am mindful that even though my pedagogy was learner-centred and the relationship in the class had shifted, I still needed to teach and the students needed to learn as posited by Adams (2006). It was encouraging to observe others using this methodology.

In observing my colleagues, I also learned what not to do when engaging with the students. An example of this is that when one is lecturing in a stepped venue and walking up the stairs and talking, there are many students who are sitting behind you as you move up the stairs. They cannot hear what is being said and are isolated for the time that it takes for you to walk up and down the stairs. In the case where I observed this, I suggested that the colleague stand in the front of the room when talking and only move around when the students were engaging in activities. In reflecting on my own practice, I realised that I am guilty of not practising what I was suggesting. In the lectures following the peer-review exercise, I had a heightened awareness about this and other issues and was able to make small changes in order to improve my practice. An example of this is that I suggested that rather than jumping in with background information a colleague spends time finding out what students know and then scaffolds on that. However, I have realised that I do not always practice this in my classes.

In writing about critical friends, Samaras and Roberts (2011) stressed the importance of working in collaboration with peers and stated that to work with peers in a supportive environment should improve practice as one's teaching becomes explicit when getting feedback from others. This is exactly what happened when I invited colleagues into my lectures and attended their sessions. The views of and comments from my peers, allowed me to better understand the shortcomings in my lectures and what was working for the students. What was

possibly more beneficial for me was that when observing the lectures of my colleagues, I was able to learn much about my own practice and how it could be improved.

6.7 Conclusion

In reviewing my learning in this chapter, I noted that in becoming more purposeful my lecture reflections have become multi-layered. After my lectures, I wrote reflections on all aspects of the sessions and requested that students do the same. I then reflected on my pedagogy when I examined what I had initially reflected along with the students' reflections. These were considered in conjunction with my peers' observations and what had been revealed as possibilities for my pedagogy. In revisiting the reflections, I considered not only the lecture content and delivery thereof, but also how issues such as personal stories impacted on the lectures (Nash, 2004). My learning from the reflections was multi-dimensional as I moved "back and forth between particulars and universals" (Nash, 2004, p. 60). This resulted in layered reflections in which every layer was purposeful and honest as I considered the nuances that different voices and experiences brought to the reflections. These contributed to more explicit possibilities for my future pedagogy. The chapter focussed on how my learning was scaffolded inside and outside of the classroom through listening to my voice, the voices of my students and those of my peers as I considered possibilities for my pedagogy

This chapter opened with my *Toast for Change* in which I stated a desire to develop, within my honours module, a pedagogy that models constructivist teaching practices, encourages students to question the current status quo, allows for all voices to be heard, leads the students to become reflective practitioners and stimulates critical thinking. In the chapter, I reviewed my pedagogy with the honours Language in Education module by touching on the 2014 and 2015 groups before critically reviewing aspects of my 2016 pedagogy with the group. As can be seen from my initial lecture reviews and students' communicate, my reflections revealed that I was pleased with my pedagogy in the 2016 group. However, this narrative self-study forced me to critically confront my pedagogy and I came to the realisation that there are many exciting and purposeful pedagogies that I look forward to implementing with my 2017 group.

After reviewing my post-graduate teaching, I decided to revise my *Toast for Change*:

My Toast for Change is that the possibilities for my pedagogy that were identified through the influences thereon will become part of a more purposeful, manageable, theoretical, reflective and ethical pedagogy, which will benefit myself as well as my students and in, turn their learners.

The concluding chapter that follows gives a brief review of the thesis before exploring my personal and professional learning through the study. I then examine my methodological learning before offering my concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: “DO I KNOW?”

7.1 Introduction

The opening chapter of this thesis posed the question: *How will I know that I know?* This chapter comes full circle in order to respond to that question. In this concluding chapter, I offer a review of the thesis before considering my and methodological learning. The chapter concludes by answering the question: *How will I know that I know?*

7.2 Review of the Thesis

In the introductory chapter (titled *How will I know?*), I stated that the purpose of this narrative self-study was to investigate influences on my pedagogy and from there, to identify possibilities for my current and future pedagogy. I further explained how I arrived at the topic of this thesis: *Influences on and possibilities for my English pedagogy: A narrative self-study*, and the two guiding research questions: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* and *How can awareness of the influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?*

I went on to consider the historical backdrop to the study and to describe the research setting of a school of education at a university in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. This was followed by a brief introduction to my methodological approach of narrative self-study. I then discussed my choice of the complementary concepts of *Pedagogy*, *Critical Pedagogy*, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Constructivism*, *Purposeful Pedagogies*, and *Reflection and Reflexivity*, as a “theoretical bricolage” to position and guide my narrative self-study (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 335). In this discussion, I noted that pedagogy and teaching differ, with pedagogy encompassing much more than delivering a lesson. Pedagogy is discourse in addition to the act, which suggests that the term pedagogy is inclusive of the act of teaching (Alexander, 2009). Moreover, pedagogy incorporates theories, opinions, policies and contentious issues encountered by teachers in the classroom. In developing a pedagogy of teacher education, there is a need to look beyond the ability to perform a skill and to analyse the nature of pedagogy in relation to both teacher educators and student teachers (Loughran, 2007).

In Chapter Two (titled *My Research Process*), I discussed my chosen methodology of narrative self-study and explained the reasons for my choice. I then went on to describe the context of the study and to introduce the research participants. I also explained how critical friends offered alternative perspectives during my research process (Samaras, 2011). Next, I clarified how I went about creating field texts and research texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). What followed

was an explanation of the layered literary analysis of my personal history narrative. Ethical concerns and issues of trustworthiness and research challenges were then addressed.

In Chapter Three (titled *Sowing*), I approached my first question which was: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* In responding to this question, I wrote a personal history narrative in an attempt to identify people, places and events that have been influential. Initially this writing seemed to be a trip down memory lane for me, but it soon turned into a far more demanding exercise as I began to become conscious of the influences of people with authority at home and school. Through juxtaposing my personal narrative with a literary proof text (Nash, 2004) in the form of a novel, *Hard Times* (Dickens, 1854/1973), I took some of the focus off myself and was able to write about painful memories by making connections beyond the particularity of the plot and my personal history (Van Manen, 1990). The juxtaposition also made the writing of the personal narrative more interesting for me and allowed me to use my disciplinary knowledge in the writing process. In composing my personal history narrative, I became more conscious of pedagogy that had been modelled at school and at home and that I was unconsciously mimicking in my own pedagogy. Through making connections between my personal history and *Hard Times*, I was constantly catching glimpses of visions and failings (Samaras, 2011) and in doing so was garnering a deeper and more complete understanding of my pedagogy and of both constraining and generative influences on my pedagogy.

This chapter concluded by identifying key people who influenced me: my mother; Mrs SC, who was my very authoritarian primary school teacher; Mr BP, my dynamic high school English teacher; and Mr BR, who was my entertaining university lecturer. I explained my awareness of how in some instances, my mother served as an obstructive influence and in others, as a constructive influence. I acknowledged that when I am unsure in a classroom situation, I often revert to a default position of authoritarianism as modelled by Mrs SC and my mother. An observation that is noteworthy is that I have little confidence in my position as a teacher educator, which affects my pedagogy. After writing my personal history narrative, I understand that this could be linked to my experiences at home and in the classroom.

Chapter Four is titled *Reaping: Unearthing the Influences* and it was in writing this chapter that I analysed my personal history narrative and wherein influences on my pedagogy became more explicit. The three-layered analysis started with treating my personal history narrative as I would a fictional short story. However, I became aware that this first layer of analysis merely

skimmed the surface of my personal history narrative. On realising that I needed to re-examine the narrative, I created a method of coding to assist with a second level of analysis. In this way, I constructed 28 themes. I populated a table with the themes and then in adjacent columns I added the people, places and events related to every one of the themes. It was then easier for me to see which people and places had been most influential and which themes were dominant. This table (Annexure One) allowed me to see how I could collapse the themes into three main themes: a) *Fear*; b) *Importance of Reading* and c) *Teacher Education*. My discussion of these three major themes responded to my first research question one: *What has influenced my pedagogy?*

A third layer of analysis then took place as I examined my pedagogy in relation to the three themes that had emerged as major influences. In this third layer of analysis, I juxtaposed my pedagogy with the pedagogy of Ms Gruwell from the film *Freedom Writers* (LaGravenese, 2007) and Mr Keating from the film *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989). This juxtaposition allowed me to draw comparisons between my pedagogic experiences and those of fictional characters. The concepts of *Critical Pedagogy*, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* and *Constructivism* and *Reflective Practice* were evident in this layer of analysis.

Through this multi-layered analysis, the significance of the themes that were uncovered and of the concepts relevant to this study became apparent in my current pedagogy. In Chapters Five and Six, I considered changes that I had made to my pedagogy through what I referred to as multi-layered pedagogic reflection. These emanated from the possibilities that had been identified for my pedagogy. In these chapters, I was responding to my second research question: *How can awareness of these influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?*

Chapters Five and Six were also juxtaposed with the films, *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers*. I was attempting to bridge the gap between my personal history narrative, which revealed the influences on, and possibilities for my pedagogy, and my current pedagogy. This was a complex process in which I was constantly going backward, forwards, inwards and outwards (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I experienced many moments of uncertainty and anxiety and constantly analysed my pedagogy and my lecture reflections. I also analysed my students' lecture reflections, their evaluations of my lectures and their circumstances inside and outside of the university through the process of multi-layered pedagogic reflection in which the voices of critical friends (Samaras, 2011) were also important.

The second research question – *How can awareness of these influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?* – was at the forefront of my mind as I constantly questioned the pedagogic impact of the influences, thinking about those aspects that I wanted to take forward and those that I needed to try to shed. In this conscientisation of myself through reflection and action, I came to better understand my students. This allowed me to begin a process of developing possibilities for a pedagogy that is relevant within the current context in which I practice as an English teacher educator. This process was not straightforward and linear, but messy as I critically examined my pedagogy through my observations and reflections as well as through the observations and reflections of my students. The pedagogy that I wished to enact involved getting to know the students through deconstructing their experiences and then capacitating them to cope with the lecture content from a position of knowledge rather than ignorance. The emergence of this understanding through the concept of layering assisted me in seeing more clearly how I might enact and model sound pedagogy, that was not static but fluid enough to constantly evolve in response to political, economic and social influences which are at play. To enact pedagogy such as this will be ongoing in a process in which I will constantly be looking backward, forward, inward and outward (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Scaffolding and *Constructivism* (as explained in Chapter One) are not new concepts but I came to see that I needed to be purposeful in practising them in class. An example of this is in the fourth year (Chapter Five) and honours classes (Chapter Six) interventions in which I attempted to encourage my students take ownership of their learning. In the honours lectures, I presented a lecture and then asked that an article related to that lecture was read and that the students respond to questions individually. The students then collaborated with others and with me as they were internalising what was read. Throughout these activities, I was encouraging the students to think critically and to take ownership of their learning. Had they missed a lecture they would not have had the necessary background knowledge; had they not read the article and responded to the written questions, they would not have been able to work collaboratively when required to do so and without this, they might not have become more self-reliant and confident. While my lectures were sometimes fun and interactive I was always striving to be authoritative, knowledgeable and as the study progressed, purposeful about what I was teaching.

7.3 Professional learning

In this narrative self-study, my professional learning was strengthened by my engagement with the concept of purposeful pedagogies, which are generated by noticing (Samaras, 2011). As I began to envision possibilities for my pedagogy in response to my deeper understanding of the influences thereon, my pedagogic practices became more purposeful because of heightened awareness through my noticing and reflections.

Because of my engagement with the concept of purposeful pedagogies, I became more conscious that it was not enough to better understand significant influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy. I also needed to enact these possibilities within my current pedagogy. As I delved into influences on my pedagogy by composing and analysing a personal history narrative, I started to see that I had to make changes and to gain some insight into how those changes might occur. I became more aware that in developing an understanding of pedagogy in teacher education, I needed to look beyond the ability to perform a skill and to recognise and engage critically with the pedagogy of both myself as teacher educator and the student teachers (Loughran, 2007). Whereas technical competency had been the focus of the teacher education programme I had attended in the 1980s (as discussed in Chapter Three), I wanted to go beyond this in my pedagogy of English teacher education. I started to see the importance of working with my students to develop their own purposeful pedagogies to respond to the complex needs of their learners, in a context appropriate manner, rather than sending them into the schools with a list of the “how-tos” of teaching. In particular, as Ball (2000) advised, I wanted to work alongside my students in developing the wherewithal to teach responsively within multilingual classrooms that are culturally diverse.

Through my study, I came to see that to construct knowledge jointly with students is most effective when I am more aware of individual students’ experiences and contexts and am able to build on these (Adams, 2006). However, I also learnt that getting to know the students better would not automatically equate to pedagogy with which the students and I were comfortable. My lecture reflections revealed that I often felt uncertain in my pedagogy. An example of this uncertainty is shown in Chapter Five in my lecture reflection after a 2014 poetry session (Figure 5.14. p. 168).

My learning was deepened by the upsetting racial experience in 2014, which made me feel deeply vulnerable (as described in Chapter Five). It was only in 2016 after much self-introspection, as well as interaction with and feedback from students that I started to feel more

confident about my poetry pedagogy (Chapter Five). From this, I have realised that there is no easy linear quick fix to enacting purposeful pedagogies. Rather it requires multi-layered self-reflection and reflexivity, as well as interaction with students and colleagues.

One consequence of my narrative self-study is that it is now always in the forefront of my mind that as a teacher educator I should aim to enact purposeful pedagogies (Samaras, 2011) that can be adapted to respond to different contexts within our diverse South African schools rather than encouraging the students to replicate my pedagogy in their own classrooms. To achieve this, I have to strive to make my pedagogy relevant and responsive to the lives of diverse South African students and to be explicit and self-reflexive about why I do what I do in my teaching. In order to do this, I need to keep working to understand my students, their lived experiences and the contexts with which they are familiar, as well as how to communicate with them. In addition, the students and I need to forge relationships of mutual trust so that we have the freedom to work collaboratively and to question each other without feeling threatened.

As the study progressed, I feel that I connected with the students in a meaningful way through our interactions inside and outside of the classroom. Nash (2004) advocated “fostering relationships between students and subject, teacher and student, reader and writer, student and student, coursework and the work of the discipline and the work” (p. 100). I had always been friendly toward the students but through this narrative self-study research, I began to realise that I had kept them at a distance and knew very little about their lives. Asking that they reflect on their pedagogic experiences and share their experiences with me created a foundation for practicing meaningful Culturally Responsive Pedagogy that was purposeful (Woolfolk, 1993). As the study progressed, and I let down my guard, the students became more responsive to my pedagogy.

In Chapter Six, I noted that in 2014 when student F emailed me, he thanked me for love and for being there for him, and stated that he had learnt a lot from me. Another email that I included in Chapter Six is the 2016 email from student S which was very different and in comparing the content of these emails, I can see that S seemed to be thinking critically and that he had agency. He took it upon himself to start a discussion about an article that I had prescribed and he went as far as to compare it with another article that he had sourced and read. As my pedagogy is becoming more purposeful, this email interaction that was initiated by the student makes me hopeful that my students’ learning too is becoming purposeful.

At the start of this narrative self-study, my “knowing-doing gap” (Ball, 2012, p. 285) was wide. Now that the study has reached an end, I feel that through engaging in reflection, introspection, critique and finding my personal voice (Ball, 2012), I was beginning to narrow the gap between my knowing about key pedagogic concepts (as explained in Chapter One) and my enacting of purposeful pedagogies (as described in Chapter Five and Chapter Six). However, I have also realised that this is an ongoing, back and forth process and that there will never be a point at which the gap will close.

7.4 Methodological Learning

My key methodological learning in this narrative self-study was in relation to creative analytic practice (Richardson, 2000) as I developed the practices of layered literary analysis (as shown in Chapter Four) and multi-layered pedagogic reflection (as shown in Chapters Five and Six).

7.4.1 Layered Literary Analysis

My methodological learning revolved around the creative analytic practice of layering which started with the composition of my personal history narrative in juxtaposition with the novel *Hard Times*. As explained in Chapter Four, the first draft of my personal history narrative merely told a story which I found to be trite and lacking in depth and complexity. My initial literary analysis of this personal history narrative took the narrative elements of characterisation, plot and setting (Coulter & Smith, 2009) into consideration but revealed very little to me.

I then worked on a second layer of analysis wherein my personal history narrative was juxtaposed with events and characters from *Hard Times*. The juxtaposition of my personal history narrative with a literary proof text (Nash, 2004) created a rich tapestry through which my story came alive. This layer of analysis was shaped through a system of coding (see Chapter Four) in which I uncovered more about influences on my pedagogy than what had been revealed to me in the first layer of analysis. In writing a further version of my response to my first research question – *What has influenced my pedagogy?* – I developed a third layer of analysis, which was juxtaposed with two films: *Dead Poets Society* and *Freedom Writers*.

What developed through this process of layering was a creative analytic practice of layered literary analysis, through which I developed an understanding of influences on and possibilities for my pedagogy. Juxtaposing my personal history narrative with fictional literature assisted me by taking some of the focus off myself. It helped to make the writing richer and more

complex as I connected beyond myself and “tried to tell a good story” (Nash, 2004, p. 62). This creative analytical practice added to the depth and complexity of the analysis. It also added to going beyond the particularity of my own personal history (Nash, 2004; Van Manen, 1990). The possibilities that were revealed through this layering were rich and more purposeful pedagogies evolved from these.

I envisage this practice of *layered literary analysis* being taken into my future pedagogy as I examine my pedagogy “in an open ended way through writing that is both a craft and an art” (Nash, 2000, pp.63-64). I would like to further my research on my teaching through drawing on my disciplinary knowledge and finding innovative ways in which to deepen understanding of my pedagogy through the concept of layered literary analysis.

7.4.2 Multi-Layered Pedagogic Reflection

Dewey (1910/1933) explained that reflection occurs when one diligently questions the way things are or were and how they might be. This is what I aimed to do in retracing my personal history and reflecting on my pedagogic experiences in order to uncover significant influences. In responding to my first research question: *What has influenced my pedagogy?* I questioned the way things were by reflecting on my pedagogic experiences and using these to understand how things might be. Through narrating and analysing my personal history, I came to see that the predominant pedagogy in my formative years was teacher centred and authoritarian and in as much as I wanted to be different and dynamic in my pedagogy, I tended to unconsciously practice what had been modelled at school and home. Through this narrative self-study, I realised that my pedagogic practices were often more constraining than constructive, which was unintentional.

Responding to my second research question: *How can awareness of these influences offer possibilities for my pedagogy?* was not a simple linear process. Rather, it was a complicated multi-layered process as I reflected, analysed my reflections, asked that the students reflected, analysed their reflections, engaged with students about their lives and their responses to my pedagogy and drew comparisons between what they had said and what I had said. What emerged was an ongoing and ever evolving multi-layered reflective process in which I was constantly looking inwards and outwards and going backwards and forwards (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

My pedagogic learning developed through this multi-layered reflective process. This included getting to know the macro issues within education in South Africa, such as the way in which the legacy of apartheid affected teacher education and schooling in South Africa. It also involved coming to understand micro issues within this macro scenario, which were the pedagogies to which my students were exposed when they were at school, along with the conditions within their communities, schools and homes, amongst other issues. In talking with the students about their lived experiences, I was encouraging them to reflect and to share their experiences with me. I can liken this process to the peeling and chopping of an onion wherein the whole onion represents the macro issues that affect teacher education and schooling in South Africa. An onion is not a pleasant vegetable to peel as it has a strong odour and has the capacity to reduce the person peeling it to tears. As the onion is peeled, it reveals more about the students who are at the core of the macro issues. Once all of the layers of the onion, which represent the micro issues related to all aspects of the students' lives, have been cut, they can be combined with other ingredients and reconstituted to form a meal of purposeful pedagogies. The onion analogy can also be likened to the way in which my pedagogy was becoming more purposeful as layers were revealed.

As my pedagogy became more purposeful, the value of the concept of layering was increasingly evident to me. This is illustrated in Chapter Five and Six where I described how I reflected on lectures and this then fed into reflexivity through discussions with students. These discussions served as a second layer to my reflections as I considered the students' voices in seeking additional pedagogic possibilities. I got into the habit of analysing students' reflections, complaints and comments in dialogue with my reflections, which I now see as part of my practice of multi-layered pedagogic reflection through which my pedagogy was becoming more purposeful. I was also looking at my pedagogy through a far more critical lens. In seeking additional possibilities, I re-examined my lecture reflections in what was to become a third layer of analysis as I reflected on my initial reflections (as shown in Chapter Six). This layer was much more meaningful to me as I viewed my pedagogy more purposefully and in many instances, I no longer agreed with what I had concluded in the second layer of analysis and I identified additional possibilities. Multi-layered reflection was also evident in the exercise wherein I requested that the 2016 honours students answered course evaluation questions (Chapter Six). I answered the same questions and then compared my self-evaluation against what the students had written which added another layer to the evaluation of the course.

I plan to take this practice of *multi-layered pedagogic reflection* forward in my teaching by continuing to reflect on more than one level through multi-layered reflections that incorporate my own reflections, those of the students and of my colleagues. I will also encourage my students to reflect and to consider ways in which they might deepen their reflections through layering.

7.5 Conclusion

This narrative self-study has challenged me emotionally and intellectually as I thought that I could never manage a project of this magnitude. It also moved me into an intellectual space wherein I feel part of a teacher education academic community whereas before I felt that I was on the periphery. It most certainly encourages me to write as I want to contribute to scholarly conversations on purposeful pedagogies and layered creative analytic practice in teacher education as well as in self-study narrative research.

Van Manen (1990) maintained:

“Pedagogic situations are always unique. And so, what we need more of is theory not consisting of generalisations, which we then have difficulty applying to concrete, and ever-changing circumstances, but theory of the unique . . . We can move toward this theory of the unique by strengthening the intimacy of the relationship between research and life or between thoughtfulness and tact”. (p. 155)

I have learned that I will keep writing and questioning my pedagogy and that I will constantly revise my story. Learning this has set me free. I hope this will result in new possibilities for my pedagogy. When in *Freedom Writers* Ms Gruwell gives every student a notebook in which to write their stories she says the following:

Everyone has their own story and it is important to tell your own story, even to yourself. So, what we are going to do is, we are going to write every day in these journals. You can write about whatever you want – past, present, future. You can write it like a diary or you can write songs, poems. I mean good things or bad things. Anything - but you have to write every day.

In the same way as I now write and reflect daily, I would like my students to write every day and to investigate the impact that the influences in their lives have on their pedagogy, in an endeavour to change their stories (and those of their learners). Through my narrative self-study, I have learned that, while we are products of our past, we have the choice not to be prisoners

of it. I was anxious about how I was going to present this thesis and something that assisted me was Richardson (2000)'s advice that "evocative representations do not take writing for granted but offer multiple ways of thinking about a topic, reaching diverse audiences and nurturing the writer" (p. 5). Through my layered literary analysis and multi-layered pedagogic reflection I am offering other writers and researchers an exemplar of an innovative way of going about academic writing and analytic practice. Mishler (1990) called for clear and detailed descriptions of how field and research texts in narrative studies were generated and constructed. The comprehensive way in which I demonstrated and explained the layering of my creative analytic practice might be useful to others as they search for meaningful ways in which to represent their field and research texts. I offer my layered literary analysis and multi-layered pedagogic reflection as a contribution to ways of coming to know in teacher education and narrative self-study research.

The conclusion of this thesis brings me back to the question that was posed during my proposal defence and that was recorded in the introductory chapter of this thesis: *How will you know that you know?* Samaras (2011) maintained that at the end of one's self-study inquiry there will not necessarily be an answer and I now respond to the question with the following: "I now know that to know is not enough. Knowing what influenced my pedagogy is a small part of the knowing. I constantly need to practice learning how to respond to the ever-evolving contexts influencing teaching and learning." Layered creative analytic practice will assist me in the continuing exploration of pedagogic influences and will be vital in how I respond to ever-evolving teaching and learning contexts.

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ANNEXURE ONE

THEME	WORDS	WHERE?	WHO?
1 DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE			
2 NB OF READING	READING LEARN TO READ EXPOSURE TO BOOKS IDLE STORY BOOK RHTRLP FORTUNATE ADVANTAGE AVID READER 100'S OF BOOKS REINFORCE CONTENT OF CLASS PRIVELEGE PARENTS NOT PERMITTED TO READ STORY BOOKS ENCOURAGED TO READ AND DISCUSS/CONVERSATIONS/SU BSTANTIATION/REFERENCE TO TEXT/NO ASSUMPTIONS	AT SCHOOL AT HOME HARD TIMES FLP HOME HOME SCHOOL/HOME ME/MY CHILDREN HARD TIMES HIGH SCHOOL	ME/SIBLINGS/OUR CHILDREN GRADGRIND CHILDREN RURAL CHILDREN ME/SIBLINGS/OUR CHILDREN/RHTRLP CHILDREN MOTHER LEARNERS HOME/SCHOOL GRADGRIND CHILDREN MR BP/LS
3 PEDAGOGY	AUTHORITARIAN	SCHOOL	MRS SC
TEACHER CENTRED	WITHOUT QUESTIONING OR INTERACTING TRANSMISSION MODE/ROTE/REGURGITATE SEATED QUIETLY NOT ALL LS RESPOND TO TC PEDAGOGY BLAME I RUINED HIM	SCHOOL SCHOOL SCHOOL SCHOOL HOME/SCHOOL	LEARNERS/TEACHERS ME/TEACHERS LEARNERS MICHAEL ME/DAVID
LEARNER CENTRED PEDAGOGY	OWN OPINIONS/ENCOURAGED/ENG AGED IN DIALOGUE AMONGST	HIGH SCHOOL	LS/MR BP/ME

	<p>SELVES AND HIM/GROUPS DISCUSS/COLLABORATION/REFRESHING/GUIDE/CHANNEL OUR THOUGHTS TAKE OWNERSHIP/MADE IMPRESSION ON ME WHEN I STARTED TEACHING</p> <p>SHARE/PRESENTATIONS THEN NO DISCUSSION = IMPEDED/HOW DO I KNOW IF IT IS ACCURATE?</p>	HIGH SCHOOL	NDALENI
4 PARENTAL INFLUENCE			
POSITIVE	<p>READING LITERACY PROJECT</p> <p>LIBRARIES</p> <p>WONDERFUL STORY TELLER IMAGINATION/CREATIVITY/PLAY /INFLUENCED MY PEDAGOGY – FUN LESSONS TRIED</p>	<p>HOME</p> <p>RURAL AREAS</p> <p>HOME SCHOOL</p>	<p>FLP</p> <p>MOTHER/SIBLING AND ME</p> <p>ME/MY LEARNERS</p>
NEGATIVE	<p>IDLE STORY-BOOK</p> <p>PERFECTION/EXCEL/EXPECTED TO DO WELL/ERODED MY CONFIDENCE/ LAUGHED/FORCED/BEEN CRYING/SELDOM CONFIDENT/FEEL LIKE A FAILURE/DEMANDED PERFECTION/AMBITIOUS/FRUSTRATED/ ROTE/REGURGITATE/TRANSMISSION MODE</p> <p>STUPID</p> <p>DID NOT INSTILL CONFIDENCE</p>	<p>HARD TIMES</p> <p>SCHOOL/HOME</p> <p>SCHOOL</p> <p>SCHOOL</p> <p>SCHOOL</p>	<p>MR GRADGRIND</p> <p>MOTHER/ME</p> <p>SISSY/MR GG/EDUCATORS</p> <p>MR PONI</p>

	<p>I FELT INADEQUATE</p> <p>ACCEPT THEIR SHORTCOMINGS</p> <p>PUT PRESSURE</p> <p>LEFT TO OWN DEVICES LOSING INTEREST</p>	<p>HOME/SCHOOL</p> <p>HOME/SCHOOL</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL</p>	<p>ME</p> <p>ME/MY CHILDREN</p> <p>ME/MY CHILDREN</p> <p>ME/MOTHER</p>
5 NB OF BUILDING CONFIDENCE	<p>ENCOURAGE</p> <p>ENJOYED THE ATTENTION/SPECIAL ATTENTION</p> <p>UNDERDOG</p> <p>ENCOURAGE/ORIGINAL THOUGHT/TAKE OWNERSHIP/</p>	<p>SCHOOL</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL/LITERACY CLASSES</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL</p>	<p>PSYCHOLOGIST/ UNDERPERFORMING LS</p> <p>ME/AFRIKAANS TEACHER/MR L</p> <p>ME/ALL MY LS</p> <p>MR BP/LS/ME</p>
6 HOOKS – INTEREST			
7 INEQUALITY			
A SOCIAL/CLASS	ADVANTAGE	HOME/SCHOOL/ SA	ME
B EDUCATIONAL	ADVANTAGE		
C RACIAL	ADVANTAGE		
8 LITERACY	<p>LITERATE PARENTS</p> <p>ADULT LITERACY</p> <p>BASIC LITERACY SKILLS</p>	<p>RURAL COMMUNITIES</p> <p>RURAL COMMUNITES “</p> <p>ANYWHERE</p> <p>ANYWHERE</p>	<p>LEARNERS IN COMMUNITIES</p> <p>ADULTS IN COMMUNITIES</p> <p>L’S IN COMMUNITIES</p> <p>READERS WHO READ TO LEARN</p> <p>ANYBODY WHO CANNOT READ TO LEARN</p>
ACADEMIC LITERACY	<p>INDEPENDENT THINKERS</p> <p>LEFT BEHIND</p>		
9 REFLEXIVE PEDAGOGY			

REFLECTIVE PEDAGOGY			
10 CONSTRUCTIVISM	OWN OPINIONS/ENCOURAGED/ENG AGED IN DIALOGUE AMONGST SELVES AND HIM/GROUPS/COLLABORATIO N/DISCUSS/CONSTRUCTING OWN KNOWLEDGE/CONVERSATION S/NO ASSUMPTIONS/TAKE OWNERSHIP	HIGH SCHOOL	LS/MR BP LS/LS – LS MR BP
11 NB OF THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE			
12 NB OF PREPARATION – TEACHERS TEACHER TRAINING			
13 MODELING HOME SCHOOL	DID WHAT MY MOTHER HAD DONE PRESSURE ON THEM IMPACT /MADE IMPRESSION ON ME	HOME/SCHOOL SCHOOL	MY CHILDREN/ME MODELED MR BP WAY OF DOING
14 AUTHORITARIAN VS AUTHORITATIVE EDUCATORS	AUTHORITARIAN WITHOUT QUESTIONING OR INTERACTING TOO MUCH NOISE/AUTHORITARIAN HEAD/REPRIMANDED	SCHOOL SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL	MRS SC LEARNERS MR S/MR BP/ME
15 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING	RELEVANT TO OUR LIVES/CONSTRUCTING OWN KNOWLEDGE/TEACHING LITERATURE = RELATE CHARACTERS TO THOSE WE KNEW/CONVERSATIONS/RELA TE EVENTS TO OWN LIVES	HIGH SCHOOL	MR BP/LS/ME/
16 COLLABORATIVE TEACHING LEARNING			

17 EMPOWERMENT			
18 FEAR VS RESPECT	REPRIMANDED CHEATING POUNDING HEART FEAR	HOME SCHOOL HOME	ME/MOTHER ME ME
19 TEACHER PERSONALITY			
20 EXPECTATIONS STATE PARENTS TEACHERS OWN	I FELT INADEQUATE	SCHOOL	ME
21 PRIVELEGE	PRIVELEGED EXPOSURE TO LIBRARIES ENCOURAGE	SOUTH AFRICA RURAL AREAS SCHOOL	ME FLP PSYCHOLOGIST/ UNDERPERFORMING LEARNERS
22 STORY TELLING AND LEARNING	STORY RECORDS STORY TELLING LISTENING TO STORIES NOT PERMITTED	HOME HOME HARD TIMES	ME/SIBLINGS NDALENI/GRANNY GG CHILDREN AND L'S
23 APARTHEID	WHITE MASTERMIND OF APARTHEID SUPPORT APARTHEID	DURNACOL SOUTH AFRICA SCHOOL/SA SOCIETY	ME VERWOED EDUCATORS/TEACHERS /ALL RESIDENTS
24 PUNISHMENT	FEAR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT WRITING OF LINES TERRIFIED HIT CONTROL	HOME SCHOOL/CNE/HOME SCHOOL SCHOOL TEACHERS	LEARNERS/GG CHILDREN BOYS GIRLS ME/MRS SC EDUCATORS/LEARNERS/
25 INTERACTION	SHARE/PRESENTATIONS THEN NO DISCUSSION = IMPEDED	HIGH SCHOOL	MR NDALENI
26 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LITTLE INTEREST?	SCHOOL	TEACHERS

27 ACHIEVEMENT			
28 UNDERPERFORMANCE	UNDERPERFORMING/HAD POTENTIAL/ENCOURAGE	SCHOOL	ME/FELLOW PRIMARY SCHOOL LS/PSYCHOLOGIST

ANNEXURE TWO: ETHICAL CLEARANCE.



23 October 2014

Mrs Bridget Campbell (801800728)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0476/D14D
Project title: Influences on, and possibilities for, my English pedagogy: A narrative self-study

Dear Mrs Campbell,

Full Approval – Expedited Application
In response to your application received on 28 May 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have 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.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Kathleen Pothouse-Morgan
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Mr Thaha Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



Academy of Arts ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

ANNEXURE THREE – PEER EVALUATION FORM

Lecturer's name: _____

Observer's name: _____

When observation took place: Date: _____ Class: _____ Time: _____

Number of students present: _____

Context: i.e. – lecture, tutorial, laboratory _____

		<i>Not present</i>	<i>Requires more Emphasis</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Accomplished very well</i>	<i>na</i>
1.	Lecturer was well prepared	1	2	3	4	na
2.	Outlined clearly the learning objectives for the session	1	2	3	4	na
3.	Links the teaching session to the previous session/s	1	2	3	4	na
4.	Provides an introduction to the session	1	2	3	4	na
5.	Demonstrates enthusiasm for the subject matter	1	2	3	4	na
6.	Uses teaching methods that facilitate accomplishment of learning objectives	1	2	3	4	na
7.	Communicates material appropriate for the level of the students	1	2	3	4	na
8.	Explains concepts and ideas clearly	1	2	3	4	na
9.	Defines unfamiliar terms	1	2	3	4	na
10.	Presents examples to	1	2	3	4	na

explain/clarify points

11.	Demonstrates command of the subject matter	1	2	3	4	na
12.	Highlights major points (e.g. voice, reemphasis)	1	2	3	4	na
13.	Listens to student's comments and questions	1	2	3	4	na
14.	Encourages student interaction/questions	1	2	3	4	na
15.	Responds appropriately to student questions in the session	1	2	3	4	na
16.	Strategies used encourage critical thinking and analysis by students	1	2	3	4	na
17.	Voice volume appropriate	1	2	3	4	na
18.	Rate of speech appropriate and clear	1	2	3	4	na
19.	Maintained student interest	1	2	3	4	na
20.	Exhibits distracting mannerisms	1	2	3	4	na
21.	Session paced and pitched to allow students to make notes	1	2	3	4	na
22.	Overhead transparencies (or other visuals) well prepared and easily read from the back of the room	1	2	3	4	na
23.	Summarised major points/concluded	1	2	3	4	na

the session

24.	Related the session to future sessions	1	2	3	4	na
25.	Demonstrates equitable concern for all students	1	2	3	4	na

Where an item mentioned is not applicable (na) please elaborate so that the context is clear. There may be valid reasons why interaction, for example, would not be applicable.

Note any factors affecting delivery e.g. appropriateness or otherwise of the venue

What were the lecturer's major strengths?

What suggestions do you have for improvement?

Overall impression

Module outline

It is important to note here whether the lecturer being observed is involved in team teaching and whether he or she developed the module.

	<i>Not present</i>	<i>Requires more Emphasis</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Accomplished very well</i>	<i>na</i>
Clearly states aims and objectives of the module	1	2	3	4	na
Suitability of the content	1	2	3	4	na
Provides up-to-date references	1	2	3	4	na
Includes a variety of references e.g. books and articles	1	2	3	4	na
Organised logically	1	2	3	4	na
Topics for each session indicated	1	2	3	4	na
Covers an appropriate amount of material	1	2	3	4	na
Assessment requirements clearly stated	1	2	3	4	na
Assessment methods are clearly linked to the objectives	1	2	3	4	na
Assessment methods are fair	1	2	3	4	na

Overall impression of module

Quality of teaching materials used	1	2	3	4	na
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Any comments on teaching material developed/used

Signed (observer): _____

**ANNEXURE FOUR – EXAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT LETTERS FOR
COLLEAGUES , STUDENTS, SIBLINGS AND PEERS.**

Education Faculty
College of Humanities,
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Edgewood Campus

Dear(name of colleague)

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Bridget Campbell and I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am conducting a narrative self-study about the influences on, and possibilities for, my English pedagogy.

To gather the information, I am interested in having conversations with you.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing the influences on, and possibilities for my English pedagogy and as we work closely together your input and insights will be useful to me.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be a participant, please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the conversations to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		
Photographic equipment		
Video equipment		

I can be contacted at:

Email: Campbell@ukzn.ac.za

Office contact number: 0312603468 Cell: 0783423042

My supervisor is Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan who is located in Education Studies on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact details: email: Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 3460

The contact person in the research office is:

Mr Premlall Mohun - Senior Administrative Officer

Email: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za

Tel: 031 260 4557

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....