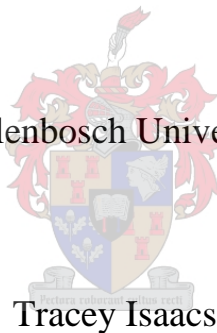# Critical Student Agency in Educational Practice: A South African Perspective

Dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Philosophy of Education

in the Department of Education Policy Studies

Faculty of Education at

Stellenbosch University

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Promoter: Distinguished Professor Yusef Waghid

December 2016

DECLARATION

I declare that Critical Student Agency in Educational Practice: A South African Perspective is my own, original work, except where explicitly indicated otherwise. I swear as a statement of fact that this dissertation has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any university.

....   December 2016

Tracey I. Isaacs (signed)   **Date**

ABSTRACT

Violating students' inalienable and unassailable rights to human dignity could be considered a concrete manifestation of how inequality is perpetuated within a society. By infringing upon human dignity, the potential to tolerate poverty and unemployment is unleashed, creating possibilities to transgress language and religious rights, and accommodate inequality. In this potentially under-served and undermining context, it becomes apparent to ask the question: *How could students utilise critical agency to mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology in order to bring about a measure of equality in a South Africa classroom, community and society?* This research question highlights the status of a sampled group of disadvantaged and marginal students in the schooling system, as they could be regarded as the most vulnerable and threatened participants in the schooling experience, whose human rights are brought into question every time they encounter the schooling situation. Since ruling class hegemony is so pervasive and intrusive in the lives of economically, culturally and linguistically marginal students, they are usually measured against the markers of values, beliefs, norms and standards that are alien to their lived realities and experiences. Often poverty sets the poor apart from their more affluent peers in society, as the poor do not display the level of success envisioned by curriculum planners and administrators. The omnipresence of capitalist or ruling class hegemony makes it almost insurmountable to overcome poverty and inequality. Or does it? The deliberate choice of a philosophical research methodology in this study is designed to gradually clarify meanings, and make values manifest, even while it seeks to identify ethics. As such the study report was mapped out through an interpretivist research approach. Operationally, the data was sourced from written material and verbally expressed ideas that highlight education policy, teacher education and concrete classroom experience. This study focussed firstly, on an investigation of the indicators of critical agency in students from under-resourced school environments within the dominant research literature and secondly, on discovering whether the activation of critical agency can expose students towards becoming individuals and critical thinkers who strive for personal freedom and equality as they are confronted with the stark reality of their lived experiences (specifically the causes and effects of their lives under capital and the possibilities for change).

Key words: human dignity, inequality, capitalist hegemony, critical student agency, social transformation

OPSOMMING

Dit is 'n ernstige aantyging om te beweer dat ons, deur ongelykheid in die samelewing voort te sit, ons studente se regte skend, veral die onvervreembare en onweerlegbare reg op menswaardigheid. Deur menswaardigheid te skend, ontketen ons die potensiaal om armoede en werkloosheid te verdra, word moontlikhede geskep om taal- en godsdienstige regte te oortree, en gee ons plek aan ongelykheid. Teen hierdie agtergrond word dit duidelik dat ons die volgende vraag moet stel: *Hoe sou studente kritiese agentskap kon gebruik om die uitwerking van kapitalistiese hegemonie en ideologie te temper om sodoende 'n mate van gelykheid in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse klaskamer, gemeenskap en samelewing teweeg te bring?* Hierdie navorsingsvraag het gehelp om die aandag op die haglike toestand van minderbevoorregte en marginale studente in die skoolstelsel te vestig omdat hulle die kwetsbaarste en mees bedreigde deelnemers in die onderwyservaring is, wie se menseregte bevraagteken word elke keer wanneer hulle aan die onderwyssituasie blootgestel word. Armoede sonder die armes af van hulle ryker eweknieë in die samelewing aangesien armes nie die vlak van sukses toon wat deur kurrikulumbeplanners en -administrateurs verwag word nie. Armoede met die uitsluiting van kapitalistiese hegemonie sou oorkombaar wees. Aangesien die hegemonie van die heersende klas so deurdringend en indringend in die lewens van ekonomies, kultureel en linguisties marginale studente is, word hulle met die merkers van waardes, oortuigings, norme en standaarde wat aan hulle geleefde realiteite en ervarings vreemd is, gemeet. Die alomteenwoordigheid van die hegemonie van die kapitalistiese of heersende klas maak dit feitlik onmoontlik om armoede en ongelykheid te oorkom. Of dalk nie? Hierdie studie het op 'n ondersoek na die aanwysers van kritiese agentskap by studente gekonsentreer en op pogings om vas te stel of kritiese aanwysers die vermoë het om die karakter van studente bekend te maak namate hulle individue en kritiese denkers word wat na persoonlike vryheid en gelykheid streef algaande hulle met die naakte werklikheid van hulle geleefde ervarings gekonfronteer word (in die besonder die oorsake en gevolge van hulle lewens onder kapitalisme en die moontlikhede vir verandering).

Sleutelwoorde: menswaardigheid, ongelykheid, kapitalistiese hegemonie, kritiese studente-agentskap, maatskaplike transformasie

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ABBREVIATION AND ACRONYMS

BEd	Bachelor of Education
BPaed	Bachelor of Pedagogics
BAGET	Bachelor of General Education and Training
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CALP	cognitive academic language proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CDA	critical discourse analysis
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CNE	Christian National Education
DoE	Department of Education
ELL	English Language learner
FP	Fundamental Pedagogics
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ICT	information and communications technology
IPUP & IHR	Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past & Institute of Historical Research
ISA	ideological state apparatus

NCS   National Curriculum Statement

NQF   National Qualifications Framework

NSE   Norms and Standards for Educators

OBE   Outcomes-based education

OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PIRLS   Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

RNCS   Revised National Curriculum Statement

SAIRR   South African Institute of Race Relations

SAQA   South African Qualifications Authority

SES   socio-economic status

TAG   Test for Academic Literacy

TALL   Test of Academic Literacy Levels

UDW   University of Durban-Westville

UK   United Kingdom

WCDE   Western Cape Department of Education

PROLOGUE

Challenging the common sense in common-sense notions of society

'Education', 'equality', 'democracy', 'development', 'growth' and 'progress' are some of the terms we naturally associate with the positive benefits or 'pleasantness' in advanced industrial societies. However, each one can be converted, in turn, into very negative and antagonistic terms if, for example, one is to suffer economic inequality. But having to admit to the unpleasantness of capitalist society means the unthinkable: the promotion of criticism toward an economic, political and cultural system that is seemingly unmatched and without opposition and resistance. Marcuse submits, "advanced industrial societies promote the paralysis of criticism" (Marcuse, 1964:7). In such instances, ideology is neutered, allowing the causes of social problems to remain "unidentified, unexposed and un-attacked by the public because they recede before they become too obvious" (Marcuse, 1964:7). Thus, the paralysis of in capitalist society is synonymous with the destructive capacity of commercial and industrial productivity on the natural environment. And, just as the latter endangers the natural world, it is also negative to human needs and faculties because it works to foreshorten all the unused capabilities for improving the human condition (Marcuse, 1964:7). However, the attempt to reconcile all opposition (and achieve absolute social order and stability) and to refute all protests in the name of technical progress can exist only as long as alternatives (to the established order) and social change are not contemplated (Marcuse, 1964:9). It is on the basis of the 'unconscious intelligence' and self-determination of particular students in an unequal society and segregated schooling system that this study strove to highlight the critical agency of young students invested in bringing about social change.

Theoretically, this investigation was anchored in critical theory, which adopted an intellectual culture of critique towards a totalitarian society (which characterises capitalist social relations), which challenges the inequalities visited upon "unequally equipped economic subjects" (Marcuse, 1964:13). On the one hand, the study re-introduced arguments on the constraints to freedom for particular social classes and the deceptive liberties in industrial societies (free competition of prices, brands, gadgets, free press, etc.) (Marcuse, 1964:17). On the other hand, it exposed critical student agency as an exercise of inner freedom, autonomy, historical consciousness and self-determination (Marcuse, 1964:39). The study was organised according to the themes and arguments presented in the chapters below to help resolve an essential

question the researcher asked herself, and that conceptually rested on the knowledge, activities and consciousness of a community of scholars, schools, communities and society at large. The result of this conceptual study led to summary inferences chronicled by how critically agentive students, largely through their own initiative, provide the answer to the researcher's questions by revealing how they broke out of a seemingly enclosed system of control and domination. What follows immediately below is the schematic flow of the chapters and the issues with which each one tried to grapple on its own terms.

Chapter 1: Introduces an argument on the paradoxes of liberal democracy, which ideologically sets expectations that schooling corrects class and economic inequality in society. The chapter opens up a discussion by educational economists, respected academics and the current Minister of Basic Education on educational performance by avoiding the question: Why does the same curriculum produce such mottled results for different economically resourced students? The chapter then draws on the theories of Gramsci (1971), Bourdieu (1986), Giroux (1983), Santos (2004), Dillon (2010), Martinez and Garcia (2000), Rancière (1999) and Cornbleth (1990) to help structure an argument about the type of society within which students live and the role of schooling in such a closed system. More importantly, the chapter presents the educational concepts associated with Freire (1970) in critical pedagogy as the centrepiece of an educational intervention that some (Kincheloe, 2007; McLaren, 1997) have argued is an effective alternative to educational indoctrination and training under capitalist-inspired curricula.

Chapter 2: In this chapter, the researcher attempts to examine the most prominent debates on critical pedagogy and student agency through a review of current literature. This debate opens the philosophical and educational space to meta-theorise, and provides the validity for the proposition of critical student agency that is distinct (yet very present and unexplored) from agency. The chapter includes contributing socio-educational philosophies from key thinkers such as Freire (2005a; 2005b), Shor (1993), Lankshear (1993), Kincheloe (2005; 2007a and 2007b), hooks (1994), McLaren (2005) and Giroux (1993) as they relate to critical pedagogy and its real-life application in classrooms. Furthermore, this chapter also addresses one key element of the entire dissertation – student agency – by drawing on the empirical work done by Scott (1985) in Malaysia, and Apter (2007) in Africa on the heterodox of agency when it is seen as resistance to established power. Additionally, this chapter provides particular conceptions of democracy as found in Barber's (2003) work, and calls on Waghid (2004), De Certeau (1984), Althusser (1984) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) to help understand the role of education as effective social action in a radical democracy turned toward social transformation.

Chapter 3: Carries a discussion of discourse analysis and critical pedagogy as a research approach (both methodology and method) in which I expound on discourse analysis, which consists of an analysis of texts and context as these relate to the policy of teacher education and the framework within which teacher education unfolds. The originators and key theorists (methodologists) of critical discourse analysis (CDA) are Wodak (1989; 1996a; 1996b; 2002; 2007), Fairclough (1989; 1992; 1993) and Van Dijk (1984; 1991; 1993; 1998), who help bring an unconventional understanding to text and speech analysis that is aligned with the features of critical pedagogy as both strive to uncover the hidden ideological meanings behind printed words and speech acts. The methodology of CDA also helps provide a clearer picture of the underlying meanings of policy readings and the interaction between participants during classroom encounters.

Chapter 4: Reports on an exploration of teacher education policy, teacher training and action in an effort to develop greater insight into and inform an account of teacher agency as a minor unit of analysis, because it is inconceivable to investigate critical student agency without even slightly considering teacher agency. As such, this chapter reports on the research conducted by noted academics such as Waghid (2001; 2010), Samuel (2002), Morrow (2001), Shalem and Slonimsky (1999), Lombard and Grosser (2004), Grosser and Nel (2013), and Arends and Phurutse (2009) to try to establish whether there is synergy between critical pedagogy, teacher education policy, BEd programmes and university lecture hall pedagogy. Finally, consistent with all the cases in this study, it must be declared that the researcher does not attach any particular neutrality or objectivity to the truth claims made by the researchers, but at least accepts all statements as provisional, shifting and unstable, given the nature of social experience and researcher subjectivity.

Chapter 5: Provides data on an examination of critical pedagogy, agency and change in an attempt to create linkages between current practices of critical pedagogy in classrooms and the theoretical analysis formulated in Chapter 2, all with a view to propose what needs to be different. In this chapter, Rancière (1991), McLaren (1997), and McLaren and Leonard (1993) provide two conceptions of what critical student agency include: one from an "equality-of-intelligence" point of view, (Rancière, 1991), and the other from a "critical-consciousness" perspective (McLaren, in Pozo 2003). Additionally, empirical evidence provided by academics such as Jansen (1999), Molteno (1987), Fataar and Du Plooy (2012) and Evans and Cleghorn (2012) helps consolidate a crisper picture (than the one we currently have) of what critical student agency might look like in classrooms.

Chapter 6: This chapter reports on the findings of the analysis based on Chapter 5, and portrays different critical pedagogical encounters within a poststructuralist framework. In this chapter, we see Rancière (2006) problematise democracy, which is another opportune opening to suggest individual and collective agency to correct the imbalances in the technical administration of society. Additionally, two specific research studies (Molteno, 1987; Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012) are isolated for closer investigation. This leads to a discussion of the congruence and dissonance between student and teacher agency, the role of critical thinking, and the influence of outdated and discarded policy on current pedagogic practice.

Chapter 7: Concludes the dissertation by stating the specific findings and representing the implications thereof as they are related explicitly to theory, policy, pedagogy, the curriculum, educator professionalism and philosophy.

Chapter 1: POSITIONING THE STUDY WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

1.1   Introduction

Threats to liberal democracy as seen through education

In this subsection it is argued that capitalist ideology gives rise to a distorted and unequal curriculum that privileges the affluent and further promotes the most unattractive features of neo-liberalism. In this way a discussion of critical student agency is introduced by providing the contextual landscape that requires non-elite students to interrogate and repel the anti-democratic components of the social structure. Critical student agency then becomes the focus of the study because the official education policy already alludes to elements of criticality in its discourse. But the discourse does not sufficiently conceptualise and personalise critical student agency because critical student agency has not yet been admitted into an official and transparent educational discourse. So, in order to bring the non-tangible concepts of official policy to greater visibility; and to make the agents of the policy less anonymous, a philosophical research design was adopted in this study in order to clarify meanings, reflect values and provide a moral sense in line with an ethical pedagogy that appraises both elite and non-elite students through the formal education experience. To achieve the aim of greater clarity and understanding of educational experiences centred on cases of critical student agency in working-class classrooms; a critical discourse analysis methodological approach was used for the productive integration of textual analysis into multidisciplinary research on social change.

The nexus: social inequality and educational inequality

Equality in education is an inescapable and intractable challenge not only in South Africa; it also surfaces globally in other advanced capitalist societies. As an issue having an effect on education worldwide, the quest for equality is steadily gaining significance, as researchers in the United Kingdom investigate social inequality and whether schools can narrow the gap (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick & West, 2012), while in the United States, educational publications produced content on inequality in teaching and schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In this context, it is not remiss to ask how equality in education could contribute towards a more equitable society. By **equitable** is meant a society that provides justice and freedom from bias and favouritism (Giroux, 1987:103). It could be assumed that the matter of equality in education continues to suffer much neglect because the process of education in South Africa does not

deliver justice and freedom from bias (Vally, 2006:170). The preceding reality is illustrated by the fact that, sadly, missing from the four areas of focus for the new school year 2012, as stated by the then Minister of Basic Education, was the crucial issue of equality in education; instead, the instrumental focus fell on reporting performance. And while equality in education might seem like a utopian (understood in its classical definition as a place that does not exist) pursuit, achieving equality in education could be one of the most important elements necessary to transform an economically, politically and culturally fragmented South African society. I will now attempt to demonstrate how educational inequality has manifested itself through its outcomes, resources and the curriculum.

Educational inequality becomes apparent when analysing previous years' matric results in that those students from historically disadvantaged communities did not have parity in terms of performance on the standardised national examination.[1] Statistics shared during the Minister's address on the 2011 matric results revealed that White and Indian students outperformed black and Coloured students in the nation's schools (Motshekga, 2011). The disparity of resource allocation was highlighted by the fact that, in certain provinces, students were not provided with the necessary materials and circumstances for effective teaching and learning to occur (Downey, 2011). While this may appear as an isolated incident, it was embedded in the apartheid legacy of unequal resourcing and continues today, as schools in more affluent communities charge school fees and consequently are better resourced (Keswell, 2005:913; Spaull, 2012; Van der Berg, 2008:12; Van der Berg *et al*., 2011:11). Furthermore, the outcomes of South African education (as measured and demonstrated by matric results) point to the fact that it may not be mere coincidence that poor academic performance in schools could be linked to students with a working-class background (Van der Berg, 2008:4). Hence, students' educational success may require additional reflection from the perspective of whether there is a correlation between government spending and student success.

Educational investments by the state are illustrated through the fact that the South African government spends roughly 5% of its annual national budget on education (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2008; South African Government, 2013), which is high even by international standards. Given that South Africa's student performance is not independent of historical impediments to success, issues such as access, quality, gender,

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[1] As a political manoeuvre, no verifiable data was published on this topic. Academics (Rukshana Osman and representatives from Equal Education) have queried why full disclosure was not given to reveal a true reflection of academic achievement amongst economically marginalised students.

race and socio-economic status (SES) have an effect on the learning experience (Van der Berg *et al*., 2008; Van der Berg, Louw & Yu, 2007). Of these factors, the quality of education offered, SES and class are key, although not exclusive, determinants of student success (Van der Berg *et al*., 2007). This then warrants questions such as:

- Does the government allocation on education spending perpetuate historical *advantages* for the higher-performing students in the system due to the fact that their parents still have considerable financial affluence (greater/or surplus school finances, smaller class sizes, available and/or supplementary resources: facilities, services, materials and equipment).
- Whether commensurate government spending has *minimal effect* in equalising the chances of educational success for poor, low-performing students because their parents do not have financial affluence (deficient school finances, overcrowded classes, insufficient or inadequate resources: facilities, services, materials and equipment).

Of the two issues that were isolated for reflection, viz. quality of education and SES, it should be considered that schooling does not automatically invalidate the unequal effects of SES, particularly in advanced capitalist societies. This means that poor children do not automatically reduce or overcome the challenging conditions of their material lives merely because of schooling; neither do they naturally transcend social class purely because they receive schooling (Sadovnik, 2007). However, a meritocratic logic (Goldthorpe, 1997: 663) which is promised through schooling, seems to suggest such inevitability, and thereby gives rise to an interrogation and necessity to separate the issue of quality of teaching and learning for closer investigation. In summary, the motivation behind isolating educational resources and curricular content is to suggest that these two elements work in tandem to affect schooling, and to prove that both elements are deficient in the schooling of marginal communities. Lastly, curricular design and content (see section 1.3) on their own warrant significant attention, as they are the vehicles by which ideology is entrenched and hegemonic subjectivities are achieved (Edson, 1978: 65). Curricular design and content thus reinforce seemingly inescapable inequality for economically disadvantaged and marginal children (Vally, 2006:166). As such, the content and design of the curriculum points to the hierarchical structure of capitalist societies, in which it is perhaps accepted that those with inherited wealth and privilege access the best services of the state, and this opens up entryways for further inquiry (Vally, 2006:166).

Following the above discussion, the class structure of capitalist societies makes it almost inconceivable that middle-class schools would be faced with a lack of basic supplies such as water, textbooks, libraries and teachers, a situation with which working-class and poor students are very familiar (Downey, 2011; Equal Education, 2012). And while educational resources are not the sole key determinants of student achievement, they warrant attention as they emanate directly from SES (comprising school location, family income, etc.). These factors further reinforce that educational outcomes vary substantially among underprivileged and marginal students compared to middle-class students, based on access to industry capital rather than on an emphasis on individual student intellectual capacity (Berk & Burbules, 1999; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Vally, 2006:166; Willis, 1981). Nevertheless, educational resources, outcomes and the curriculum are material and quantifiable manifestations of schooling that also carefully conceal the 'mater principles' (Pope John XXIII, 1961) of the dominant elite through ideological hegemony, as we shall see in section 1.2, 1.3 and further developed in section 4.9.

1.2   Capitalist ideological hegemony privileges the affluent

Failure on the part of the state to provide adequately for certain students does not end exclusively with the lack of delivery of services and material. Consideration of the state's responsibility to economically disadvantaged and marginal students has to extend further – to the unspoken questions of curriculum design, quality of educational experiences, access and inclusion, and whether poor and marginal students have been herded into a state and capitalist hegemony that does not serve their particular interests (Gramsci, 1971). This disregard for underprivileged students and the subsequent inequality it reproduces seem to confirm Gramsci's argument that the power of the ruling class (through state agency) produces ideological hegemony through consent (Gramsci, 1971). **Ideological hegemony** is translated as the values and beliefs of the ruling elites that are mediated and transmitted to the popular classes via cultural organs, such as schools, in order to perpetuate and maintain class subjugation. The insidious nature of ideological hegemony is that, in democratic societies, it takes the guise of the natural order of things in that particular society, and the popular classes come to regard it unquestioningly as natural and 'commonsensical'. Given Gramsci's (1971) notion of ideological hegemony, the nexus between a capitalist hegemony and academic achievement may seem abstract and immaterial, but empirical evidence (South African Institute of Race Relations [SAIRR], 2010; Van der Berg, 2008) confirms that White and Indian students historically performed better, and continue to do so, over black and Coloured students, because the former students traditionally have had and continue to have greater material

affluence or private resources, and they have had and continue to have higher-educated parents. This line of argument suggests that economic resources provide better opportunities for academic success in capitalist cultures, and thereby flattens out the meritocratic myth that hard work, skill and talent collapse class hierarchies because the poor can 'work' their way out of poverty (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

So far, I have laboured through descriptive analysis to illustrate the tangible elements of social and educational inequality in relation to outcomes and resources. Now it becomes crucial to unmask the undetected structural and ideological matters (as previously alluded to in section 1.1) that give rise to such inequality, and to pay attention to how this manifests predominantly through the curriculum. In this regard, the immediate questions that emanate concerning the curriculum are:

- Who develops the various curricula and for which purpose are they created?
- Do the curricula serve and promote middle-class or bourgeois hegemony as expressed through language, cultural background and experiences?
- How are poor students marginalised because the curricular content does not admit the reality of their experiences, although their success is based on mastering curricular content embedded in the dominant culture?

By attending to these questions, a good understanding of the relationship between the curricula and (dominant) culture and the nature and process of curricular design may emerge.

1.3   Curriculum deception that privileges the affluent

Firstly, I will focus the attention on the answers to the questions posed above. The probable answers may be explained by the fact that students from the dominant class have the requisite cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to succeed academically (Giroux, 1988:15–22). **Cultural capital** is defined as the inherited meanings, qualities of style, modes of thinking and types of dispositions that are most valued by the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1986; Giroux, 1988:17–19). The advantage of middle-class students becomes even more apparent as they are not only financially more privileged to meet the demands of school (fees, materials, etc.), but they are also more familiar with the subject content to display the skills learned from their family background and social class. In contrast, historically and economically disadvantaged students lack the familiarity that comes from possessing cultural capital. In other words, these students lack the language, meanings, style and modes of thinking that schools legitimate and reproduce

and that are characteristic of the dominant culture (Giroux, 1988:18). Consequently, these students suffer the inequality of opportunity not only in a material (financial) way, but also through academic cultural disadvantage.

Taken as such, it can be argued successfully that the nature of curricular content is not neutral; instead, it is ideologically driven with unstated norms, values and beliefs that are embedded in the values of the dominant classes (Giroux, 1988:20). These values are transmitted to students in schools and classrooms directly by way of the formal curriculum, as well as implicitly through the 'hidden curriculum' (Jackson, 1968) as a means to ensure social control (Vallance, 1973:7). The insidious nature of the 'hidden curriculum' (Giroux, 1977; 1978, 1981) could help elucidate the consequences of the poor educational performance on the part of economically marginalised students further, as the focus of their learning is on the unquestioning following of rules in preparation for their future roles as workers in society. It could also be assumed that these subjugated students would have limited personal involvement with curricular content, as it is hard to imagine how the curriculum relates to their lived experiences. Whereas the curriculum is presented as their own through the content, it in fact reflects the experiences, values, beliefs and norms of the elite class (Giroux, 1988:19–21). Therefore, one way that these dominant ideologies become normative is when we consider the ideologically imperceptible, but very real, socialisation function of schooling. The school is instrumental in transmitting and disseminating the values required (for continuity and control) by the existing society or ruling elite. To this end, the ruling class remains uncompromising in perpetuating their beliefs (to maintain power, domination and hegemony), and does not delegate this responsibility solely to the family, but ensures that other civic organisations, such as the church, reinforce these beliefs. The above scenario gives insight into the definition and mechanism of hegemony, which Gramsci (1971) describes as a world-view that is diffused by agencies of ideological control and socialisation into every area of social life. Hegemony proves to be so pervasive that its manifestations come to be seen as organic and common sense by even those who are subjugated by it. Yet, an often neglected (but rather obvious choice, given how ideology works) understanding is that marginal students bring with them valuable lived experiences that enrich the learning environment, as they provide insights into different perspectives of what exists, what is good and what is possible. But since hegemony works to eviscerate certain student perspectives, it serves as an inhibitor to explore these valuable perspectives and leads to a "waste [of] their social wealth" (Santos, 2004:2), robbing us and them of the chance to entertain subjugated views of what exists, what is good and what is possible.

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However, in opposition to hegemony, a counter-hegemonic position might be essential to ensure a functioning, emancipatory democracy by interrupting the dominant ideologies of the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels, 1963). This argument therefore begins to unravel a line of reasoning that points to the realities of living in a particular society: classist, capitalist, unequal and unjust. These circumstances thereby create a double difficulty for observers in trying to understand how this society comes to call itself a democracy; and, where the state is legitimised (legally and politically) by its duty to serve the common good (equality and justice), yet is incapable of honouring such. While I shall attempt in the next sections to provide the background that entitles (or not) marginal students to a fair and equitable education, I cannot simply ignore that a capitalist technical rationality sets its own educational aims to produce a particular curriculum, and thereby enforces certain practices that may result in predictable outcomes for the majority of underprivileged students.

1.4   Educational aims: A challenge to consensus democracy

The question that needed probing was how educational aims perpetuate inequality and hegemony, and why they remain unquestioned and unchallenged by those who are most oppressed by these aims. Another question was whether, as Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006) claim, working-class students are prepared by schools for arbitrary, demeaning work, while elite students learn to make rules and to control the lives and labour of others. If true, the two aforementioned facts do not simply point to inequality, but also to the distorted aims of education and its apparently deterministic nature (Dimitriadis and Kamberelis, 2006). The aims and outcomes of education bear relevance as a criticism of dominant ideology, and it is on this basis and understanding that inequality should be addressed (Althusser, 1970). As such, educational aims in themselves are not without controversy, since historical perspectives indicate that education has served various purposes during different epochs. It is therefore the duty of responsible, conscious and democratic citizens to establish and reflect on that in which their particular education culminates, such as the ability to build bombs, strategise wars, crash the stock market, spread disease, etc. Scholars and theorists have not been able to reach consensus on questions such as what the result of education should be (Taylor & Richards, 1979). Should the student be educated as a critical, democratic individual who values justice and equality, or should his or her education merely reflect that he or she belongs to a particular society for a predetermined purpose, set externally by either the state or industry (Willis, 1983)? According to Bobbitt (1918; 1928), the curriculum allows the student to display and perform activities that exhibit abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations and knowledge. This notion still

problematises the question of the purpose of education, since the same curriculum should foster abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations and knowledge for one group of [2]learners that differ from those of another group of learners, based on social class and the quality of teaching received, yet they are measured against the same parameters in terms of student achievement. However vague and perplexing the outcomes of education may be interpreted as being, it would still appear that more affluent students benefit and receive greater advantage (higher graduation rates, better jobs, higher salaries and a higher standard of life) by the outcomes over disadvantaged students. In this light, it begins to emerge that the aims of education do not address the apparent inequalities, but rather entrench the status quo (Bowles and Gintis, 1967; Giroux, 1986; Willis, 1983).

To help unravel the purposes of education further, Dillon (2010), who studied some of the questions we could ask in terms of educational purposes, creates an exhaustive list of the philosophical issues in education in his book *The basic questions of education*. These questions analyse key human issues by asking, for instance:

- − What is good?
- − What are the values and ideals at work in culture?
- − What should we teach?
- − How could we make meaning?
- − What effect does the media have on education?

While analysing the key concepts in modern education (values, ideals, meaning) as presented in the list, the reader is arrested by the fact that economic, political and social influences have diverted the focus away from the individual to that of industrial society (Bell, 1973). This gives rise to the question whether the child is being educated for his or her own intellectual and human potentialities, or whether the child is being educated to fit into an existing, sophisticated and elaborate scheme of 'vocationalism', as termed by Halliday (1990). Since one cannot simply assume that the state has benevolent interests in educating young children (due to capitalist ideological hegemony), we must continue to investigate whether the aim of education is liberation or indoctrination. Are we creating the *One dimensional man* (Marcuse, 1964) as

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[2] Rephrasing curricular terminology in post- apartheid South Africa was inspired by international assessment-driven terminology (Becker, 2013:214; Chisholm, 2005:196). In this way (children) students became 'learners,' teachers became 'educators,' subjects became 'learning areas' and textbooks became 'learning support materials' (Becker, 2013:214). I shall use the words student/learners (students are those who learn; leaners study and are therefore students) and teachers/educators interchangeably.

workers in advanced industrial societies, or is our educational aim to produce multidimensional, critical thinkers who work for the betterment of society? Since some perplexing questions dominate this debate, it is not immediately clear, as Dewey (1916:32) wondered, whether young children should be educated as a "private personality or for humanity". That being said, traditional approaches to education steeped in the preservation of society as it is (hegemony as cultural reproduction, emphasis on control and authoritarianism, and the promotion of competition as a feature of capitalism) compel us to contemplate more transformative and counter-hegemonic modifications in schooling and education. Notwithstanding the educational inequalities, as evidenced through the availability or not of resources, outcomes and the curriculum, it cannot be sidestepped that there must exist a particular social and economic superstructure that gives rise to such inequality, and thus I briefly discuss the social and educational ideologies that neo-liberalism spawns.

1.5   Neo-liberalism and democratic individualism

While Giroux (1983; 1988) advocates for youth empowerment as a path to achieving full democratic rights as autonomous and free citizens, neo-liberalism serves as yet another instrument to thwart these ambitions. On the question of whether schools promote democratic aims, Harvey (2005) claims that neo-liberal policies stand in direct opposition to democracy as they present themselves as a vehicle for human liberation and well-being, while insidiously relying on individual entrepreneurial freedoms through property rights, free markets and free trade to subvert democracy. **Neo-liberalism** is defined as the macroeconomic approach to economic and social studies, where the control of economic factors is shifted from the public to the private sector (Giroux 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2004; 2005). Neo-liberalism is further defined by Martinez and Garcia (2000) as having five identifying features:

- free-market or private enterprise with no state interference, no matter how much social damage it causes;
- reduction of public expenditure, where less government spending is devoted to social services such as health and education;
- deregulation of private enterprise by government on everything (from environmental protections to job safety) that could diminish profits;
- privatisation as state-owned assets, goods and services which are sold to private investors; and

- eliminating the concept of 'public good' or 'community' and replacing it with individual responsibility. As an example of this, the poorest members of a society have to find their own solutions to social problems such as health care and education.

Neo-liberalism thus introduces the question of how we expect the market ostensibly to create human freedom when it is predicated on competition and individual property rights and which will achieve these aims by any means necessary (Giroux, 1983:157). Conversely, neo-liberalism perpetuates the class hierarchies apparent in capitalist societies, which are characterised by lack, scarcity and poverty for the masses, and in direct contrast provides opulence and extreme wealth for the ruling elite (Keswell, 2005).

The capitalist ideology that legitimates neo-liberalism has a formidable history and global reach, as Wallerstein (1999:51) remarks:

> Margaret Thatcher launched so-called neo-liberalism, which was of course really an aggressive conservatism of a type that had not been seen since 1848, and which involved an attempt to reverse welfare state redistribution so that it went to the upper classes rather than to the lower classes.

Likewise, in South Africa, the post-apartheid ANC government has adopted neo-liberal policies that continue to perpetuate the inequalities of apartheid (Seekings, 2010:5). The state becomes complicit in aiding global capitalism, as it "has withdrawn from playing an active role in the regulation of markets, i.e. the state is withdrawing from any commitment to de-commodification" (Seekings, 2010:6). As Seekings (2010:6) further points out:

> Policies such as the privatisation of and introduction of end-user charges and cost-recovery measures for municipal services, the delegation to the private sector of house-building, and the proliferation of gated communities and business-led improvement districts implicates the state in its dereliction of duties to eradicating economic inequality.

In such a system of carefully constructed capitalist hegemony and neo-liberal conventions, schools function to perpetuate class hierarchies and inequality in society by their preoccupied institutional efforts of preparing students to fit into the global economy. This reduces the role of students in the global economy, which is predicated on consumption, to being passive, unquestioning and prolific consumers in their youth, and who graduate to become dominated and exploited workers in adulthood (Giroux, 1998). In sum, the threats to educational equality are borne out of a particular social relationship that opposes Rancière's theory that "there is no natural principle of human domination" (Rancière, 1999:69). Consequently, Rancière

(1999:69–71) advocates the 'dismantling of a tautology' of superior over inferior, which works to vaporise social and educational inequality, capitalist ideological hegemony and neo-liberal educational aims; thus, democratic individualism and exclusive consensus are supplanted by liberal consensuality for greater equality. In the upcoming discussions, the focus rests on democratic equality and specific worlds of community that contemplate democratic freedom and equality as virtues to pursue through transformative schooling.

Opportunities grounded in liberal democracy as seen through education

This subsection outlines critical, counter-hegemonic reactions in the face anti-democratic social practice, while it introduces the justification of the kind inquiry undertaken in this study. The purpose of this discussion is to develop a sensitvity in teachers to harness the available potential agentic disruption students may already possess.

1.6   Nicomachean ethics challenges the privileges of the affluent

For Rancière (1999), one of the philosophical hooks that anchor the debate on equality is the sort of thing in which we are supposed to be equal. The unresolved difficulty can be seen in trying to reconcile the Declaration of the Rights of Man (Rancière, 1999:1–9) with the 'speech' and 'non-speech' (counted and uncounted) members of a society based on human rights and democratic equality. Rancière argues that humans are distinct from the lower animals in that, while the latter have voice, the former have speech, and this speech enables humans to indicate what is harmful, useful, just and unjust (Rancière, 1999:1–2). Rancière therefore sees the paradox and conflict in democratic equality that separates people into plebs and patricians, bourgeoisie and working class, rich and poor as necessary of philosophical reflection to help establish what is exalted, and what is deplored in democratic practices (Rancière, 1999:1). Rancière further tries to prove this theory by exposing the antagonism between democratic equality and the inequality of tyranny, where in both instances 'the parts of the community that are not real parts of the social body' are systematically deprived of speech (and, by implication, only symbolically part of the society) (Rancière, 1999:19). Hence, a 'police logic' is necessary to prevail over 'those deprived of speech' (plebs, workers, and the poor) by putting them in their place and securing their function in society (Rancière, 1999:40). In contrast, one would expect an egalitarian logic to be preeminent in a situation of democratic equality, where social rank is less important than equality of speech, which entitles all citizens to their legal and political rights, and their right to argue for what is useful and just (Rancière, 1999:55). In so doing, speech in a democracy opens up a world in which argument can be received and have

an effect in order to achieve justice according to Nicomachean ethics (Aristotle, 2000:19). According to the Aristotelian concept of Nicomachean ethics, 'good' means pursing something for the sake of some greater good (or chief good), and where human activity is thought to have some definite purpose (Aristotle, 2000:19). In medicine, for example, the 'good' could be the attainment of health (Aristotle, 2000:10). Thus in the interests of the good of society, members of a community and society cannot take more than their share of advantages or less of their share of disadvantages in order to optimise gains for all in the social whole (Rancière, 1999:5, 11). However, the unresolved difficulty of bourgeois capital in a democracy creates the suspicion that consensus democracy can survive crippling democratic individualism, which in turn creates a world of appearances and "total exhibition" filled with "empty democracy" (Rancière, 1999:69, 97–118). To relate democratic equality directly to schooling, the state acts as proxy for the elite classes in curricular matters when the state serves as a democratic apparatus (appearing to provide equal education for all) (Rancière, 1999:75). However, the state may actually be closer to serving as ideological state apparatus (ISA). Following Althusser (1970), this might be plausible in the light of the fact that states are able to maintain control over citizens by reproducing human subjects through certain beliefs and values (accepted as being organic and pure) peddled through the curriculum (Giroux, 1983). In the foregoing sections 1.1 and 1.4 I tried to highlight how Althusser saw ideology: the truth of falseness, where confusion is spread between words and things (or reality), and where the greatest good in democracy does not translate into equality (Althusser, 1970; Rancière, 1999:85). Taken together, if ideology is driven by the construct of unconscious *thought,* and the curriculum is driven by 'empty' *words*, then in section 1.7 I will turn to (another construct) the *people* participating in curriculum development and design to discover those who are "counted" (Rancière, 1999:7) to exercise their speech and those who are "uncounted" (Rancière, 1999:7–9).

Since schooling is a microcosm of the social web related to human energies and interests (Rancière, 1999:7–9), and the curriculum functions as an educational apparatus (think state apparatus: law and politics, repressive state apparatus, police and army), the curriculum violates consensus democracy as curriculum design, which is taken to mean the completed curriculum plan as issued by the national education authority, falls outside the limits or locus of control of the key role players (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:159–168). The centralised nature of curriculum making by national education authorities is not participatory and excludes key role players such as teachers, parents, students and affected educational communities, rendering these agents

powerless (Freire and Macedo, 1987). The teacher, as education facilitator at school, has no valuable and recognised participation in curriculum design. Nor does the student, as the intended recipient of the education, contribute by delineating the things he or she would like to learn, since the curriculum has been predetermined. In this way, the process of education may take on a rather deterministic nature when it comes to educating the young. **Determinism** is explained as the inevitability of causation in that everything that happens is the only possible thing that could happen (Burmeister, 2009). Therein lays the problem, that even to consider the curriculum as deterministic disregards any notion of agency, yet we cannot simply discount the seemingly fixed character of the curriculum. Thus, the curriculum, as expressed in its aims, content and pedagogy, may reinforce specific, defined roles with limited agency for teachers and students, and may impose the methods of assessment that suggest unalterable pre-determination, predictability and strict uniformity (Magrini, 2012). Determinism could further advance the question whether curriculum designers ensure that certain groups of students graduate to be workers, while others are destined to become leaders. The official processes establishing the content and design of curricular programmes do not involve the community, parents, teachers or students, but instead are determined by the state, influential academics and those with commercial or industrial interests (Giroux 1983:8; Hoadley & Jansen, 2009:185−194; Kanpol, 1994). This scenario further reinforces that educational inequality has a hierarchical structure, since the power to influence the curriculum design process is located at the macro-level of education planning (with powerful interests vested in the state, academics, etc.) to the exclusion of the micro-level experiences of particular students and communities (Lingard and Rizvi, 1998).

1.7 Counter-hegemonic responses to the curriculum: How the marginalised fight back

The above interpretation of curriculum development informs an account where outside influences (from labour, industry, academics and government) have greater control over curriculum organisation, making it appear as though curricular matters are shut and impenetrable. If that were the case, then economically disadvantaged students would have no hope of escaping the hegemonic nature and influence of schooling. Cornbleth (1990) however provides optimism through addressing the inequalities in society at large and showing how to attempt to disempower ideological hegemony as mediated through the curriculum. She describes the curriculum as an ongoing social process comprised of the interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and the educational context or setting. In this definition, gaps are presented for teachers to interpret the curriculum and, through practice (teaching) at the micro-level of

the individual student, to affect teaching and learning. This fissure opens the curriculum up to interpretation by the teacher, as he or she is afforded the opportunity of presenting counter-hegemonic knowledge to contextualise student learning. The contextual positioning of the curriculum by the teacher presents a way to introduce students to alternative views, issues apparent in the 'hidden curriculum' (Giroux, 1981) and ways for students to confront the real problems of their existence (Freire, 2005a; 2005b; Giroux, 1983:8−11; McLaren & Leonard, 1993; Smith, 1996; 2000) through praxis. Praxis presents the opportunity for students to reflect on subject matter during learning routines, then to act on the subject matter through performance or application of a skill, and to culminate the process with further reflection on the effect of the aforementioned action (Smith, 1996; 2000).

Giroux (1988:9) was a forerunner of the sentiments expressed by Cornbleth (1990), namely that teachers should challenge the curriculum, as it is not a neutral, unbiased element or body in education. According to Giroux (1983:47; 1988), the curriculum is a way of organising knowledge, values and relationships of social power. His position is that teachers should not assume passive roles by merely accepting the technical imperatives of the curriculum, but that they should challenge these so as to advocate meaningfully for students (Giroux, 1983:42). Giroux (1983:44; 1988) further suggests that students and teachers undertake critical reflection of their real world in order to generate a curriculum that reveals possibilities and transformative solutions that are counter-hegemonic and which do not enforce social reproduction or economic production. Cornbleth (1990) and Giroux (1988; 1986) demonstrate the power that teachers can harness to challenge and confront a restrictive curriculum to serve the needs of students by affirming students' lived experiences. The authors also appeal to teachers as professionals and intellectuals (Wink, 2005) to represent the needs of the learners as their top priority, because if they do not advocate for students through challenging a curriculum that does not serve student interests, who will be left to challenge it and advocate for students?

1.8   Critical pedagogy: Reclaiming consensus democracy

In order to confront and attack acerbic hegemony as described above, Santos (2004) suggests we start embracing themes such as participatory democracy, even in schools, and to envision alternative productive systems as well as to naturalise differences in order to abolish racial, sexual and social classifications. To this, critical pedagogues like Freire, (2005); Giroux (1988); Kincheloe (2007); Lankshear (1993); Lather (2004); McLaren (1986); Shor (1993); Steinberg (2006) respond by suggesting critical pedagogy as a form of hegemonic resistance in schools

to address educational, political, economic and social inequalities. To expand on the term **hegemonic resistance**, critical pedagogue Kanpol (1994) elaborates that, in this sense, resistance encompasses acts that counter the oppressive and dominant structural and cultural values (such as individualism, rampant competition, success-only orientations, and authoritarianism) in society. This resistance could be achieved through various social institutions, such as the school, church, family and community. Just as these social structures serve hegemonic ends in maintaining the status quo, they can be transformed into agents and mediums for counter-hegemonic potentials and possibilities for marginalised and subjugated people (Giroux, 1983). The question however remains what it is about critical pedagogy that suggests success where other educational interventions have failed.

Critical pedagogy as a counter-hegemonic response has its theoretical origins with Paulo Freire, who proposed the theory in the political and social climate of the 1960s and 1970s. This historical period was characterised by social movements concerned with transformation, liberation from colonialism, civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, environmental issues and anti-war movements (Freire, 1970). Against this backdrop, Freire (1970) suggested critical pedagogy as a process, through education, to address social problems and as a means through which society could be transformed along inclusive or participatory, democratic lines. This seemed apropos, since the resistance movements chose to challenge the established, unjust and unequal order apparent in their world (Freire, 1970). More specifically, Freire (1970) used reading and writing to aid thinking among economically disenfranchised slum dwellers in his native Brazil. The critical dimension in his literacy approach was evident in that he used pictures to help illiterate adults interpret the problems of their lives by examining the causes, effects and possibilities for action to change (Giroux, 1983:201–202).

Trying to avoid oversimplification, it cannot purely be assumed that, because Freire used critical pedagogy with a non-elite group of students in Brazil, it should out of necessity work in South Africa as well. Freire's pedagogic approach was documented in the former Portuguese colonies (what are otherwise termed 'The Five Sisters' in Africa, viz. Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome é Principe, Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique), where Freire worked as an education consultant to develop literacy programmes for adults in these post-colonial societies using critical pedagogy (Freire & Faundez, 1989). Specific to South Africa, there are stories of oral histories (Weider, 2003) documenting how teachers used critical pedagogy as a form of resistance during the 1976 student uprisings. There are however limited formal, in-depth studies detailing the nature and dimensions of critical pedagogy in South African education to the point

where we can inform critical pedagogy as a theory and/or practice. Nevertheless, critical pedagogy encourages a particular disposition in students and teachers (or education as a whole), which engages marginal students in a unique way. Critical pedagogy asks of its students to examine the causes, effects and possibilities for change through critical literacy. Thus, a central theme in critical pedagogy is created in the form of 'conscientisation', which, by Freire's (1970) definition, means the awakening of critical awareness (Freire, 1970). This critical awareness is used through literacy to heighten the student's ability to deconstruct the capitalist hegemony of the ruling elite towards the goals of developing "critical democracy, individual freedom, social justice, social transformation and a revitalisation of the public sphere" (Freire & Freire, 1994:90). The invoking of consciousness in the South African educational landscape might have significant and telling results, as it did during the Soweto student uprisings of 1976, where critical consciousness was raised about the injustice of Afrikaans language instruction in black schools, and where students structured resistance through student-led protests. Therefore, the agency of historical beings may call for the remembrance of this event in South African history, and it may serve to be instructive, inspiring and empowering to students, as it presents an opportunity to appreciate the possibilities of human agency, specifically student agency (Alexander, 2012). This line of thinking opens up alternate visions of schools and schooling. As stated previously (see 1.1 and 1.4), on the one hand schools could be considered sites where the ideologies of capitalist hegemony become entrenched in students as they unconsciously assimilate and acquiesce to the dictates of the market fundamentals of consumerism and materialism (Kellner, 2001). On the other hand, as counter-hegemony, schools could be seen as sites where the prevailing social, political and economic order is challenged and transformed (Kellner, 2001). Thus, schools present an opportunity to address social inequality, as is evident in the critical student agency during the Soweto riots of 1976 (Alexander, 2012). Critical student agency should furthermore not only be seen as local or particular, but students globally add (have added and will continue to add) their critical agency at educational sites (Paris in 1968 [Rancière, 1999; Giroux, 1978], the United States of America in the 1960's [Scranto, 1970] and Egypt in 2012 [Beissinger *et al.,* 2014]) to address social problems that spur revolutionary thinking and action.

It would appear that both schooling and youth are the ideal combination for criticality and critical action, as Giroux (1983) and Freire (1970) explain below. Giroux identifies youth as a complex site of hope and possibility, as well as a site of domination and exploitation, since the youth possess the power to transform society and address inequality, yet they also are

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vulnerable to the onslaught of hegemonic ideology (Giroux, 1983:13). Giroux (1983:14–15) locates youth as being "scapegoated" for the problems of society, like violence, social degradation, poverty, crime and poor educational performance, while Freire (1970; 2005a:153) positions the vulnerability of youth, as the schooling experience leaves them "anesthetized, a-critical and naïve" in the face of the material reality of their lives and the world at large. To further this thinking, alienation and distance from reality are seen primarily in the light of the fact that the authoritarian ideology of the ruling elite produces programmed and conditioned subjects through the education system, rather than emancipated, empowered individuals who operate in a functional democracy (Althusser, 1970; Giroux & Aronowitz, 1987). Student conditioning is seen to encompass the norms, values and beliefs of the dominant elite, and how these become entrenched in society and are effectively disseminated through media and political establishments as legitimate (Kellner, 2001). These norms, values and beliefs of the elite are believed to become so well established and unquestioned that students become inclined to accept them as their own (Kellner, 2001). Therein lays the danger: when students are seduced sufficiently by the meritocratic myth, they no longer see the need to struggle, because meritocracy makes them believe that they have transcended class (Giroux, 1994). A lack of consciousness therefore works to desensitise students to their marginal and subjugated position, where the subjectification is first ideological, then hegemonic, and it reinforces their status as "beings for others rather than being for themselves" (Freire, 2005a:74). It is ostensibly out of historic necessity and not preference that agentive students examine the causes of their oppression (Freire, 2005). As a result, critical consciousness, which can be made more visible through critical pedagogy, could be considered a tool to help marginal students be "counted" (Rancière, 1999:7) and heard when anti-democratic forces choose to silence them and invalidate their rights.

1.9   Critical literacy and agency for democratic equality

Whilst I have, on one level, characterised schools as institutions of repression above (see 1.1; 1.2; 1.3 and 1.4), Freire's (2005a) approach of critical pedagogy through critical literacy also suggests that schools present the opportunity to be transformed as centres for individual and social emancipation. As a teacher, Freire's (1970; 2005a) work with the poor reported in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* is instructive on the effectiveness of critical pedagogy as a cognitive approach. Through his work, Freire determined that criticality involves the student or citizen being critically astute of social relations, social institutions and social traditions that create and

maintain conditions of oppression, and then being in a position to interpret them, criticise them, and change them (Freire, 2005a:88).

In the tradition of Paulo Freire, literacy provides an opportunity to read the 'word' (the literal text with its associated symbols) and the 'world' (the discreet, hidden messages that promote certain values, beliefs, assumptions), and to make meaning by deep and active interrogation of the implications on the lived experiences of those who encounter the texts (Freire, 2005a:119−121). As opposed to the traditional approach to literacy, in which the emphasis is on mastery, meaning the memorisation or archiving of facts, this critical approach to literacy and literature is aimed at helping students create their own meaning and to probe, question and criticise words and symbols presented in literary materials (Freire, 2005a:110). The 'problem posing' ideology of critical pedagogy and critical literacy allows students to reflect on philosophical (cognitive, dialogical, reflective) rather than on functional (narrative, docile, mechanistic) issues, which subsequently position them with greater agency to respond to the social problems that face them, their communities and society; and that have increased potential to bring about social transformation (Freire, 2005a:71−74).

For the purposes of this study, a distinction was made in terms of terminology between critical pedagogy and critical student agency. In this research report, **critical student agency** as an offshoot of the central theory (of critical pedagogy) assumes a particular focus within critical pedagogy. **Critical pedagogy** refers to the science and art of teacher preparation and practice as proposed by Freire (2005a). While the teacher is instrumental as the facilitator of learning encounters, in the great majority of cases, considerable energy is expended and emphasis placed on teachers' roles and responsibilities in critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005a), which some might argue is stultifying pedagogy because the teacher (at times unwittingly) oppresses students through domination rather than guidance (Montessori, 1989:6−19; Rancière, 1991:13, 48, 87). **Critical student agency**, on the other hand, is characterised by the numerous instances in which students are seen to exercise critical agency, such as in relation to teachers, other students, the curriculum, in the community, etc. In critical student agency, special emphasis is placed on student roles (student as learner-participant, student as co-teacher, student as researcher, student as collaborative lesson planner, student as evaluator, student with equal power in a democratic classroom, student as activist, student as co-creator of meaning, etc.). Student prominence during instructional encounters, relies on the student-centred approach to education versus the

teacher-centred approach (Jones, 2007; Montessori, 1989). The student-centred approach to education has the following characteristic features:

- students who value each other's contributions, with emphasis on cooperation and a willingness to learn from each other (Jones, 2007:2);

- a cooperative learning community is created in class, where students help each and work collaboratively in pairs or groups or as a whole class group (Jones, 2007:2); and

- student activities and behaviours allow them opportunities to compare, discuss, negotiate and respond to each other's work, and make suggestions on how improvements could be made (Jones, 2007:30).

In this way, the features of a student-centred approach are conducive to fostering autonomy in students by empowering them to make meaning, express opinions and experiences, and ask critical questions, rather than being dependent on the teacher as the sole possessor of information and facts (Freire, 2005a:24, 47; Jones, 2007:40; Montessori, 1994). Consequently, this approach to learning also motivates students positively to become co-creators of instructional materials and procedures. The decided shift to critical student agency, student empowerment and the student-centred approach in education looks to establish some distance from the traditional practice of critical pedagogy. Whereas in critical pedagogy more reliance is placed on teacher agency, it does not prove to be progressive or democratic enough to achieve the potency dormant in critical student agency fully.

Critical student agency could present itself as a medium to initiate and institute the change and action alluded to by Freire (2005a), with a more dedicated focus of human agency bestowed on student empowerment and the student-centred approach. Critical student agency functions in the duality of firstly, a theory in the broader context of critical pedagogy, and secondly, as a practice in the school and classroom (Freire, 2005a). In its practical dimension, critical student agency may provide an educational alternative (solution) for the current student, who may be a future exploited worker, as it could be an awakening of his or her individual potentialities through the reconstruction of curricula away from the established dictates, which serve the elite, toward a greater measure of socialist democracy, which may result in a more just and humane world.

1.10   Current research on critical student agency within critical pedagogy

Current research within the context of critical pedagogy has begun to address pertinent questions on education reform as this pedagogy relates to nonconformity with the established

capitalist-centred approach and outcomes, and creates some of the most ideal environments to initiate critical agency (Giroux, 1983). To this end, critical educational theorists such as McLaren and Kincheloe identify the reconstruction of education as taking on a decidedly more social (egalitarian) approach as they look at alternatives to the established system of imposed ideologies, and as they consider transformation and equality along real, democratic ideals. In *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now*? (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007), teachers are given practical evidence of critical pedagogy in real-life classrooms, as Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2007), Quintero (2007) and Grande (2007) share evidence of their encounters using critical agency. The episodes contained in the volume indicate the application, functioning and challenges of implementing criticality or the exercise of critical agency in practice. Critical theory, practice, agency and critical education as a research domain then becomes the resolute exploration of a distinct synthesis and collaboration of a critical educator and critical students combating hostile inequality, unfamiliar curricular content, indistinct educational outcomes, unrealistic aims, entrenched hegemony and sinister ideology (Freire, 1970). Given the internal conflicts within critical pedagogy, it continues to remain relevant as a theory and practice because, as a discourse, it opens itself up to criticism and revision for historical and contextual significance (Kincheloe, 2007). Furthermore, as long as there are marginal students within society, critical pedagogy will remain meaningful to communities invested in transformation (Kincheloe, 2007). As a philosophical construct of agency within the critical paradigm, there is as yet no clear indication that critical student agency has been conceptualised fully. Bussey (2008) treats agency from the perspective of a futures orientation to education in *Where next for pedagogy: Critical agency in educational futures*. Jackson (2003) argues from an identity-sensitive education viewpoint in *Education reform as if student agency mattered*: *Academic micro-cultures and student identity*. On the other hand, Scott (1985) studies agency through everyday forms of peasant resistance, and Apter (2007) addresses discourse and critical agency in Africa. However, there is not sufficient evidence or data to suggest that research on education and critical student agency (which includes, among others, critical pedagogy, critical theory, critical consciousness) has been carried out in working-class classrooms in South Africa. Since critical student agency itself has not even developed fully as a theory, this creates a vacuum (or conceptual gap) in which to explore critical educational dimensions by using critical theory to an extent and critical student agency to a greater extent as the theoretical and conceptual framework. While students themselves have in the past displayed critical agency, research has not fully captured or provided a strong understanding of how to use the best features of critical student agency in educational practice, curriculum design, teacher education programmes,

educational theory and educational policy fruitfully. The aim of this current study was therefore to establish critical student agency not just as an (unrecognised/misrecognised) practice or activity, but also as a theoretical exploration.

1.11   Justification for the research

The scope of scholarly research involved in understanding critical pedagogy is by no means elaborate. Some educators like Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2003); Antonacopoulou and Grey (2004) regard critical pedagogy with suspicion and scepticism, either because of a lack of understanding or because of inadequate exposure to the dimensions that this critical theory claims to support. Since its first appearance in the work of Freire (1970) in the 1970s, critical pedagogy has made incremental steps toward visibility, [specifically in North America through the work of Apple (2000); Ellsworth (1989); Giroux (1988); hooks (1994); Kanpol (1994); Kellner (2001); Kincheloe (2007a and 2007b); Kozol (1991); Lankshear (1993); Lather (2004); McLaren (2005); Shor (1993); Steinberg (2006); Wink (2005)] , where the majority of modern theorists reside and who have further defined and enhanced the theory as an alternative educational approach. While critical pedagogy was a feature in educational programmes in Latin America and Africa during the post-colonial period, it has had scant resurfacing in modern times. In South Africa particularly, it was instrumental in fuelling student resistance during the 1970s and 1980s, but it has been lying somewhat dormant since then, while social and historic conditions demand the return of such confrontation in defence of democracy, equality and human emancipation (Alexander, 2012).

Given the considerable respite in activity regarding critical pedagogy and critical consciousness (perhaps suggesting that democracy makes us believe we need less criticality), gaps have emerged in the literature, and this is especially evident in the South African context. The literature of the struggle for democratic education during the 1970s and 1980s may have been suppressed by the oppressive apartheid government, and these covert actions (the reading and teaching of critical theory and critical pedagogy) created a dearth in the archives of critical pedagogy in South Africa. It has been documented by Wieder (2003) that the Teachers' League of South Africa endeavoured to employ critical pedagogy with a focus on non-racialism in Cape Town schools and prisons, but no formal literature is available for academic scrutiny (Wieder, 2003). To elaborate on the work done by the Teachers' League of South Africa, Wieder (2003) prepared a work entitled *Voices from Cape Town classrooms: Oral histories of teachers who fought apartheid*, which I consider to be semi-autobiographical narratives of teachers' reflections on their lives during the turbulent years of apartheid and having less to do with

critical pedagogy per se, but more to do with liberation ideology and teachers' part in it all. This and other efforts to address critical pedagogy in South Africa, by Moloi *et al*. (2010), Cooper (2005), and McKinney (2005), among others, still do not make up for the deficit in authoritative voices to help understand and enumerate the manifestations of critical pedagogy in South Africa in a present-day context. In addition, the scholarly work of Bozalek (2011), Bozalek, Carolissen and Leibowitz (2013), Jansen (2009), Jansen and Weldon (2009), Carrim (2011), Naidoo (2013), Newfield (2011), Sonn and Annaleen (2011), Roodt and Stuurman (2011), Bray and Moses (2011), Linington*,* Excell and Murris (2011), and Allais (2003) contain theoretical threads and impulses in critical pedagogy, but were inappropriate to help answer my research question. At another level, as a body of evidence, these studies were also unhelpful because they set different research agendas and therefore proved to be contextually irrelevant to my purpose. However, contemporary displays of critical student agency, such as those documented by Philippi High School learners (Wilkinson, 2015) provide great promise that learner initiative – proactive, self-directed and self-organising learner agency – may fruitfully help inform an account of how learners themselves are contemplated as transformative agents.

1.12 The Philippi High School learners: A contemporary argument for critical learner agency

The Philippi High School learners feature in this vignette below to help set up the basis for the case studies I shall study in chapters 5 and 6 (see 5.7; 5.8; 5.9 and 5.10; and 6.4; 6.5 and 6.7). These case studies assisted me as the researcher in theorising the phenomenon of critical student agency by identifying the general themes that characterise critical student agency; and allowed me to access certain implicit dimensions of the phenomenon. Therefore, I began with an analysis of the experience of the Philippi High School learners, and progressed to synthesise the accounts through a critical discourse analysis of the educational, the philosophical and the political aspects that inform an account of critical student agency.

In 2015, Philippi High School learners contributed to a comment piece on their particular experience of schooling in South Africa to add to the general debate on the South African school system, which Roets (2015) estimates is characterised chiefly by 80% dysfunctionality at school level (Wilkinson, 2015). As a sign of agency, the students report:

> On the morning of March 6 2015, we, as the Philippi High pupils, decided that each pupil will go the Western Cape Department of Education (WCDE) for each of us to ask and get answers themselves (Philippi High School pupils, 2015).

The learners (who were not accompanied by adults) wanted answers from the provincial education department about the promise that their informal school facility (shipping containers) would be replaced with a permanent building. When they arrived at the WCDE they were asked to identify their leaders so that only a few representatives could address the district officials. They replied that they had no leaders and that they were not marching or protesting, but merely wanting answers to their questions. This resulted in the police physically assaulting the group (with stun grenades), leaving five badly injured students, and verbally abusing the group with racial insults.

The above incident reports on critical learner agency in the following ways: Firstly, learners sought to resolve their problems by being proactive and challenging an injustice through dialogue. Secondly, learners' self-organisation meant that no adult mediation (parents or teachers) was necessary to help them obtain the answers they sought. Thirdly, in confronting a further injustice, learners laid criminal charges of assault against their assailants. Fourthly, as a demonstration of equality of intelligence, they concluded that the district officials had no immediate plans to build a school. The incident related above thus provided indicators of critical agency in an instance where learners mobilised to defend their rights: their right to argue and deliberate (on the basis of educational equality), and their right to access a public building and discuss their discontent with officials in the hope of solving a problem. In so doing they opened up an argument about inequality and injustice that affected them as individuals as well as their community and which had wider social ramifications. Their mobilisation informed an account of a social whole where the learners were experienced as 'outsiders', yet they laid claim to their rights as part of a democracy. Because they were not financially well-resourced (shipping containers as a school), they indirectly challenged the capitalist underpinnings that supported a classist society. Nonetheless, they exercised superior intellectual and affective intelligence through civic participation (to address a social injustice) and depended on a set of ethics and values (respect and obedience of the law) to access their rights. Given the authenticity of this proactive, self-directed and self-organising display of student agency, room was created with an expectancy that I may be able to provide plausible answers to the research question based on this investigation.

Research methods and plan

This subsection provides details on the research design as it clarifies the problem statement and the chosen methodology; and it substantiates the suitability of the methodology for this study.

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1.13   Research design

The research genre or design type that was used in this study was foremost a philosophical design. Philosophical design is considered a broad approach to examining a research problem rather than a methodological design (McLaughlin, 2013). In this study, philosophical analysis was used to challenge certain educational assumptions in the context of marginal, working-class students and to explore these assumptions critically. To narrow the focus of a broad field of research further into a few selected research examples, this investigation followed the explanatory and descriptive case study design (McLaughlin, 2013). This type of research activity aims to observe and describe a particular phenomenon (in this case, critical student agency) in its real-life context. It also seeks to discover whether a particular theory of critical student agency applies to real-world classroom and civic encounters. In so doing, a clear understanding may be established of a complex issue through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of conditions and events and their interlocking relationships. Furthermore, the current study was based on abstract philosophical reasoning and argumentation that relate to practical activity in society (classrooms, communities, homes, student life), and which makes no claim to first-hand empirical evidence. However, textual information from previous case studies and policy documents formed the basis of the data types that were interpreted and analysed. Therefore, whereas in empirical studies, data types strive to identify and explain the relationship between variables, interpretive studies such as the current study focuses on meanings, perceptions, symbols and descriptions (McLaughlin, 2013). In addition, philosophical inquiry as an academic exercise, makes use of a range of "already existing information networks" (Floridi, 2011:2) without having to submit to the strict adherence to data collection strategies (see Becker, 2013; Botman, 2014; Bussey, 2008; Mathebula, 2009) via empirical and positivistic methods. Yet, problems typically identified in philosophical design are that the analysis can be seen as abstract (Burton, 2000; Maykut, 1994; McLaughlin, 2013) and that the writing may be dense and subject to jargon and excessive quotation and documentation (Burton, 2000; Maykut, 1994; McLaughlin, 2013). However, Spivak – whose writing has been labelled 'difficult', 'at an advanced level of abstraction' and 'inaccessible' (De Kock, 1991) and 'pretentiously opaque' (Brohi, 2014) offers certain objections to these 'problems'. Spivak defends her writing style by saying 'plain prose cheats' and 'clear thoughts hide' (De Kock, 1991). She also clarifies, 'when people demand simpler language, they often are demanding simpler thoughts' (Spivak, 2014, cited in Brohi, 2014). Thus to "theorise is an attempt to make visible a great deal' (De Kock, 1991), and an ethical appeal is made to the

reader to open discursive space for the writer to be heard (Kilburn, 1996). Therefore, the interpretivist research approach adopted in the study was used to re-examine case studies taken from lecture hall pedagogy and actual classroom encounters in schools to first of all make visible what critical pedagogy looks like in practice. Once a particular conception of critical pedagogy was made visible; participant thoughts and actions were analysed further to understand whether they could be categorised as critical agency. Operationally, this meant that five case studies were selected to investigate the phenomenon of critical pedagogy in teacher education programmes at university level to clarify how education policy (with an emphasis on critical pedagogy) was made visible in the practice of teaching. In addition, official policy documents concerning teacher training were studied to provide direction as to what elements of critical pedagogy are featured therein, so it might be inferred what perception policy designers have of a criticality that may be visible in teacher training programmes as well as teaching practice in school classrooms. And lastly, four case studies involving teaching and learning in a working-class context were isolated as qualitative, textual data to help clarify and identify the general themes of critical student agency.What follows in 1.13.1, is the research question or problem statement and unit of analysis that allowed the researcher to make inferences, and refine and redefine theoretical propositions that are stated.

1.13.1 Problem statement

The main problem addressed in this research was:

> *How might students utilise critical agency to mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to bring a measure of equality to a South Africa classroom, community and society?*

The unit of analysis, which was the selective focusing on two issues that were fundamental to understanding critical student agency, was:

- ways in which critical agency might manifest in working-class students' cognitive and affective functioning and intellectual ability, academic performance, and civic participation; and
- whether students could use critical agency to reveal the available gaps within the current hegemony (in education, culture, media, capitalism), which dominant ideology had not besieged.

For the purposes of this study, the indicators of critical agency were whether students in the case studies were able to identify the causes and effects of their realities at the time of the study, and whether they could devise strategies to transform certain realities positively. Further to this, the investigation sought to reveal whether critical agency was able to expose the character of the students in becoming critical thinkers who strove for personal freedom and equality as they were confronted with the stark reality of their lived experiences (specifically the causes and effects of their lives, and the possibility for change). The research procedure that was followed to study critical student agency in South African and internationally, was to source literature to determine the breadth of knowledge associated with critical student agency. Since critical student agency as a theoretical concept did not exist at this time, the researcher selected texts with regards to agency, and more specifically texts that could be mined to inform a theory of critical student agency. Of the broad literature studied, the data selection had to include texts that provided a particular experience of education in South Africa by looking at education policy; the experience of teacher education programs and lecturer experience of teaching within current (democratic) frameworks. The common themes that linked the data selected centred on the attempt to resolve the research question. Thus critical pedagogy functioned as the causal connection that would allow for a thorough study of the philosophical, educational and political aspects that the research question aimed to settle conclusively. Therefore, all texts selected as data provided insight into the experience of teaching and learning from the vantage point of students as well as teachers, and provided a glimpse of the theoretical and practical dimensions of critical pedagogy. The inclusion of critical pedagogy as a causal connector to critical student agency was based on policy imperatives that demand for critical pedagogy to be visible during teaching and learning; and also an inference that if critical pedagogy was visible, then general themes to identifying critical student agency might emerge when the researcher isolated critical (as in the theory of critical pedagogy) student behaviour.

Taken together, case study analyses provided an opportunity to exploit a multi-perspectival strategy to explore different educational and social theories and research methods to help establish meaning. In the current research study, multiple sources of evidence were used to allow the researcher to present the evidence, undertake an interpretation and engage in explanation building (Tellis, 1997). Therefore, the multiple triangulation case study methodology (Tellis, 1997) was used, since this methodology takes into account multiple research studies and multiple cases to help resolve a complex research question that involves multiple actors better. That being said, 1.12.2 expands on the methodological approaches of

this study, which can be considered loosely to be practical philosophy rooted within critical theory, using critical discourse analysis, which examined the processes of gaining, maintaining and circulating existing power relationships (Henning, 2004:104–109) and endeavours to equalise the control of power. Thus, in order to develop a particular understanding and theory of critical student agency, its possibilities, propositions, assertions and implications as an alternative educational practice in critical pedagogy, I turned to critical discourse analysis (CDA) [Capdevila, (2011); Fairclough, (1989) ; Kress and Hodge, (1979) ; Van Dijk, (2004) ; Wodak, (1989)] as an appropriate methodology in ideology criticism.

1.13.2 Methodology

Critical pedagogy (through critical theory) provides the theoretical basis that links CDA in a flexible, multidisciplinary research approach. Since both 'methods' (critical pedagogy does not technically define itself as a method because it cannot be replicated step by step) are influenced by critical theory, they are both invested in dealing with controversial social and educational issues. CDA, in turn, is a grammatical and textual analysis and literary criticism that strives to address social power abuse and dominance, and to resist inequality in text and talk (Van Dijk, 1983). CDA positions itself as a reaction to the social contradictions listed above, and understands the role of the researcher and research participant as being influenced by a particular social structure. Consequently, we cannot expect to encounter a value-free 'science', or value-neutral research finding or education. Thus, generally, with an emphasis on social interaction and by using CDA methodology, the researcher was inclined to focus on the social problems that had an effect on dominated groups. In this way, CDA helped the researcher in theory formation, and a description and explanation of the socio-political phenomenon and, as a result, allowed the researcher to mediate between text and society in the form of social action that problematised the use of power as control, especially control of public discourse and mind control. Of great import to the researcher was how in educational contexts the use of power as control is generally obscured purposefully (Foucault, 1980). Consequently, particular to the current research study, multiple research cases, as well as the relevant education policy documents, were sourced, interpreted and explained in order to find meaning behind how and why language and power are enacted, reproduced and resisted in social interaction. Practically, this meant that the data used to formulate a theory of critical student agency was selected from four studies conducted by Jansen (1999), Molteno (1987), Fataar and Du Plooy (2012), and Evans and Cleghorn (2012). These studies were selected according to pre-determined criteria established by the relevance to my research question based on working-class contexts, how

critical pedagogy featured therein, historical contextuality, and curriculum alliance. The study conducted by Jansen (1999), was significant because it presented an experience of education in a working-class context in a Grade 1 classroom in Kwa-Zulu Natal province with Outcomes-based education (OBE) using Curriculum 2005(C2005). In this way, the theory of critical pedagogy which is alluded to in official policy via OBE and C2005 may be demonstrated (or not) in actual classroom experiences. Similarly, Molteno (1987) provided a social, political and educational experience of working-class high school students during 1980 in the Cape Peninsula. The study helped to highlight the school, class and social experiences of students and teachers under apartheid and how these actors negotiated and re-arranged power within this context. Fataar and Du Plooy's (2012) study was meaningful as a data source because the participants navigate the issue of race within a school and classroom context. So, even while the study satisfied the general criteria for inclusion for analysis, it also provided unique perspectives as it dealt with the literacy practices of Grade 6 students in the Western Cape Province using OBE and C2005. And lastly, Evans and Cleghorn's (2012) study was selected because it provided insight into the classroom practice of foundation phase students, their teachers and teachers-in-training. The study took place in Gauteng Province, the teachers were guided by OBE and C2005, and the interesting facets of the study are how multi-literacies, the language issue, as well as race is experienced within daily authentic classroom experiences.

In addition to the classroom experiences of students in working-class communities, the policy documents that functioned as data sources were Outcomes-based education (OBE); Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS); National Curriculum Statement (NCS) ; Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) ; Christian National Education (CNE), and Fundamental Pedagogics (FP). These policy and curriculum documents formed the basis wherefrom the legitimacy of critical pedagogy could be argued in relation to official South African educational discourse. Furthermore, apartheid curriculum documents were used as the basis to illustrate the progressive educational turn the democratic government took in relation to education reform. The purpose of contrasting apartheid curriculum with a democracy-infused curriculum was to track the trajectory of how the adoption of certain curriculum positions influence ideology; teacher training programmes; lecture room pedagogy; and classroom practice to see how this relates directly to student agency.

Furthermore, policy documents regarding teacher preparation in South Africa contained relevant information on how curriculum policy and teacher professional standards are synchronised to the major themes in critical pedagogy. A study of these documents reinforce

pedagogical approaches that highlight critical pedagogy in both lecture hall and school classroom pedagogy. Therefore, these official documents set the expectation that if critical pedagogy is present in curriculum discourse as well the discourse on initial service training for teachers, it could be visible in school classroom teaching and learning. And if critical pedagogy could be visible in school classroom teaching and learning, observers might be able to see how critical student agency is incorporated or organised in pedagogical experiences. Ultimately, the CDA methodology provides opportunities for the close analysis of individual texts and helps make visible taken-for-granted assumptions; it facilitates a critical reading of what appears neutral; and it provides proper contextualisation of social relations by looking at indicators such as textual analysis, discursive analysis, social practice and historical analysis in a state of advanced capitalism seen as neo-liberalism (Sarup, 2012:165).

With the above understanding of the methodological approaches used in this study, I shall now try to defend the importance of interpretation as a research method, since the methodology relies on dialogue for uncovering subjugated knowledge, as it aims to link a special understanding of discourse to social criticism (Dash, 2005).

1.13.2.1 *Justification for the methodology*

This subsection substantiates the unconventional way that the researcher used interpretation of life experiences as text through CDA.

This particular qualitative research study falls within at least three research paradigms: the critical, the constructivist and the advocacy/pragmatist paradigms, all driven by interpretive methods of understanding social reality. Firstly, these paradigms and methods favour an interpretive perspective rather than an empirical (scientific) perspective. In the former instance - the interpretive perspective, the epistemological assumption is that, in place of truth (scientific perspective), understanding social reality is based on creating multiple realities and that there is a strong reliance on experience, thus we construct reality from experience (Floridi, 2011). Secondly, the ontological assumption is based on the contradiction between determinism and free will in human nature (Sarup, 2012), whereas in critical, constructivist, advocacy/pragmatist paradigms, support is given to action theory, which submits that the agent has the possibility to make and exercise choices (Floridi, 2011, Dewey, 1916). Lastly, the axiological assumptions are based on the paradox between objectivity (scientific perspective) and emancipation, where values and determining 'goodness' are the focus. The distinct difference between the interpretivist and empirical perspectives is that, while the former probes the various unexplored

dimensions of social reality and suggests theoretical propositions, the latter seeks to establish specific relationships between components (Dash, 2005; Sarup, 2012) to reach conclusions. The critical, constructivist, advocacy/pragmatist paradigms operate in two ways:

- they adopt a practical interest in understanding the meaning of a situation to generate hermeneutic and historical knowledge (Dash, 2005); and

- they lay hold of an emancipating interest centred on personal growth and advancement that generates critical knowledge and exposes conditions of constraint and domination (Dash, 2005).

Furthermore, interpretation as a research method suggests a critical reflection on the part of the researcher to present a certain reading or interpretation of a policy or a practice that makes a difference and improvement in educational settings (Smeyers, Bridges, Burbules & Griffiths, and 2015:2). Smeyers *et al*. (2015:35) see the work of the researcher as being engaged in a three-layer exercise of interpreting the world, the researcher's theoretical propositions, and the researcher's philosophical assumptions. Interpretation then becomes a method whereby the researcher mediates an understanding and uses specific tools such as text, speech, body language (for example, making sure the student is on task), gesture (facial expression), policy documents, theories and the effects of educational interventions to interpret meaning (Smeyers *et al*., 2015:40). Consequently, "interpretation is seen as a kind of argument that sheds light on the significance of something that is not immediately apparent", and asks the audience to consider things in a particular way by making connections and suggesting the implications thereof (Smeyers *et al*., 2015:40). In sum, the inquiry I propose above provides opportunities to see critical student agency through multiple lenses, and characterises this study as being driven by a comprehensive view of social phenomena, rather than by a conclusion (Dash, 2005; Smeyers *et al*., 2015).

1.13.3 Rationale

This particular research project was inspired by the instructional and learning episodes and routines found in the practice of critical pedagogy as it situates students from a specific demographic, proposes an educational intervention that possibly could transform the way they think and act, and that has a significant or positive effect in their lives. While critical pedagogy sets the foundation in critical theory (critical consciousness and critical thinking), it is debatable whether true displays of critical pedagogy may manifest in South African education. However,

it may be conceivable that a strain of critical student agency is made visible in spite of critical pedagogy.

The aims and objectives of this study as spelled out above were achieved by:

- describing whether critical agency could have a meaningful effect on students, teachers and the community, for example, whether critical agency would help develop a learner who is an individual and a critical thinker who strives for freedom and equality;

- representing the behaviour and attitudes of all participants displaying critical agency throughout the study;

- identifying the potential of critical student agency through its evident strengths and limitations;

- understanding how critical pedagogy (and by extension, critical student agency) is situated within a discourse of curriculum policy, teacher education policy and teacher development;

- contributing to the field of research in critical pedagogy and critical student agency as observed in South Africa, since limited research of this kind currently exists, or is not available for scrutiny. More directly, the narrow research that was available set different aims and objectives and studied dissimilar circumstances using critical pedagogy and agency; and

- investigating whether criticality in students could lead to the furtherance of democratic aims, which in turn could lead to greater social welfare and public good.

1.14   Philosophical and conceptual positioning of the study

In this subsection the researcher affirms herself as a learning being, in search of meaning through a better understanding her world.

1.14.1 Ontological and epistemological anchors

The philosophical positioning of this dissertation is related to the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions, premised along a continuum ranging from positivism to constructionism, with the latter appositely anchoring the study. Given an understanding of ontology as 'being', or more appropriately as 'becoming', the researcher (appreciating her subjectivity as a 'being in becoming') assumed an epistemological premise based on a view that there is no absolute truth and that facts are created or constructed (Thorpe, 1993). This positioning bypasses a purely positivist epistemology anchored in realism that supposes that

there is only one single truth and that facts exist to be revealed (Thorpe, 1993). It further disavows other notions of 'being' rooted in internal realism, where truth is understood to be obscure, implying that facts exist but are hard to uncover (Thorpe, 1993). It also rejects conceptions of 'being' defined by relativism, where there are many truths and these facts are entirely dependent on the view of the observer (Thorpe, 1993). While the last ontological position seems more tenable than the preceding two categories (realism and internal realism), and whereas the researcher was inclined to favour an understanding that facts are dependent on the view of the observer, it was difficult to reconcile the fact that there are many truths, since it would be debatable which truths get legitimised and which are de-legitimised. To elaborate further on the epistemological assumptions that repel a positivist view of reality and knowledge, Thorpe (1993) argues that the aim of constructionism is invention and that it takes criticism as its starting point, as the research design of constructionism is set in a method of engagement, using words and experiences as data types, while its analysis is in sense making and understanding. Ultimately, the outcomes of constructionism are expressed as insights and actions. By employing Thorpe's (1993) definition of constructionism, it was imagined that the position of the current study would be substantiated, regulated and organised in order for theory to be generated and formulated, as well as that evidence would be produced that hopefully could challenge the researcher's personal beliefs, the beliefs of a particular academic audience and society at large. However, the researcher also had to confront the unavoidable tensions that are associated with the qualitative research methodology in relation to the degree of objectivity and subjectivity toward which researchers are assumed to lean in their work, and how this related to the quality of the current study. Particular to this study was the added difficulty to avoid a gross idealisation of the empirical studies that were conducted by Jansen (1999), Molteno (1987), Fataar and Du Plooy (2012), and Evans and Cleghorn (2012). While these cases provided the textual evidence necessary to make theoretical propositions, it was understood in a Derridian (1976) sense that 'the authority of the text is always provisional' (Derrida, 1976: xix). Simply stated that means that I did not ascribe undue neutrality or objectivity to the original authors of the cases [Jansen (1999), Molteno (1987), Fataar and Du Plooy (2012), and Evans and Cleghorn (2012)], but understood the difference in habits of mind between themselves and I in our interpretation of the world; our philosophical assumptions and our theoretical statements. Whereas it is supposed that positivism renders the most reliable (objective) results, positivism still does not address the subjectivity of the researcher adequately to presuppose that a single or absolute truth can be objectively revealed. As Vasilachis de Gialdino (2009) reminds us, science is a social

construction dependent on the scientist's beliefs, values and attachment to abstract methods. Furthermore, qualitative research methods accommodate the uniqueness and flux of social reality in the context of daily practice (or lived experience) (De Certeau, 1984; Freire, 2005a). This is especially evident in the accumulation, reformulation, improvement and updating of theories in each paradigm associated with relevant social events, and ensures that knowledge and knowledge production may be appreciated in a variety of ways (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009:12–14). Consequently, a critical and philosophical attitude was maintained that understood the authority of the texts I had accumulated, reformulated, and updated were themselves provisional and inconclusive, resulting in my own connections and suggested implications to hold no ultimate truth value.

Furthermore, Floridi (2011:1) holds the same constructionist approach to philosophical and conceptual positioning as Thorpe (1993) and Vasilachis de Gialdino (2009) to help guide us towards resolving philosophical research questions. Floridi's (2011) view assisted the researcher in understanding herself as an "epistemic agent and a conceptual engineer, one who builds, models, constructs and produces knowledge to plug into already existing information networks that account for such knowledge" (Floridi, 2011:2). Floridi developed a notion that the researcher's epistemic expertise increases with the scope and depth of questions he or she is able to ask and answer (Floridi, 2011:2). In this way, "constructionism deprioritizes mimicry, and passive declarative knowledge; and favours creative, interactive knowledge" (Floridi, 2011:2). Subsequently, following the above theorists, researchers are positioned to shatter the mould that dictates that we can only rely on others to generate knowledge, and that we are passive information receivers and consumers of knowledge of the world and reality, by replacing it with an understanding that we are critical, proactive information producers ourselves (Floridi, 2011:5).

1.14.2 Philosophy of language: Clarification of key concepts driving the argument

Williams (1983) explains the importance of clarifying vocabulary in a particular discourse based on its historical and social significance. For him, it is inconceivable that, in a constantly changing and strange world, we presume to speak a common language when we have such obvious social differences (Williams, 1983:11). Williams drives his argument on the basis that the language we speak is nuanced with the values, energies and interests of each social group, and that the dominant groups in particular assume themselves to be the gatekeepers of what can be considered the 'correct' use. Following Williams, I have selected the words below to help

structure the discourse on critical student agency within a neo-liberal framework, because advanced capitalism affects society to the degree that it structures a certain set of behaviours (Becker, 2013). The words are what Williams (1983:12–13) calls "difficult words" because they are used in different senses to elucidate complex social relationships, make connections and offer criticism with the hope of understanding urgent contemporary problems. To clarify, this section is not a glossary and should not be treated as an academic subject. It is rather an attempt to understand the immediate world through a language of "strong, difficult and persuasive" (Williams, 1983:13) words that have slipped into general discussions without categorically exposing the true meanings, which are bound up with social problems, which these words should describe. Consequently, through the general acceptance of words we foreshorten the discussions, ideas, experiences and points of analysis necessary to problematise the practices, institutions and meanings conveyed through vocabulary in a particular culture (Williams, 1983:14–15). Williams therefore advocates the problematising of a specific active vocabulary and proposes the awakening to a consciousness that opens up new forms of thought and activity, and that unlocks the issues and problems in society (Williams, 1983:15). He suggests that words act as one of the elements of the problem of trying to overcome obscure meaning and social controversies and conflicts (Williams, 1983:16). In my dissertation, the relevance of this thinking is that words have a complexity of meanings and therefore are open to interpretations that ultimately have (hidden) social and political implications that affect human agency. Words are pregnant with the values and ideologies of a particular social group, yet users avoid the intellectual clarity of seeing the actual relationships and meanings of words. Instead of actively considering their effect and the way words should be transformed, we settle for the vulgar misunderstandings of intricate vocabulary because we have not conscientized ourselves to the origin and intent of their particular reference and perspective (Williams, 1983:20–23). With that said, the clarification of the words below forms concept webs that hopefully appropriate meanings, which support the argument of the dissertation, as the words involve ideas and values intimating meanings (thought, behaviour, action) and relationships are not to be seen as simple and final. Instead of over-simplification and finality, meanings should be contested and deliberately selected as an area of argumentation and concern (Williams, 1983:20–23).

1.14.3 Clarification of words

In this subsection, certain words that are used throughout the dissertation are highlighted so as bring about thematic cohesion through conceptual webs that exist both historically and in a contemporary sense.

1.14.3.1   Alienation

Schooling in capitalist society has the capacity to make marginal students feel estranged or make them beings for another (Freire, 2005a:49; Williams, 1983), or belonging to another person or place. Alienation can also be seen as a state, rather an action of being cut off. Marx (1889) suggests that the labour process produces programmatic and radical alienation, making humans estranged from their essential nature. In this sense, humans loses their own productive activity and are absorbed into an alienating society that psychologically causes the loss of connection with their deepest feelings and needs (Williams, 1983:33). An extension of this meaning points forward to how problematic and alienating under-resourced communities experience school, work and society because they lack capital. Freire (2005a:44–48) suggests that one way for students to overcome alienation is to build solidarity and to reclaim their humanity by exercising choice, by being actors rather than mere spectators, by being speakers rather than being silent, and by being creators and re-creators of knowledge so as to bring about social change.

1.14.3.2   Bureaucracy

The hierarchical structure of society (school or church administration, for example) promises order and the control of bodies through bureaucracy, where bureaucracy can be taken to mean the office of tyranny, rigidity and excessive power of public administration (Williams, 1983:49). Under capitalism, bureaucracy means types of centralised social power used in the efficiency of business methods and organisation (Williams, 1983). Yet, this concept violates public or civil service (such as teachers), which is premised on impartiality and selfless professionalism (Williams, 1983). However, under the problem-posing method of critical pedagogy, dominating and repressive bureaucracy could be replaced by student dialogue, in which students use speech as a precondition to reclaim their humanity (Freire, 2005a:135–139).

1.14.3.3   Capitalism

Capitalism is distinguished by the moneyed classes or capitalists, having labour at demand, a controlling intermediary between producers, and an owner of the means of production (Marx, 1967). In the late 19th century and early 20th century, Marx (1888; 1889; 1909) defined industrial capitalism as the basis for bourgeois society (those who could retire and live on invested income). The significance of this is that different stages of bourgeois society led to different stages of capitalist modes of economic production and thereby had an effect on social and cultural development (thought, feeling, ideology and art) (Williams, 1983:50). Furthermore, the problem with industrial capitalist society, as seen by Marcuse (1964:9), is that it seems capable of containing social change through the decline of pluralism and the ascendancy of domination and control (Marcuse (1964; 1967).

1.14.3.4   Career

The adaptation and extension of this word, which initially meant to gallop and career about on a racecourse, has been assimilated to mean progress and success in work (Williams, 1983). However, it bears vestiges of its original meaning in the sense that semi-skilled workers are considered to have a flat career trajectory, and 'careerism' is synonymous with the 'rat-race', in which only the fastest, smartest and most efficient progress (Williams, 1983). Student agency might be wholly circumscribed if all poor students are meant to become is labourers in a neo-liberal rat-race in which the wealthy outpace them (are the bosses and attain the highest positions, money and privilege) (Williams, 1983:52−53). However, from a totally different perspective, this word serves as the living embodiment of how capitalism has structured language and thought, where a word which meant gallop has a very general and neutral meaning: success in work. Nonetheless, it also offers hope that critically conscious students may see the beyond-capitalist vocabulary and create and recreate words for a completely new discourse of alternatives (see Santos, 2004:1−17).

1.14.3.5   Class

In the modern sense, social formations are organised into the lower, middle, upper and working class. According to Marx (1889) class, economic conditions of existence separate the ways of life, interests and culture of some classes from other classes and put classes in hostile opposition to one another. In this way, each class develops a specific class-consciousness, inviting struggle, conflict, legislation and bias to protect their interests (Williams, 1983:60). Wealth inequality

maintains these class stratifications; therefore, an active consciousness should be developed that is tuned to the causes and effects of this unequal system, and agency needs to be marshalled to challenge and transform this wrong (Giroux, 1983). Critical pedagogy describes the dominant class as hindering the affirmation of others as beings of decision (Freire, 2005a:155). Thus, Freire resonates with Marx (1889) above in the call for class-consciousness as a means to unite the oppressed (just as the elite have unity for self-preservation) (Freire, 2005a:100). Freire cautions that awareness and self-awareness are prerequisites for the type of cultural action agentic students might need to overcome their oppression. First, they would need an awareness of their oppression as individuals, and thereafter they would need to develop an awareness of their oppression as a class to be submersed in the reality of their circumstances in order to affect change (Freire, 2005a:174).

1.14.3.6   Community

A community comprises people positioned for direct action and local organisation (Williams, 1983). Unlike in other social organisation, which is centrally or bureaucratically controlled (the state, nation or society), greater agency can be exercised at the local level where citizens reside (Williams, 1983:74–75). A critical understanding of community is that cultural action (the action of critical agents) is a totalising process that demands interaction from other parts of the community, which means that not only the leaders participate (Freire, 2005a:143), but all parts of the community (Freire, 2005a). In this way, Freire (2005a:140) believes development is given to a consciousness of unity in diversification. However, as we shall discover later (see 6.2), it is precisely the 'unity in diversification' that problematises consensus democracy, according to Rancière (1999).

1.14.3.7   Consciousness

Consciousness refers to the systems, beliefs and modes of being that have a strong hold on our minds (Williams, 1983). To be conscious is to know or be aware of human actions, to be actively aware and reflective, thinking, self-aware (Williams, 1983). Consciousness or consciousness raising is essential in the discourse of critical pedagogy, in which agents contemplate the causes and effects of their lived dimensions with a view to transforming them (Freire, 2005a:145). Marcuse (1964:45) believes that, although advanced capitalism induces unconsciousness in us, it is consciousness that allows us to become capable of comprehending and realising the possibilities of self-determination.

1.14.3.8   Consensus

When one considers the meaning of **consensus**, such as in **consensus democracy**, the term refers to policies based on existing and agreed opinions; general agreement through the evasion of contentious issues that are excluded from political argumentation and/or the counting of opinions to 'secure the centre' (Williams, 1983). However, consensus seems improbable in stratified classist societies, separated by capital or moneyed interests that intersect culture, politics, religion and the economy (Williams, 1983:76). In this sense, it only seems profitable for political expediency and democratic deception.

1.14.3.9   Democracy

Democracy is a system of popular rule of the people, by the people and for the people (Rancière, 1999). It represents a government or administration in the hands of not a few, but many from the popular classes who have exclusive rights to rule (Rancière, 1999). Democracy becomes a theoretical abstraction and an empty virtue (Rancière, 1999:69) because the tautology that the 'superior' (best, rich) will prevail over the 'inferior' (less good, poor) has not yet been dismantled (Rancière, 1999). Freire (2005a:89) chimes in on this sentiment by pointing to the mockery of glorifying democracy while at the same time silencing the people.

1.14.3.10   Determinism vs agency and free will

Determinism assumes a pre-existing and external condition that fixes the course of a process or event that falls beyond human control (Marx, 1967). This external force is alien to the will and desire of the individuals caught up in it (Marx, 1967). Determinism therefore challenges notions of free will and agency as much as it contradicts Rancière's (1999) rationalising that there is no natural principle of domination, and that it is precisely because we possess equality of intelligence that inequality of opportunity has to be institutionalised to maintain the status quo (Rancière, 1999:69). Critical pedagogy, in turn, contradicts determinism with possibility, presenting critical agents with the choice to speak, act, create, recreate and change social situations (Freire, 2005a:26).

1.14.3.11   Elite

The elite are the elected or formally chosen, eminent persons in a process of distinction and discrimination by rank, order and class (Williams, 1983). The elites claim to act on behalf of a class and continue to rule by the regular recruitment and circulation of their class interests

(Williams, 1983). This encourages class struggle in an openly competitive society, where antagonistic class interests compete for political power (Williams, 1983:112–113). Freire (2005a:95) argues that the dominant elites utilise the concept of "banking" to encourage passivity and to submerge the consciousness of the non-elite, thereby ensuring that the latter remain a-historical beings with no capacity for critical decision-making.

1.14.3.12   Equality

To have equality proposes a state of being level, even and just in the social sense through a natural process of equalisation (equal human beings) and by the removal of inherited privileges (Williams). The early 19th-century economic inequalities made legal and political equality abstract by glossing over the inequality of opportunity and negating categories such as economically deprived and oppressed (Williams, 1983:117). Critical pedagogy sees equality as a neo-liberal myth, as much as neo-liberal ideology deposits myths such as a free society and the equality of all individuals when it is apparent that the worker is not equal to the boss, just as women are not considered equal to men (Freire, 2005a:137).

1.14.3.13   Experience

For this dissertation, experience was considered to be the knowledge gathered from past lessons and events that led to conscious observation or consideration and reflection (Freire, 2005a). The past therefore differs from the present, as the past is seen as lessons, whereas the present is seen as full and active awareness, meaning that it forms the basis for all subsequent reasoning and analysis (Williams, 1983). Experience acts as a system of beliefs and perceptions that provide proof of certain social conditions that do not explain themselves (Williams, 1983:116–117). According to emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 2005a:178), a true learning experience is to name the world through authentic lived experiences, which dispel romanticised versions of reality (Freire, 2005a:178). Thus critical pedagogy gives experience primacy, as experience becomes transformed into knowledge, and this new knowledge is used to create further knowledge, which has the potential for social transformation (Freire, 2005a:16).

1.14.3.14   Hegemonic (vs counter-hegemonic)

Hegemonic is derived from the word **hegemony**, which means 'leader or ruler with political predominance' (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci (1971) considers hegemony as the relations between social classes, where bourgeois hegemony establishes a specific way of seeing the world, human nature and social relationships. Marx (1967) calls hegemony a 'master principle'

because hegemony is not only intellectual, but also political facts involving institutions and individual consciousness. Hegemony thus predominates all active forms of experience and cultural factors (Williams, 1983:144).

1.14.3.15   Ideology

For its legitimacy, an ideology depends not only on an expression of ruling class interests, but also on its (ideological) acceptance as normal reality or common sense by subordinates (Williams, 1983:145). Critical pedagogy suggests that an ideology of oppression breeds an ideology of ignorance in those who are oppressed (Freire, 2005a: 70,134). It is then left up to the oppressed to draw thematic content from their lived experiences to develop action – action that involves their own values and ideology in order to deepen an understanding of themselves (Freire, 2005a:180).

1.14.3.16   Individuality

Individuality emphasises personal existence above place or function in a rigid hierarchical society, such as in advanced industrial societies (Marx, 1889). Marx (1889) considers the individual a social creation born into relationships and determined by such relationships (Williams, 1983:163). This is not to mean exclusively, as Freire (2005a:44) theorises, that the oppressed cannot break out of constraining and limiting situations and circumstances. But rather, it points to the way Marcuse (1964:11) characterises neo-liberal societies - as supressing individuality so as not to foment protest and dissent. Perhaps by this Marcuse (1964) means the suppression of individual consciousness that leads to self-awareness (Freire, 2005a:107). Here, individuality should not be confused with the term **individualism**, as seen in neo-liberal principles such as individual and private property rights, widespread competition and the evisceration of the 'public good'.

1.14.3.17   Intelligence

Intelligence is seen as the faculty of understanding, knowledge and information (Williams, 1983). Between the 17th and 19th centuries, it was assumed that the more or most intelligent should govern (Williams, 1983:169). Rancière (1991:38, 41, 45), for example, argues that we all have equality of intelligence as speaking beings, and precisely because of this, the elite classes impose false standards of inequality to justify their unmerited privileges and hierarchy in society. In addition, in an advanced technological society, intelligence is measured scientifically as the IQ (intelligence quotient) to help support theories that lower classes have

less intelligence (Willis, 1981, 1983) and are prone to socially deviant behaviours (Willis, 1981, 1983), whilst variables like environment are conveniently excluded from the analysis.

1.14.3.18   Intellectuals

Intellectuals are the direct producers of ideology and culture, legitimising the social function of the elites with specialised and directing kinds of knowledge to make judgments on general matters (Williams, 1983:169). Yet, critical pedagogy points out that intellectuals are usually alienated from the reality of the (common) people; thus, they produce a perverted kind of knowledge that does not account for the greater social reality (Freire, 2005a:120). While Marcuse (1964) accepts a position similar to that of Williams (1983) in his submission that "intellectuals help provide fixed, doctored, loaded meanings to words that are often repeated in general use and are thereby void of the cognitive value (read as consciousness), except the recognition of an unquestioned fact" (Marcuse, 1964:76).

1.14.3.19   Materialism

Materialism comprises attitudes and activities with no necessary scientific or philosophical connection, but being primarily concerned with the acquisition of things and money (Williams, 1983). As a prominent feature of capitalist society, the concept of materialism opens up a moral argument of how self-interest might be regulated for mutual benefit (Williams, 1983:197). Marcuse (1964:126) considers materialism as a negative word because the economically disadvantaged in society do not have certain material needs fulfilled, while the financially resourced have more than they need, and this even creates room for waste when equitable distribution might equalise the imbalance.

1.14.3.20   Praxis

Praxis is practice as action (Marx, 1909). For Marx (1909), praxis is practice informed by theory and theory informed by practice (Williams, 1983:317). Freire (2005a:139), on the other hand, avers that the oppressed and subjugated are presented a world of deceit designed to increase their alienation and passivity, instead of engaging in critical and transformative action. This way, the oppressed foreshorten opportunities to view the world as a problem in which they are equipped to present solutions (Freire, 2005a:139).

1.14.3.21   Socialism

Socialism is seen as the radical reform of the social order to develop and extend liberal values through political freedoms, ending privileges and formal inequalities, and social justice (Marx, 1967). Socialism opposes industrial capitalism (private ownership of the means of production) (Marx, 1967) and wage labour, which are considered the enemies of social forms such as cooperation and mutuality (Williams, 1983). Under this logic, real freedom cannot be achieved, inequality cannot be ended, and social justice cannot survive unless private property is replaced by social ownership and control (Williams, 1983:276).

1.14.3.22   Social status

Social status is used to indicate the position occupied by a person or family or group in a social system, which points to a hierarchical distribution in which a few occupy the highest positions, supporting a competitive model of society (Williams, 1983:300). This ideology supports a neo-liberal discourse predicated on Social Darwinism, according to which survival depends on the ability to access and increase capital and profits through any means available (competition, fraud, theft, exploitation) (Williams, 1983). Social status also helps solidify concepts such as winners and losers, heroes and villains, success and failure, where the positives are invariably linked to capital, and the negatives attached to the lack of capital (for example poor schools struggle in terms of student achievement, while affluent schools excel) (Van der Berg *et al.*,2011).

1.14.3.23   Subjugated, subjective

A person who is under the domination of a lord or sovereign, or even more graphically: someone thrown under the influence of another for them to work upon (Williams, 1983:308) is understood to be subjugated (Williams, 1983). Against this background, critical theorists like Freire (2005a) consider the social relationships of power and forms of power. Therefore, in the interests of counter-hegemony, critical theorists study categories such as subjugated knowledges in critical race theory, post-colonial theory and feminist theory in order to highlight the complexity of lived reality (Steinberg, 2006).

1.14.3.24   Theory

Theory is contrasted against practice, where the former is considered speculative, while practice is thought of as functional, practical action. Theory is further explained as hypothetical, the mental conception of an explanatory scheme of ideas (Williams, 1983:316).

1.14.3.25   Underprivileged

This is a euphemism for the poor, those lacking rights, the oppressed, those falling below an assumed level of social existence (Williams, 1983:324).

1.14.3.26   Working class

The working class is a group categorised under capitalist productive relations and control, the labourer, worker, paid employment, initially defined by work characterised by crushing pain and toil in agricultural activity (Williams, 1983:335).

In summary, the foregoing section 1.14.3.1 – 1.14.3.26 was necessary from the perspective that it was meant to raise the reader's consciousness in advance of some taken-for-granted meanings, nuances and relationships between words. Epistemologically, clarifying the key concepts of this dissertation draws attention to the relationship between language and reality. And, while conceptual versions of the words are essential for any scholarly treatment of them, the focus here was upon the associative meaning, vis. the affective, social and reflected meanings that the researcher imposed on them (Mastin, 2008). As a sign of agency, words are the tools speakers use as intentionality towards the world by expressing beliefs, fears, hopes and desires (Mastin, 2008). It was also interesting to see how particular understandings of words in a discourse point to the contradictions in capitalist society, such as career and unemployment, class and equality, community and individuality, underprivileged and materialism, and democracy and subjugated. At a deeper level, it also points to the contradictions within capitalist society at large, which require the efforts of critical actors to exploit and transform.

1.15   Ethical considerations

The fundamental principles guiding this research were honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness, the respect for intellectual property, confidentiality, responsible publication, social responsibility and non-discrimination (Resnik, 2011). Additionally, ethical norms that were observed were to:

- promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth and the avoidance of error by adhering to the prohibitions against fabrication, falsifying or misrepresenting research data;

- sponsor public accountability by not presenting any conflicts of interest;

- build public support for research through public trust and the quality and integrity of educational research (Resnik, 2011); and

- promote moral and social values, such as social responsibility, human rights and compliance with the law (Resnik, 2011).

1.16   Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to present an argument for how capitalist ideological hegemony contributes to educational and social inequality. I considered the ways in which schooling symbolically locks marginal students out of formal education through its neo-liberal aims and the curriculum. This foundation was necessary in order to situate a question about how working-class students might use critical student agency fruitfully to overcome the most destructive threats of capitalism, and to bring about qualitative change in their lives and in the wider social whole. When contemplating the opportunities that critical agentive students might employ in their defence against capitalist hegemony, I looked at Rancière's (1999) interpretation of Nicomachean ethics and other counter-hegemonic responses as possibilities. Specific to direct pedagogic approaches for schooling and education, I drew upon alternative teaching approaches, among which Freirean critical pedagogy (see 2.6; 2.12) was central to this dissertation. Within critical pedagogy, I isolated critical literacy and began meta-theorising on how critical student agency might serve as an avenue through which students could create the conditions for their own freedom, as well as opportunities to be their true selves (Marcuse, 1964:10). Lastly, I provided clarity on the philosophical and methodological justifications for critical pedagogy as a pedagogical approach; CDA as a methodological tool; and critical student agency as the theoretical construct in the current qualitative case study. Due to critical pedagogy being a lesser-known, and what some would term an academic 'outcast' in relation to educational interventions, what is reflected in the next chapter, is a review of the body of academic literature to build a defence for and strengthening of critical pedagogy by infusing it with a Rancièrean model of equality of intelligence as the basis for cultural action and social transformation.

Chapter 2

Legitimising critical pedagogy through critical student agency using a Rancièrean notion of equality of intelligence

2.1   Introduction

This chapter sets out to analyse the available literature that addresses the topics of ideological hegemony, resistance and human agency, and their interconnectedness, in order to defend the ideals of democracy. The parameters of the review will include the nature and function of hegemony and, more importantly, the possibilities for overcoming hegemony in pursuit of full democracy for all classes in society. The theoretical framework providing the boundaries for this review is to be found in the concept of **critical pedagogy** (see 1.8) with further reaches in critical thinking, critical agency and everyday forms of resistance.

Critical pedagogy on its own is still a somewhat marginal approach to transforming education, primarily because its detractors cite its inaccessibility as a result of abstractions and opaque language and practices. While these criticisms appear mainly from commentators outside of this discipline of study, all educational theories should be open to similar criticisms, since no single theory can assume to be a positivistic (absolute), uncontested or essential theory of education (Spivak, 1988:10). For the sake of greater conceptual clarity of critical pedagogy, I argue for the possible fusion of Rancièrean ideals in terms of equality of intelligence (Rancière, 1991), where Rancière proposes a robust criticism of Cartesian dualism. His investigation into the origin, continuation and subversion of the division between mental and manual labour led him to conclude that there is no justifiable hierarchy to maintain this division. While critical pedagogy provides a muscular theoretical framework in which to strive toward educational equality and emancipatory education for non-elite students (Freire, 2005a), its practical applications remain anaemic to the point that many pedagogues still ask, "How do we do critical pedagogy?" This fact may have less to do with a demand to become 'comprehensible', and perhaps has more to do with how certain theories, texts or stories gain their authority and legitimacy (Spivak, 1988:24). While critical pedagogy makes no positivistic truth claims about education and society, it makes a contribution to well-developed conceptualisations of an alternative pedagogy that takes democratic judgment, agency and emancipation seriously (Spivak, 2011). In the upcoming section, 2.2, I attempt to understand particular notions of agency as a construct of post-structuralist thought, and begin to think about how critical student agency might be enacted and liberated through educational practice.

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Conceptualising critical student agency within critical theory

2.2   Weapons of the weak: Resistance as a form of agency

Human agency can be demonstrated through many faculties. In this section, the focus will therefore be on how the power of the mind of non-dominant groups is given thorough analysis in a study of peasant resistance by Scott (1985:29). Scott (1985:34) argues that the intellectual sophistication evident in "everyday forms of resistance (foot dragging, false compliance, feigned ignorance, sabotage, character assassination, gestures and silences of contempt) [makes] a shambles of official policies and muddles the hierarchical structure of the community" (Scott, 1985:34). It is through quiet and anonymous acts of resistance that subjugated groups do not necessarily equate poverty with misery (since quiet resistance creates a fissure for subjugated groups to expect the charity of the affluent as a form of cultural decency), or equate inequality with polarisation (Scott, 1985:63). Scott draws the reader's attention to the role of human agency, which he believes is a huge error of omission in structuralist thought, since agency exploits the opportunities to confuse the homogeneity claimed by the established order (Scott, 1985:310–319). To this end, he invokes Brechtian forms of class struggle as the basis for the efficacy of the "Weapons of the Weak" (Scott, 1985:29), because these forms of struggle require little or no planning, they represent a form of self-help, and they avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or elite norms (Scott, 1985:291). In this form of resistance, even theft is seen as counter-hegemonic, since subaltern groups impose a compensatory tax on the affluent by appropriating what they feel they are entitled to. When the subordinate groups therefore fissure the dominant ideology, they exercise their autonomy to develop their own understandings and interpretations of society, and this is given expression in their dialects, thoughts and ideas, customs, moral principles, religion and politics. Scott (1985) concludes his analysis of the rupturing of hegemony by the underclass by considering an important fact – that hegemony always provides the ideas, means or symbolic tools of criticism. While hegemony advertises a meritocratic ethos, it instead delivers favouritism and unequal access to superior education; while it promises one man, one vote, it serves corporate interests and allows the media to help dictate election outcomes; while it sponsors a capitalist economic system based on free trade, this translates into recession and unemployment (Scott, 1985:339). This way, these very contradictions in hegemony allow non-dominant groups to betray or ignore the implicit promises of ideology. Consequently, it is within the space created by these contradictions that human agency sets to work in challenging meritocracy, favouritism, inequality, democracy and capitalism. The argument offered by Scott

(1985) pragmatically reveals how human and social agency navigates the complexity of understanding hegemony, by seizing the vacant spaces created by it and resisting hegemony. Based on this argument, it is hoped that students in marginal educational encounters may inadvertently already possess the agency to overcome the strictures of capitalist hegemony. The next question then is that, if non-dominant students already possess the habits of mind to overcome educational inequality, why it is not incorporated to their benefit in their everyday and academic encounters. The subsequent section, 2.3, will attempt to address the nature of the agentic force that might produce positive transformational experiences.

2.3   A discourse of critical agency in Africa

While I have attempted to illustrate the recourse to which non-dominant students might resort through agency, Apter (2007:6) warns that not all agency should be so exalted as to be powerful and oppositional. The special interest here is therefore to unlock the characteristics of human agency that illustrate ways in which to democratise everyday practices. Apter (2007:6–10) defines **agency** as the capacity for effective social action, which is transformative in capacity, context-dependent and historically situated, and it culminates in both intended and unintended consequences. By this it could be inferred that human agents have the capacity to fight for justice, that this justice could bring freedom from oppression (in a democracy) at a specific time and place, and that all of this action may or may not translate into equality. To bolster his claims, Apter (2007) relies on a textured ethnographic study of discourse and critical agency in Africa, which lays bare the important role language plays across the continent through the elaborate forms of oratory, the specialised roles it creates (for example the King's linguist [Apter, 2007]), and the indigenous theories that account for the power of speech (Apter, 2007: Introduction). In doing so, Apter's revelations confront the "tenacious negations that have attached themselves to the continent in the form of being labelled: not civilized, not human, not rational, not moral, not White, not healthy, not even historical" (2007:1). Here, the illustration is in the exercise of agency of Africans to challenge claims of inferiority and the injustice it necessitates when reduced to Western conceptions of ontology and epistemology.

In the Introduction to his book, Apter (2007) advances the concept of agency a bit further than Scott (1985:181), and provides a compelling defence by discussing the different categories (or degrees, as he calls them) of agency, such as oppositional agency, agency of intentions, agency of projects, purposes and desires, complex and ambiguous agency and, lastly, secret agency or deep agency (dealing with sorcery and divination). His investigation thus sets out to sketch a

structural framework of power and authority to illuminate the dialectics of socio-political agency in practice (Apter, 2007:4). Notwithstanding that Scott (1985) and Apter (2007) provide strong arguments in relation to the various forms of oppositional agency that benefit the marginal and oppressed, yet a knowledge gap still exists as to how students historically and contextually fit into this particular discourse.

Still within a historical positioning of agency, colonialism strove to eradicate African "deep [hidden, powerful, protected] knowledge" (Apter, 2007:25), which is activated through ritual, as Apter (2007) contends, "the critical power of indigenous cosmologies should not be dismissed since they transcend space, time, agency, and gender; and begin with the form of knowledge that makes ritual powerful" (Apter, 2007:25). To Apter (2007), human agency is revealed in the ways that priests, priestesses, diviners and herbalists are initiated into the secrets of their work and trained for years in esoteric techniques. This way, they can detect witches, cure infertility, recall the past, influence the future and empower chiefs and kings (Apter, 2007:25). Through their agency (practices), hegemony is unmade and remade, the status quo is reversed and transformed, creating the conditions for political transformations (Apter, 2007:26). Similarly, Southern Bantu panegyric revealed human agency through praise poets when their statements criticised the very object of their praise (the king or chief) (Apter, 2007:32). This act illustrates the agency of the tribal poet to tell the community the truth as he/she sees it, and provides the license to ridicule and criticise with impunity (Opland, 1983:66–68).

However, the warning Apter (2007) gives to Africans is the need to overcome the colonial invention of Africa and recuperate the African personality and consciencism (Nkrumah, 1970:89–113) through studies of decolonising agency by way of resistance in poetic and prophetic voices of self-expression, and empowerment in ritual and armed struggle (Apter, 2007:101). In the light of the global expansion of capitalism, nationalism may be considered arbitrary or new global relations may redefine national identities, although social transformations, such as globalisation, also raise profound questions regarding post-colonial identities who have not yet recovered their pre-colonial national identities. According to Memmi (1965:3), the colonial relationship (although a historic reality) still affects almost every aspect of colonised life and personality: her (the colonial subject's) thoughts, passions, and conduct, as well as the conduct of others. To safeguard against oversimplification of the conduct of the colonised, Memmi however cautions that, since we do not actually know what man is, and what is essential to him, we cannot reduce human conduct to a single theory that explains

all feeling, experience and suffering (Memmi, 1965:9).Then again, it is also unmistakeable that colonisation acts in the mental sphere of its subjects (mind structure, mode of operation and contents) and is quite formidable, in that colonisation may cease but the colonised mind still persists through social systems such as the family, traditions, cultural practices, religion, science, language, fashion, ideology, political regimentation, the media and education (Dascal, 2006). Thus, the transmission of mental habits (Dascal, 2006) as stated above, entrenches certain beliefs, and these become persuasive enough to the point that the colonised adopts the coloniser's principles (Dascal, 2006). The implications of decolonisation theory within an education perspective mean that political decolonisation does not automatically translate into cognitive decolonisation (Dascal, 2006). Furthermore, the extensive reach of the colonising structure has a degree of permanence, attaching cognitive models (through epistemic authority) of being and identity to generations that succeed it (Dascal, 2006). This way, Dascal theorises that preservation of the colonised identity expels and obliterates the authentic and original identity of the colonised (Dascal, 2006). In addition, colonisation functions as most oppressive structures do:

- it is characterised by a relationship of dependence (Memmi, 1957:ix);
- it seems impenetrable since it is not easy to escape the concrete situation and ideology (Memmi, 1957:20);
- it presents a distorted picture of reality; and
- it induces cognitive models in its subjects, which equate changing their situations through imitation and assimilation of colonial culture (hoping for corresponding privileges) (Memmi, 1957:120).

But Spivak rescues an account of decolonising agency that becomes relevant to critical student agency in educational spaces when she speaks of the possibility of action in deconstruction and disruption (Spivak, 1988:5). Spivak defines critical agency as the breaking off of the oppressive dynamics in the socius (colonisation, apartheid, capitalism) and relinking it with the agency of change located in the subaltern (Spivak, 1988:3–5). Notwithstanding the power of deconstruction available to the subaltern (marginalising, oppressing, subjugating), any theory of change and crisis should forcefully avoid what Spivak terms a "vulgar Marxist glorification of the peasant" (subaltern, marginal, oppressed, subjugated) (Spivak, 1988:6). In her view, "the weapons of the weak" (Scott, 1985), or deconstruction becomes formidable when the subjugated operate from within the oppressive system, and subversively use the strategic and economic resources made available to them from the said system (Spivak, 1988:8). Following

Spivak (1988), it is unhelpful to invest subaltern cognitive abilities and consciousness (turned toward social transformation) prematurely with power it may not yet possess (Spivak, 1988:6). Thus, teaching viewed as an activism, focused on subverting hegemonic discourses, may be more helpful in prompting change in what may be termed the "colonized mind" (Dascal, 2006; Memmi, 1957), which leads to sufficient and more enduring social transformation (Spivak, 1988:6; 2011:16). This way, decolonising agency can be seen as continuous with critical student agency, since subaltern students have to overcome mind colonisation literally and metaphorically at the same time as they strive to overcome the social hardships (economic, political and cultural) attendant with inequitable capitalist societies. However, very few tight conceptual links have been made with regard to decolonising agency and student agency recently, because present-day students may (erroneously) be seen to be unaffected by colonisation and its material and ideological residue.

So far, I have attempted to address the question of how non-elite South African students (as human agents) might reveal to us a deep knowledge of lived reality that is empowering to the point of shattering colonialist, imperialist and capitalist hegemony to reclaim their democratic rights in a contemporary reality. However, following Spivak's (2011) views on how we shape individual reality and define our needs, we could just as easily call colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, class, race and hegemony artificial constructs in as they do not contain meaning in themselves. Since these concepts are not part of the natural world, they are social constructs (Spivak, 2011) and hence subject to human agents in terms of interpretation, assimilation and resistance (Apter, 2007; Scott, 1985). The critical question, with great educational intent, is how especially marginal agentic students, might shatter historically socially constructed definitions of their reality (because in a sense they may be present-day victims of a social system they did not design) to fight for a measure of equality. This very question helps set the stage to interrogate the premise of democracy and its promise of equality, which will be the topic developed in 2.4.

2.4   Paradoxes: Problematising democracy while positioning critical pedagogy

The above-mentioned (see Spivak [2011] in 2.3) socially constructed world provides much promise for transcendence, with globalisation being illustrative of a form of social transformation (Rizvi, 2008). Yet, transitions also call for interrogation of older social concepts and categories that are continuously evolving (Sarup, 2012). One such concept is democracy, as seen in the light of communitarian (which will be briefly discussed in section 2.5) and liberal

positions, which is uncoupled from the tensions and paradoxes inherent in democracy, such as liberty, equality and anarchy as practices of democracy (Barber, 2003:xi). The question however remains as to which strand of democracy future generations will inherit. Will social transformation demand a more deliberate form of participatory democracy, or will we continue to be content with the inadequate tradition of representative democracy? Barber (2003: xi) contends that the neo-liberal ideology of privatisation and an assault on the public sphere has heralded the end of democracy as (a) public good(s) and ushered in the advent of "thin democracy". He believes that this marks the end of progressive "strong democracy", in which people would pool their resources and find the common will to undertake common tasks (Barber, 2003:x). In such an environment, new forms of liberty and tyranny emerge that are characterised by the marketisation of politics and the privatisation of the economy, which in turn marginalise opportunities for public good or common tasks (Barber, 2003:xviii). The danger lurking within "thin democracy" (Barber, 2003:xvii) exists on account of representative (government) bodies no longer having the power and authority to make decisions on behalf of the voters as they "outsource" their responsibilities, trivialise democracy and abuse civic deliberation (Barber, 2003:xvii). It would seem that human agency is the cornerstone in a strong democracy, since it demands civic engagement and citizen participation to thicken thin democracy. But in order for the fruits of the democracy, viz. autonomy, freedom and justice, to be actualised, a well-informed citizenry is required who are enlightened enough to exercise discretion as a form of agency (Barber, 2003: xvii).

While I tried to hint that the virtues of liberty and equality promised by democracy have still not materialised for non-elite students, the residual question pertains to how realistic it is to expect subordinate students to become informed and exercise discretion in conditions where schools are seen to reproduce and maintain the status quo. Could we follow the belief and some evidence that critical pedagogy can infiltrate normative education to empower marginal students? In this section, I will articulate the origins and development of critical pedagogy as a philosophical theory and counter-hegemonic educational intervention that was considered to make the critical agents more strident in the demand for equality. To begin with, critical pedagogy was conceived of by Freire (1970), who proposed the theory in the political and social climate of the 1960s and 1970s. This historical period was characterised by social movements concerned with transformation, liberation from colonialism, civil rights, women's rights, gay rights, environmental issues, and anti-war movements. It is against this backdrop that Freire suggests critical pedagogy, as a process through education, to address social problems as a

means through which society could be transformed along inclusive or participatory, democratic lines (Freire, 2005a:12, 15, 24). Using critical pedagogy, Freire (1970) worked with illiterate and disenfranchised adults to allow them the ability to interpret their lived reality, reflect upon it, act upon it, and ultimately to change it. This sequence of action, reflection, action is what Freire termed the "praxis" (Freire, 2005a:79) which is necessary to transform undesirable elements brought about by irrational, illogical and unexamined living (Paul, 1983:23). The promise of critical pedagogy lies in its supposed capacity for self-criticism, or the notion that everything is up for questioning within critical pedagogy (Kellner, 2001). In marked contrast to ideology, which is not easy to displace and which seeks preservation, critical pedagogy is allegedly able to trace its origins and limits and, in so doing, invite new ways of thinking through plurality, tolerance and respect (Giroux 1983). It is with this in mind that Giroux (1983:88) advocates that the critical aspects of critical pedagogy allow for the reconstruction of schooling toward a more democratic culture that promotes radical democracy, rather than its current repressive function under capitalism. Here, radical democracy means radical social transformation by promoting new understandings of culture, cultural politics and pedagogy (Kellner, 2001: xxiv).

Giroux's particular position within critical pedagogy during the decades spanning the 1970s and 1980s was to highlight the role of critical pedagogy in terms of educational reform, and the transformation of education to promote radical democracy (Kellner, 2001:7). He admittedly recast his theoretical and political approaches between 1990 and 2000 in order to address what he saw as the nexus between cultural studies and pedagogy, as well as the importance of literacy (Kellner, 2001:17). While Marx (1967) did not conceive of critical pedagogy as a concept, it could be argued that, through the theory of material historicity, he provided the foundation for Freire to envision alternatives to capitalist hegemony in an era of post-structuralism and postmodernism, and to carve out horizons in a post-colonial, anti-racist, feminist landscape (although he initially was not gender-sensitive [hooks, 1994). It is within this critical landscape that Giroux (1983) identifies the youth as complex sites of hope and possibility, as well as domination and exploitation, and encourages critical pedagogues to conceptualise youth as a contested terrain between two spheres: oppression and struggle (Giroux, 1983). There is thus consensus between Giroux and Freire (Freire, 2005b:52) that teachers take up a position as cultural workers who provide the theory, language and skills to dissect the dominant culture and construct a more democratic culture. In short, critical pedagogy has been involved in an almost six decade-long (1960s–2016) fight for legitimacy, authority and respect as a theoretical

and empirical counter-hegemonic approach to reform education and transform it more equitably (Freire 1970, 2005a, 2005b). The struggle for authenticity and value in critical pedagogy has however produced more questions than answers (resulting in knowledge gaps regarding conceptualisation and implementation), and this is especially true for South Africa, as we shall see in 2.5.

2.5 Locating Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed in post-colonial Africa

Regarding Freire's (1995) work on the African continent, he physically did work in some parts of post-colonial Africa, viz. Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome, Angola and Mozambique. It was therefore no surprise that his ideas would light a spark in oppressive, segregated South Africa, as critical pedagogy was advocated by and advanced through the work of the Teachers' League of South Africa (Weider, 2003). The Teachers' League of South Africa employed the central features of critical pedagogy as a means to undercut apartheid ideology in Cape Town schools and prisons (Weider, 2003:6−11). These covert collaborations of teachers were engineered to undermine the ferocious attempts by government to subject and oppress citizen students inhumanely via a racist curriculum (Weider, 2003). In a backlash, these radical teachers used an intensely critical examination of the oppressive state apparatus, and these initiatives helped to ignite the student protests that erupted in the Soweto student uprising of 1976 (Alexander, 2012:1−23), when students openly defied the unfair state expectation of instruction in Afrikaans (a language appropriated and spoken by Afrikaners, but not the language of the majority of the black citizens). The argument thus far was intended to provide a historical account of critical pedagogy, and will further explore how the youth might navigate the contested terrain of struggle and oppression, and the question whether critical thinking is authoritative enough to help steer them to greater equality.

As illustrated with reference to Freire (2005b) and the Teachers' League of South Africa in section 1.11, one of the ways to scrutinise the dominant culture is to incorporate the process of critical thinking, which is defined by Lipman (1988:1−12) as thinking that preserves and refines meaning in four ways:

- critical thinking facilitates judgment;
- it relies on criteria;
- critical thinking is self-correcting; and,
- it is sensitive to context.

But how does critical thinking manifest itself? McPeck (1983:154−157) says that critical thinking distinguishes itself by the fact that students not only know the facts in a given field, but also have a deep understanding of why they came to be regarded as such, and therefore they are empowered to make the judgments required of critical thinkers. Bailin and Siegel (2007:43) regard these to be the values that propel critical thinking, viz. intellectual honesty, justice to evidence, sympathetic and impartial consideration of interests, objectivity and impartiality. Bailin and Siegel (2007) also advance a notion of critical thinking as being a complex business that seeks to foster a host of attitudes, emotions, dispositions, habits and character traits, and reasoning skills in students (Bailin and Siegel, 2007:77−94). Critical thinking embedded within critical pedagogy seems to suggest itself as an alternative way of thinking, grasping, acting, feeling and being to both students and teachers who are concerned with distributive justice (Kincheloe, 2007) and who are keen to operate as social activists. The impetus of critical pedagogy is dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering, and critical agents such as teachers and students seek out the causes of such suffering with the understanding that these are humanly constructed and do not have to exist (Kincheloe, 2007:11). Kincheloe's voice in critical pedagogy is significant for the fact that, although he is a White male, English-speaking, Protestant and able-bodied, he occupies the space of the 'other' (hooks, 1994). This position can be ascribed to the fact that he grew up in an economically disadvantaged community in the Appalachian Mountains, rather than in the typical suburban upper-class family that represents Western cultural hegemony. Kincheloe situates his voice among the disenfranchised and highlights the importance of understanding student context (Kincheloe, 2007a; Kincheloe and Steinberg (1996). Kincheloe and Steinberg (1996:32) state that student difficulties are not simply the result of cognitive inadequacy, but may also emanate from socially contextual factors. They propose that each learning and teaching context has its own unique dimension that must be dealt with individually. As a practical exercise in critical pedagogy, teachers could build concrete conceptual bridges between abstract knowledge and student lives (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1996). For example, student learning may be directly linked to their immediate environment, where a group contemplates the effects of their contemporary political context, shaped by corporations and economic interests, with a view to transform unequal contexts environments (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1996). In so doing, they will fashion deep relationships with local communities, community organisers and concerned citizens, proving to students that learning does not only take place in the classroom, but also in the world at large and in community learning environments (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1996:33). Although the methodological diversity of critical pedagogy continues to attract negative attention, Kincheloe

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and McLaren (2005:255) describe that one of the merits of critical pedagogy is based on its elasticity, as it is constantly changing and evolving in the light of new theoretical insights and new problems and social circumstances. The inference here is that the work of critical pedagogues can never be concluded, since they are always in search of new forms of understanding power and oppression, and the way these shape human life (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005:55). From this understanding, critical agents could develop the necessary knowledge to propose alternatives to the oppression and suffering of subjugated people. This does not mean that there are no constraints, challenges and limitations imposed on critical agents. Self-reflective practice is particularly necessary in the case of teachers as researchers, who are called on to provide more complex and textured self-conscious forms of research as opposed to data driven ones (see section 2.8), or sense data derived from pure observation (Freire, 2005a:12). Teachers therefore occupy a space between personal and professional introspection, and simultaneously take up a position of outward projection in educating their students (Freire, 2005a). McLaren (2005:281) however warns that researchers should avoid the kind of theoretical elitism that denies common sense and experiential knowledge; in its stead, teachers as researchers need to provoke students to create coherence between the discourse and practice of critical pedagogy. The discourse of critical pedagogy has been described as the kind that defends the weak, poor, homeless and have-nots in society; and to be useful, needs to be wedded to a practice that seeks practical solutions to social problems (Freire, 1998:7). Thus, critical pedagogy helps to bring the concept of critical student agency into focus by allowing students the space to study: their subjectivity; the nature of their situations; who they are; who they want to become; and develop the language to articulate personal meaning for the purpose of self-and societal transformation.This argument therefore calls to mind the efforts of Julius Nyerere, the post-colonial president of Tanzania, with regard to "African socialism" (Fatton, 1985). The concept of African socialism as interpreted by Fatton (1985) is a contemporary approach to political, economic and cultural development, which is dependent on the modernisation, reactivation, rehabilitation and recuperation of pre-colonial communalism, which was based on classlessness and conflict-resolving communal relations (Fatton, 1985). These pre-colonial socio-economic arrangements were based on a communal form of socialism, which articulated a sense of mutual respect between all members of the community who had the obligation to work and share their property and production (Fatton, 1985). Of course, in the true spirit of critical pedagogy, which problematises (i.e. renders something problematic, thus seeks a solution to resolving it (Freire, 2005a) things considered fact, this form of government was not perfect as it did not adequately address the issues of sexism and material scarcity

(Fatton, 1985). However, in its theoretical origins African socialism presented an alternative to the capitalist motivations of property and production. Nyerere (1968) wrote extensively on his belief in socialism as a way of ensuring equality, fairness and the just distribution of wealth in society (Neyere, 1968). Nyerere's theorising warrants this extensive quotation to do justice to his thinking:

> Socialist doctrine then demands the deliberate organization of society in such a manner that it is impossible – or at least very difficult – for individual desires to be pursued at the cost of other people, or for individual strength to be used for the exploitation of others (Nyerere, 1968:340).

And, although many critical education theorists favour socialist undertones in their work, the practical challenges in implementing equality, fairness and the just distribution of wealth within a neo-liberal educational framework creates spaces (knowledge gaps) for further theorising and sustained concrete efforts in making democratic socialism a material reality.

2.6   Imagining social emancipation by contemplating alternatives to neo-liberal logic

The sentiments of non-exploitation and equality resonate with the criticism Santos (2004:9–33) levels against capitalist modes of structuring society that are in direct violation of democracy, freedom and equality. Santos (2004) proposes the 'reinvention of social emancipation' by offering alternatives to neo-liberal globalisation and global capital (Santos, 2004). Counter-hegemonic globalisation could be constituted by themes such as participatory democracy, alternative productive systems, multiculturalism, collective rights and cultural citizenship, alternatives to intellectual and property rights, as well as capitalist biodiversity (such as cloning) and, lastly, new labour internationalism (Santos, 2004:1–2). Santos (2004:3) draws on Leibniz (1985) and calls for the eradication of lazy reason and the adoption of cosmopolitan reason. Santos' justification for criticism of lazy reason is based on the fact that much of social experience in the world is considerably wider and more varied than what Western scientific or philosophical tradition knows and considers. Santos (2004:3–33) believes that this social wealth is being wasted, as there are no formidable alternatives to "Westernism". He suggests a fight against this waste of experience that renders visible initiatives, births alternative movements and gives credibility to the experience of the "other" (Santos, 2004:2). The insidious nature of Western thought and knowledge is based on its system of reasoning, which does not explain itself (Santos, 2004:11). Instead, it imposes itself through productive and legislative thought, and becomes all-encompassing with its claims to be exclusive, complete

and universal with no admittance to the value of non-Western knowledge systems (Santos, 2004:11). Critical pedagogy stands as a bulwark against Western hegemony as it seeks crevices in which to explore and research subjugated and indigenous knowledge systems in order to incorporate them into and enhance education (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). The implication here is that different research methodologies need to be constructed to meet the demands of new knowledge systems, new understandings and new reasoning. The subjective methodologies of Western tradition need to be substituted for meaningful multidimensional, multi-methodological approaches (Schon, 1995:68). This critical and counter-hegemonic thrust is in harmony with the concept put forward by Horkheimer (1974) and Adorno (1973), called 'immanence', which, simply stated, is the examination of what is in relation to what should be (Horkheimer, 1974; Adorno, 1973). The practical dimensions of this concept were investigated by a teacher of young children who explored critical pedagogy from the lens of the children's lived encounters and experiences. Quintero (2007:207) illustrated the effect of personal storytelling, of play-immersed literature, and how art can equip teachers with perspectives on what is and what could be. Quintero's students used critical literacy as a process of constructing and critically using language as a means of expression, interpretation and transformation (Quintero, 2007). Some of the activities in which students were engaged were inventing stories, painting, writing a text, drawing, extending information from a film, video or game, arguing, and asking questions about the information supplied (Quintero, 2007). Of particular interest here is that these critical encounters were awoken and stirred at a formative stage of human development, which may entice these young students to have a true appreciation for what could be, rather than the coercion and indoctrination of normative, non-critical educational episodes. Furthermore, the treasures hidden in student narratives could possibly present us with testimony of their realities and an opportunity for analysis in order to deepen our perspectives and enhance our pedagogy (Rafferty, 2011). As we reflect and imagine how things could be different by reading and understanding their world, we may inadvertently gain access and insight into how they perceive the world in which they live, constructed by others (Freire & Macedo, 1987:136–140), and how they might 'write' or 'rewrite' themselves in it. More profoundly, if students reconnect with their true selves, rather than the selves inscribed by the dominant culture and ruling classes, potential, which might exist in them to reveal how to improve education and deepen democratic practice as they strive for greater equality. In sum, thus far, I have attempted to illustrate how critical pedagogy has had an effect on teaching through cultural and social consciousness, but further understanding of the concept is still necessary to uncover

how agentic students might fuse theoretical and practical knowledge in a participatory and emancipatory democracy.

While I have devoted considerable time to a general exposition of critical pedagogy, it would be grossly irresponsible to neglect to mention the dilemmas inherent within critical pedagogy. How true is it that critical pedagogy is ever evolving due to the acceleration of change and the expansion of power? The question is whether it possess the imaginative, intellectual and pragmatic authority to free us from ideological hegemony (Kincheloe, 2007:19)? As Huerta-Charles (2007:249–263) reflects on the pedagogy of critical pedagogy, we are given the perspectives of in-service teachers' impressions of the concept. Initially, due to the analytical nature of the concepts, many teachers had difficulty understanding the main concepts of critical pedagogy (Huerta-Charles, 2007). For these teachers, critical pedagogy was disconnected from and alien to their everyday practices. Instead of being thoughtful practitioners, the teachers had become mere functionaries, implementing the policies and procedures of far-removed and unaffected school bureaucracies (Huerta-Charles, 2007). Thus, their perception was that critical pedagogy would become another subject they would 'have to teach' (in their classrooms). Since the nature of critical pedagogy does not accommodate the modelling of procedure as in other educational methodologies, teachers could not conceive what it looked like in action and had no closure on the types of activities it facilitated, so they adopted a sense that "anything goes" (Huerta-Charles, 2007:252). The student teachers did not develop enough insight and sophistication to think critically and problematise their misconceptions, which could also mean that they failed to apply conscientisation (or consciousness raising and awareness), which is a key feature of critical pedagogy. In addition, the unfamiliarity, newness and complexity of critical pedagogy makes demands of teachers that fall outside of the bureaucratic accountability and assessment agendas of modern education (under neo-liberalism). So, as much as criticism of critical pedagogy may be external, self-critical pedagogues and critical theorists, such as Apple (cited in McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007:252), declare that the discourse of critical pedagogy has become theoretical and abstract, far removed from the conflicts and struggles that teachers, students and activists act on. However, it could be that precisely because critical pedagogy has not been admitted as a 'mainstream' educational philosophy, that administrators, teachers, parents and students do not take its propositions seriously and it will therefore continue in obscurity.

On the other hand, to entrench the values embedded in critical pedagogy and to make them more practical and less opaque to students, an approach such as compassionate imagining

(Waghid, 2004:38–45) could possibly be considered. Here, 'compassionate imagining' means an exploration of intellectual emotions in ethical deliberation with an explicit view to cultivate compassion (Waghid, 2004). Not only could this approach succeed as being personable and intimate, but it would also empower students and teachers through questioning meanings, imagining alternative possibilities, modifying practical judgments, and fostering respect and critical engagement (Waghid, 2004:43). In contrast to the view that professors or teachers are the custodians of knowledge, compassionate deliberation could marshal in the true power-sharing capacity emblematic of democratic education through active debate and argumentation, rather than the dull memorisation of facts on the part of students (Waghid, 2004). Further to this, the supremacy of this approach to alternative imaginings and student activism has been reinforced by the encouragement of graduating teachers to spend a month teaching in challenging, real-life situations (Waghid, 2004). These encounters could range from severe socio-economic deprivation to war-torn civil societies or struggling post-colonial environments, which would force these teachers to engage critically with the material circumstances and, even more importantly, with themselves as agents of transformation in defence of democracy and humanity. It would be remiss for us not to delve into the romanticism suggested when mention is made of power sharing between teacher (or professor) and learner or student, as this questions the assumption of student agentic force.

Education as a political act

2.7   Teachers as organic intellectuals and cultural workers

The question remains whether there could reasonably be equality of voice in learner–teacher interactions, or whether teachers invariably suffocate learner voice (Waghid, 2004:50–58), given their professional positions. Not only does the teacher run the risk of unwittingly subjecting learner voice to his/her own, but very often teachers continue on the basis of unexamined assumptions of their own beliefs and values and how this ideological posture subconsciously informs their perceptions and actions (Bartolomé, 2007:263–289). These unconscious and un-interrogated perceptions and actions could be particularly injurious when working with subjugated students. In such instances, it then becomes imperative that teachers and learners work collaboratively to name and interrogate destructive ideologies that are exclusionary and that label learners from non-dominant groups in deficit terms, such as less intelligent, less talented, less qualified and less deserving (Bartolomé, 2007:265). By this it is meant that both teacher-as-agent and learner-as-agent are equally called upon to reflect

critically and deliberatively on the quest of cultivating counter hegemonic beliefs and practices that render some participants vulnerable in teaching encounters (Waghid, 2010:19–31).

To digress momentarily, to address the critical dimensions of the teacher-as-agent is important as a counter-hegemonic practice because modern teaching has been reduced to providing answers, rather than asking questions, which is the foundation of a democratic order (Freire & Faundez, 1989:35). Freire (2005b:72) calls this practice the "castration of curiosity", where the teacher automatically provides answers without having been asked anything, thereby eliminating room for the discovery of fresh insights. This unequal and hierarchical rationality sways power in favour of the authoritarian teacher and entrenches the "banking" model of learning (Freire, 2005b:72). The banking model (Freire, 2005b:71) dismisses and negates non-scientific knowledge or the knowledge of the popular classes (Freire, 2005b). Intellectuals (teachers included) consequently omit the fact that the popular classes are not naïve in their thinking (Freire, 2005b:78). In fact, more so than the elite classes, subjugated groups have the capacity for heightened criticality because their daily lives are rooted in real-life tragedies, suffering and overall social misery, and not in the ideals propagated by the ruling elite (Freire & Faundez, 1989:89). Through this, it could be interpreted that the consciousness of subjugated groups is raised far higher than the distortions and deceits of superordinate groups because their realities are characterised by a myriad of social and economic oppressions (among these substance and human rights abuses, gangsterism, unemployment) (Waghid, 2010:28). The lives of subaltern groups are not trivialised by facts, but by concrete and substantive problems and struggles that require action (Freire, 2005b:87). It is at this juncture that Marx (1967), Gramsci (1971) and Freire & Faundez (1989) agree that science, especially social science, thus far done all it can by way of describing society, but has done far less in the way of transforming it. In answer to this dilemma, Freire (2005b) suggests that intellectuals need to find creative ways of acting with the popular classes and not on them (further entrenching the dominant ideology by telling them how to solve their problems). The deep need for academics and intellectuals to understand subordinate groups, and for them to be immersed in non-dominant culture, history and aspirations, is a plausible way of alleviating the impasse between social theory and social activism with a view to achieving balanced power in society (Spivak, 2014). It is within the realm of social activism that agentic students may assert their right to struggle for the equality pledged in the name of democracy and wrest power away from external factors by restoring it to themselves as transformative agents.

It is the issue of power that automatically brings us to the next point, namely that part of conscientisation would require a penetrating look at the definition of that very power. One should therefore ask what is power, where is it located and who possesses it (Freire & Faundez, 1989:123). Faundez (1989) advocates for a redefinition of power, an exploration of the power of resistance and the building of power from the base (characterised by justice, solidarity and participation), rather than from the ruling elite. In this instance, new powers may be identified that work in the interest of freedom, equality and justice and, more importantly, represent the interests of marginal and subjugated groups. McLaren and Leonard (1993:167) confront and challenge the abuse of power as it manifests in classrooms through teaching and learning rituals. Taken-for-granted teacher behaviours and procedures carry within them threatening positions of dominance. These may include, but are not limited to, facial gestures such as eye narrowing, deliberate silences, indirect speech, power positions, and strategic seating arrangements (McLaren & Leonard 1993:116). These undemocratic classroom management approaches on the part of teachers mimic the control and discipline imposed especially on minority students as part of the status quo. The subject of the qualitative study that informed McLaren's (1986) analysis attempted to illustrate how schooling is considered a ritual performance through symbols and gestures. However, the study also revealed that students possess an alternate disposition (or even lived reality) when outside the constraints of the schooling environment. In this particular case, student behaviour observed on the street corner exposed young people who were wholly physical and emotional, who governed their own time, who were in full control of space, who engaged in spontaneous activity and in a mood that was imaginative and playful (McLaren & Leonard, 1993:124). This is in direct contrast to the classroom, where time is structured and movements are routinised and rigid to the extent that there is an obvious disconnect between the mind and body (McLaren & Leonard, 1993:69). This sketch provides insight into the profound ways that students have had to reclaim their identities from those imposed on them through teaching and learning episodes. This way, a student-led, counter-hegemonic response to authoritarian, non-liberating rituals of school attempts to wrest power away from teachers and restore it to these same students in their personal space. This does not mean that critical pedagogy or even criticality (the ability to challenge taken-for-granted or taken-as-fact notions (McLaren & Leonard, 1993) brought about these naturally occurring, spontaneous acts of subtle protest in students. Rather, the sublime elements to create awareness of injustice and undemocratic school rituals could be unearthed and given sharper focus through the lenses of critical pedagogy. However, the truly critical question to ask about transforming education, which of course encompasses both student and teacher responsibilities, is how a

liberating classroom would differ from a classroom in which schooling is a ritual performance. McLaren and Leonard (1993) argue that a transformative classroom is democratic in that there is shared decision-making, collaboration, student problem posing, self-discipline and the ability to disagree. The behaviours, dispositions and actions of the actors in a democratic classroom are undergirded by values that are participatory, situated (or providing context), critical (displaying self- and social reflection), self-governing, dialogic, de-socialised (free from the negative values in society, such as racism, sexism and classism), multicultural, research-oriented, activist-centred and affective (McLaren & Leonard, 1993). However, knowledge gaps still exist in relation to co-intentional education, based on a search for the balance of power (between teachers and students) in classrooms, so perhaps an inquiry into critical student agency might help to highlight these gaps even further. Finally, delving into the features of a democratic classroom prompts a return to a theme introduced earlier, viz. critical literacy (see 2.8). To appreciate the significance of literacy, it would be instructive also to understand its antithesis.

2.8   A tale of two educational approaches: Violence vs power

Freire (2005a:110) calls illiteracy "violence" against people who are prohibited or denied the opportunity to read and write. The aggression with which this is done, as he describes it, is akin to suffocating consciousness and expressiveness and curtails a capacity to write about the illiterate's understanding of the world (Freire, 2005a:42). In opposition to the technocratic view of literacy development, which emphasises routines, repetition, syllabification and fragmentation of symbols, sounds and words, critical literacy begins with reading the everyday experiences of students (their world), and making sense of it in their literature (their word)[Freire & Macedo, 1987]). Freire (2005b) sees reading and writing as integral to an exploration of human potentialities and warned that literacy development should occur even before material transformations necessitate it, since literacy development brings capacity to analyse the world critically in order to understand it and to transform it (Freire , 2005b:110) . He further elucidates that reading must be a dialogical experience in which the discussion of the text by different readers clarifies, enlightens and creates group comprehension (Freire, 2005a:106). This process facilitates the ability to respect different points of view and enriches the production of text comprehension. The value to be gained through this process is that it allows readers to relive the story imaginatively or to appropriate the significance of the text gradually (Freire, 2005a:12–16). These sentiments are echoed by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2007:183–201), who assert that critical pedagogy is effective in so far as it motivates and empowers students to develop literacies and numeracies of power in their struggle for educational justice. These

researchers found that their qualitative study in an English class reinforced an appreciation for the fact that comprehension is a prerequisite to criticism, as it appropriates an understanding of the ideologies and values of the dominant elites in society. The duo found critical pedagogy to be the most effective vehicle to bring about individual freedom and social change in an urban secondary school, as it helped learners understand what they had in common with those they perceived as different. It was via the critical analysis of hegemonic texts, such as local, state and national legislation, professional contracts and school reports, that learners exposed the way that these texts and their meanings served to limit, constrain and control their actions and thoughts (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007:186). The conclusion students themselves arrived at after the exercise was that these hegemonic texts needed to be assessed critically, contextualised and rewritten by them (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007:186). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell's study illuminates the vital role of teacher agency in providing the optimal conditions for learners to reflect on and shape their own experiences and views (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993). Most telling, however, is that the learners were able to formulate sophisticated and deep knowledge of the destructive effects of hegemony, and that they attuned their power to criticise it. In the foregoing scenarios, we encountered the life worlds of agentic students who were able to institute counter-hegemonic responses to repressive literacies and numeracies to envision an alternative future with greater equality. In the upcoming section of 2.8, we shall encounter scenarios in which learner agency is potentially stifled, impinging on their democratic rights and aspirations for educational equality.

While Freire (2005b) termed illiteracy to be violence, McLaren and Tadeu da Silva (1993) call literacy the practices of power, linking hope to possibility to summon a qualitatively better world that is struggled for and eventually grasped (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993). In the same way that illiteracy is violence, Dewey (1963:4–8) argues that not all experiences are equally educative, and in fact, that some can be mis-educative. Such experiences will develop within the learner a distaste for learning and will ultimately result in boredom. Dewey clarifies that mis-educative experiences are defective in that they do not possess the ability to create the fusion necessary to connect present experience to subsequent experiences fruitfully (Dewey, 1963:8–9). It is within the realm of creating a continuum of experience that democracy becomes emboldened by permitting individual freedom not only through allowing the learner the right to a higher quality of experience, but also by modifying the quality of those experiences yet to come. The persistent question becomes apparent, namely what the optimal methodology is in allowing subaltern learner experiences to be recognised in an effort to strengthen (rather than

negate and obliterate) learners' capacity for growth and an integrated personality. Could it be that the learners themselves have not yet developed the necessary vocabulary to articulate their experiences, and that they have to extract meaning from those experiences in order to build on further experiences? Perhaps this aforementioned hypothesis is easily contradicted by the learner personality during self-structured learner games. During this activity, experience is mediated by commonly accepted rules governing, among others, conduct, fairness and structure. The important thing to note here is that rules take on a different quality compared to the rules of, say, the classroom, in that the learner is wholly in control of the practice and brings all previous experience to be very present in the playing of the new game. This may suggest that learners are fully engaged when they control the game and relinquish unconscious inhibitions in the playing and enjoyment of the game. It could be that, in discovering the alternate learner personality, hope and possibility flourish, rather than the unhealthy need to bend their natural inclinations to a foreign or external will (Mclaren, 1986). This fact is particularly true for subaltern learner, whose lived realities have scant reflection in everyday schooling. Therefore, the imperative for these learners themselves is to begin to mobilise and give expression to their realities in profound and positively meaningful ways. This may not be as easy as simply proposed, given that subaltern learners have a propensity to fare poorly in literacy tasks, as they appear to be disengaged predominantly at the level of familiarity. It would appear they are better equipped to read the *world* rather than the *word*; yet schooling evaluates them on their ability to read the *word* of an experience that is not their own. Dewey (1963) believes that this one-dimensional approach to schooling smothers the ability for critical discrimination and reason. He suggests that learners should be given the space to form their own ideas and act upon these ideas, to observe the conditions that result, and then to organise the ideas for future use (Dewey, 1963:39).

If Dewey is correct when he says experience is the means and goal of education, then Shor (1993:30) answers a question I posed earlier (see 2.8) regarding the means whereby an educator might empower her learners by incorporating experience profitably. He argues that educators should study their learners in class, as well as in the community, to discover the words, ideas and conditions of their lives (Shor, 1993:25–35). In so doing, the educator develops generative words and themes that take into account learners' experiences, situations and relationships (Shor, 1993:27). These words and themes are problematised by the teacher through critical dialogue, in other words they are presented back to the learners as problems to solve (Shor, 1993:25–35). This engagement reveals the agency of both the learners and the educator, but it

significantly calls upon learner agency to help solve and transcend social problems. Shor identifies problem posing as being key to critical dialogue, since the learners are transformed into critical agents while they transcend the passive role of merely answering questions when they learn to question the answers. Shor (1993:32) further delineates the metamorphosis learners have to undergo to assume critical consciousness. He argues that their thought has to evolve from being intransitive (fatalistic, disempowering) to semi-transitive (some thought or action to transform, partially empowering), and ultimately to arrive at critical transivity (the dynamism between critical thought and action, which is fully empowering (Shor, 1993). In so doing, learners' questioning of power, society and knowledge provides the basis for critical consciousness to be aroused, which exposes the learners' subjectivity but also clears the space for critical reflection and transcendence – what Freire calls social dreaming or the world "not yet" (McLaren, 1991:9). Freire could be suggesting a counter-hegemonic attitude here that is not synchronised with the normative dreams and aspirations dictated under capitalist hegemony, which sets as its target (in learners) typically to obtain a job and accumulate material possessions. To augment the social, mental and cultural alternatives subaltern learners might entertain, Giroux (1990) introduces the concept of **counter-memory**, in terms of which learners develop a language of public life as a vision of optimism, a politics of solidarity, and a witness to a history of prolific and inexhaustible alternatives. It is within the multitude of alternatives to which numerous theorists have alluded that Pêcheux (1983; 1988:633−650) adds a supplement with a concept called counter-identify. Since marginal learners may unknowingly identify with an elitist discourse, Pêcheux (1983) believes it will be left up to them to generate the terms to reverse the oppressive discourse. By this means, the learners are emboldened to "disidentify" by going beyond the structure of the discourse to seek out the terms by which it opposes itself, as well as the negations the discourse supplies (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993:47) in order to refuse the representations it proposes. Could it be that, when students are conscientised to the alternatives to hegemony, they have the intellectual courage to pursue variant countermeasures in a bid to live more freely and more equitably? Greater still, could this new awareness or consciousness engender compassionate imaginings (Waghid, 2010:38) through a teachable heart (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993:70) that invite respect and forgiveness, friendship and empathy through loving (Waghid, 2010:47)? In this sense compassionate imaginings is the counter-narrative to competiveness, narcissism, and insensitive modes of interaction (Giroux, 2015) evident in the dominant culture.

So far, I have attempted to elucidate human agency in the formation of counter-memory and counter-identity. It now becomes paramount to perform an in-depth probe of Freire's philosophy and politics of literacy as they work on and through agents, not only as mere objects, but more significantly as humans. In this view, critical literacy could also be seen as humane literacy (Freire & Macedo, 1987) as it works in the interest of the development and personal expansion of learners as human beings, and not just as objects (Lankshear, 1993:90). Lankshear (1993:110) says that, when learners consciousness is raised, it demands reflection and the learners is invoked to develop intentionality towards the world. He states that, since humans are beings of activity and praxis, we live in a world from which we have to emerge, and then progress on to objectify it, understand it and transform it (Lankshear, 1993:111–116). Unlike animals, which do not consider their world and are immersed within it, humans are constantly immersed in action and reflection in order to find ways of living more humanly in the world (Lankshear, 1993:107). Lankshear (1993:146) suggests that we are on a never-ending journey of expressing, developing, recreating and affirming our humanity in order to become more of what we already are – human. According to Freirean philosophy, we are unfinished beings, aware of our incompleteness, and it is through inquiry and dialogue (Freire, 2005b:47) that we transform our world and are ontological to becoming fully human. So, while literacy can be liberating and humanising, functional literacy is based on false communication designed to preserve the status quo (Freire, 2005b:102). It is within a system that favours functional literacy that human beings are minimised and learners are reduced to engaging in mechanical performances that domesticate and subordinate, inviting an oppressive order to prevail over a free society (Rancière, 1991). While I have attempted to illustrate human agency, it is naïve to neglect the insidious and hegemonic nature of functional literacy as it is used to dehumanise and emasculate learners. Within this space, the question is whether the possibility exists for learner consciousness to be activated through critical pedagogy in order for them to recuperate their humanity, as well as for them to overcome the deficit thinking that functional literacy invites. Thus, deeper conceptual probing becomes necessary of learners' existential experience, when we as teachers (and they as critical agents) seek greater understanding that learner reality is a process, and not solidified bits of information (Freire, 2005a; McLaren, 2003; Giroux, 1983). The knowledge gap here would therefore be seen in how we might enrich learner experience and allow learner agency to become more strident.

2.9   The counter-argument: It sounds good, but does emancipatory pedagogy work?

I have focused so far predominantly on the merits, excellence and positive potential of critical pedagogy, and have not paid close attention to criticisms against and inherent deficiencies within the theory. For a more balanced account of critical pedagogy, it now becomes necessary to investigate the difficulties within critical pedagogy – both as a theory and as a practice. While we could categorise Giroux's theories within critical pedagogy as theories of resistance in pedagogy and curriculum (Torres, 1993:119), Torres claims that critical pedagogy itself is exceedingly controversial – both theoretically and in practice. First, Torres (1993:119–120) confronts the philosophy and the theory of critical pedagogy by asking whether it is beneficial pre- or post-revolutionary, and whether it is indeed counter-hegemonic. Next, he interrogates the political climate necessary to give shape to an education of freedom, and asks what would be the minimum conditions for starting such an education. He also questions whether spaces prevail that contribute to the process of the political organisation of the oppressed. Further to this, and highly significant, the question is posed:

> … under what functional conditions can we foresee methodological, didactic, curricular, organizational or administrative changes that can help in developing this alternative educational proposal? (Torres, 1993:119–120).

Lastly, Torres enquires about the possibility of critical pedagogy being able to sustain its non-authoritarian dimension successively in the long run. He concludes that, for the detractors of critical pedagogy, the theory could be viewed as a sympathetic but impossible dream (Torres 1993:50). The reflections and criticality applied by Torres to critical pedagogy (which is otherwise also interpreted by him as 'radical Deweyism' (Torres, 1993), reverberate with the sentiments expressed by Kelly (1995:102) and Tilman (1990), namely that Dewey (1916) was too optimistic in his educational philosophy, since there is but a flimsy hope that anything resembling an egalitarian social order can be wrought. Ellsworth's (1989) exposition *Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy* in addition to Harasim's (1983:6) criticism that Freire's (1970) goals of literacy as a tool for national reconstruction in post-colonial Africa failed to materialise, recast critical pedagogy as problematic rather than as a panacea for anti-democracy and inequality.

Remaining completely loyal to her critical theoretical position as a scholar and marginalised black female (as she fought for racial desegregation), hooks (1994) highlights the shortcomings in critical pedagogy's theoretical origins. While critical pedagogy presented itself as a liberating

theory or educational approach (Freire, 1970), the voices of subjugated people were still stifled by the clamour of privileged, White male voices (Freire 1970; Giroux 1983; McLaren and Leonard 2002; Shor 1993). Even when women were representative, they were not subaltern voices but White, middle-class women (Ellsworth, 1989; hooks, 1994). Freire (1995) himself admitted that theoretical abstractions and the movement beyond regaining consciousness are an extreme exercise in futility if intentions are not acted upon, and therefore later apologised and recognised his 'situatedness' that perhaps subdued the female voice in critical pedagogy.

To exemplify the awkwardness of critical pedagogy further, a British university (the University of Warwick) illustrated the extreme difficulty they encountered when they attempted to translate critical pedagogy into reality (McLaren & Leonard, 1993:165). Since no curriculum existed in advance, it was created by necessity collaboratively in two weeks by students and lecturers in educational workshops with the goal of producing a curriculum for one year. Surprisingly, the process resulted in strain and anxiety for the participants, as they yearned for safer, more familiar banking forms of relationships. As McLaren and Leonard (1993:98) point out, "the attempt to use ideas generated in different cultural or historical periods is always fraught with dangers such as over-simplification, vulgarisation and distortion". Coupled with these limitations and challenges, the question was how critical pedagogy could conceivably abide when the prospects for socialism were growing bleaker and no dismantling of capital was in sight, but rather that neo-liberalism was speeding ahead viciously and unabated, and the welfare state was crippled in its dragnet.

In addition to the analysis presented above, three of McLaren and Leonard's (1993:164–177) most scathing criticisms relate, firstly, to the transient nature of the organic intellectuals (see 2.7), who in a sense betray their working-class origins and assume elitist intellectualism that rates cognitive ability supreme over physical labour. Secondly, Freire's (2005b) theory displays the dominance of ideas over practice; and finally, Freire's (2005b) theory lacks coherence in presenting a theory of the social construction of the individual (McLaren & Leonard, 1993); for example how do we overcome individualism and competitiveness? Instead, at a theoretical level, critical pedagogy rests on subjectivity and cultural transformation (McLaren & Leonard, 1993:55–56).

In relation to the criticisms, Freire and Macedo (1995:377) actually address some of the judgments against critical pedagogy, and declare that a shortcoming is notably that the pedagogy assumes a universal experience and sets forth abstract goals. In dialogue, Macedo

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(Freire & Macedo, 1995) further comments, "there's a problem over-generalising oppression and liberation" (Freire & Macedo, 1995:380). For example, at the time Macedo (Freire & Macedo, 1995) was writing, black women experienced not only White racism but also male domination (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Macedo (Freire & Macedo, 1995:194) concludes that, in such an instance, "the struggle is more political than sexual and the task is for men and women to simultaneously move toward eradicating oppression". With some of the deficiencies of critical pedagogy exposed and addressed, it would still be meaningful to see what it renders when we allow subaltern, marginal and disenfranchised learners the opportunity to invite creativity, take risks, show compassion and exercise political will in defence of democracy, justice and freedom.

As an exercise of political will, the question we may ask is what if students were to identify themselves as border crossers (Giroux, 1992a), those who have to reinvent traditions, the kind that are embedded in the discourse of submission, reverence and repetition and the kind that fall outside it, such as transformation and criticism? As post-colonial, post-apartheid situated beings, could marginalised South African learners discover power and a voice to overwrite the conscientisation of appropriating repressive discourses? How could the above-mentioned learners reject, disqualify and disempower the rhetoric in the current discourse and risk becoming metaphorically 'homeless' (JanMohamed, 1983)? Is it within this state of homelessness suggested by JanMohamed that students can begin to whittle out a "space that hegemony cannot suture, a space in which alternative acts and intentions which are not yet articulated can survive" (JanMohamed, 1983:219)? By refusing to be defined by geographic space, could these agentic learners use the power of resistance and critical geography (Harvey, 2001:4) to perceive and imagine themselves as border crossers, or those homeless and in need of carving out alternative spaces of hope (Harvey, 2001:17–19)?

The questions above thus reveal the knowledge gaps made evident by neo-liberal education (Santos, 2004; Harvey, 2005) that is decidedly hegemonic, and which revels in repetition and submission rather than in criticism and change. And so critical pedagogy will continue to remain a "sympathetic impossibility" (Torres, 1993:50) if we neglect a discourse of change regarding alternative education and alternative learner consciousness.

2.10   Cunning intelligence acts like the wind: It has effect

In response to the resistance mentioned in 2.3 and 2.3 (taken as a means for continued existence), do marginal learners already display the disposition, like fish and insects, to disguise

and transform themselves in order to survive as De Certeau (1984) describes in his book *The practice of everyday life*? De Certeau (1984: xvii) advances the notion that there is more freedom and latitude for non-producers of culture to manoeuver in the dominant culture because their actions are "unsigned, unreadable, unsymbolized". This way, the weak make use of the strong because they are at liberty to use the laws, rituals and representations of the dominant culture in ways that these were not intended (De Certeau, 1984:31). De Certeau (1984:78) provides a practical example of how the above concept is actualised through reading when the reader "insinuates herself in another person's text, she poaches on its experiences and is transported into it". As it relates to language, De Certeau (1984:6) claims that subaltern voices are signified through ordinary language (and sometimes even bastardised language or pidgin language) versus the artificial language science values. The deepest probing on the language issue, he finalises by asking, "Are there spaces where language does not fill?" (De Certeau, 1984:6–14). In other words, is there something language can show without being able to say it? Further to this, the telling of tales in a subordinate culture frequently reverses the relationships of power to ensure victory for the unfortunate, just as the worker subverts the work of the employer and turns it to benefit him/herself (for instance when he/she writes a letter in company time. This diversion of time is his/her free and creative time, not directed toward profit). These practical examples serve to illustrate the latent power and agency subaltern learners have at their disposal to irritate, disrupt and divert hegemony and, in fact, they might already do so, perhaps without even realising the potency of their action. In the succeeding section of 2.10, I turn to the potency of agentic play in an attempt to reveal its supremacy and use as counter-hegemonic.

While I have referred loosely to the practice of play in subsections 2.6; 2.7 and 2.8, I did not examine its critical dimensions as a practice in anti-discipline or counter-hegemony. Play allows for role reversals, incorporates tactics and clever tricks and, when unstructured, it is often defined in the player's terms, incorporates fantasy, and has the elements of pleasure and excitement. As revealed and cited by McLaren and Leonard (1993) and Quintero (2007), and further advocated by hooks (1994), critical pedagogy has not undertaken a thorough examination of pleasure and excitement, which are features of play, in the classroom. This important oversight therefore creates a void in informing us how to hone this state of being, in which marginal learners are closest to being their true selves, as they are more animated, passionate, autonomous and emotional. The learners themselves could better develop a language to articulate how learner agency during play could be incorporated effectively to

empower them further and consciously reveal to them the ruptures in the links of the hegemonic chain. Hooks (1994) also proposes that Eros or passion (which she considers as the basis for love to flourish (hooks, 1994) be resuscitated in the classroom in order to collapse the Cartesian dualism (hooks, 1994), which supports the disjuncture between body and mind. This could be a fitting call, since play requires the whole body to be present and rewards the whole body for its effort, rather than, say, the domesticated, disciplined (even policed) state during class, when it is imagined that only the cognitive aspects of the learner need to be engaged (McLaren, 1986).

Whereas the preceding focus has been on agentic power (see 2.9 and 2.10), it is now necessary to revisit the limitations within the theory and practice of critical pedagogy, as these warrant the engagement of a more responsive framework within which critical performances can be actualised. Bearing this in mind, I shall now turn to the arguments proffered by De Certeau (1984) and Rancière (1991) to evaluate whether a more full-bodied conception of critical pedagogy may flourish. De Certeau (1984:50) formalised a concept of how subordinate people in society, although marginal, really provide the basis for most scientific study and thereby assert their value, albeit it grudgingly, in the spot science reserves for itself. For example, Foucault's (1980) theory of ideology or the technology of power was arrived at while he was studying criminal law and the way that human beings are punished. Foucault (1980) collected information from penal, military, educational and medical material to investigate how isolating excluded people from normal social intercourse occurs in order to maintain a rational social scheme (De Certeau, 1984:20–45). De Certeau (1984) continues to emphasise that no ideological conditioning exists without cracks, since subaltern realities still find expression in jokes, unconscious dreams and slips of the tongue (Freud, 1915). This 'cleverness' De Certeau (1984) mentions is an ingenuity that does not recognise itself as such, because the subjects do not know what they are doing and do not recognise that these acts latently possess more meaning and power, as they are caught in the grip of *docta ignorantia* (learned ignorance) (De Certeau, 1984:50). While this cleverness is commendable as anti-hegemonic, it can easily be subsumed within Bourdieu's (1986) theory of habitus or the interiorisation of structures via learning (Bourdieu, 1986). The habitus creates an assumed reality which further produces observed facts to entrench the reality since we practice what we know, not what we do not know (*docta ignorantia*) (De Certeau, 1984:50–56). But the cunning intelligence referred to by Detienne and Vernant (1978:312) reveals agency through the ability of subordinates to seize the moment in a form of time called the 'kairos moment', when the structures and the ideology of the dominant elite are haemorrhaged and pierced. It is in this moment that the transgressive

or wily tactics of the subordinate thrive (Detienne and Vernant, 1978:312). These transgressive moments could arrive, for example, at the impulse of a learner who scrawls on his/her schoolbooks to create an opportunity for him/her as an author, not a mere scribbler. By this act, the learner assumes some equality with the author, without even being aware of it. This example could also illustrate that the learner wants his/her voice to be recognised and his/her thoughts validated. It is at the point, when subordinate learners begin to assert their power, that they become discontent with structure and start questioning knowledge (for example) and its relationship to political power, or the content of teaching, as happened in the spontaneous popular student uprisings in Soweto in 1976 (Alexander, 2012), Paris in 1968 (Rancière, 1991) and Egypt in 2012 (Beissinger *et al*., 2014). Thus, a reading of De Certeau (1984) leaves the impression that critical pedagogy needs to be responsive enough to student agency to exploit 'the hunter's cunning'- wily tactics and strategies (De Certeau, 1984: xix) as a symbol of student power in their fight for equality. Finally, the preceding references to unexplored dimensions of subaltern educational experiences creates a knowledge gap, because it has not been sufficiently demonstrated elsewhere that critical pedagogy advances cunning intelligence.

2.11   Equality of intelligence between 'unequal' beings?

In their attempt to achieve equality, Rancière (1991:xvii) posits that there is only one way for learners to begin to criticise their teachers' knowledge, and that is by learners dismantling authoritarian structures and becoming peers so that they may have equality of intelligence. It is with this thought in mind that Rancière (1991) advocates for a position of equality from the outset, rather than equality as a goal to strive for in the distant future. In the same vein, he studied the victories won by workers when they claimed the right to aesthetic contemplation, or dead time, as well as time to and the right to think; which contests the notion that they cannot be cerebral because they are labourers (Rancière, 1991). The contempt that Rancière (1991:xx) has for deficit models of thinking is expressed in his rebuke of the manner in which inequality of intelligence is represented in terms of velocity, such as slowness, backwardness, delay or lag, which suggests that the learner will never catch up with the teacher. To further extend the metaphor, this could also be interpreted as the 'developing' nations will never catch up with the 'enlightened' nations, which really disregards the fact that recorded history itself is an additive, gradual, slow, reasoned accumulation of data (Rancière, 1991: xxi). Furthermore, marginal students are compared to elite students as being (almost inherently and permanently) less intelligent, less talented, less qualified and less deserving (Bartolomé, 2007:265). It is deficit thinking or lazy reason (Santos, 2004:2) that has prescribed to us that we come to learning

through explication, when in fact young children prove that they learn to speak through their own intelligence and not through a form of guided practice (Rancière, 1991:42). Rancière takes the view that, to explain something to someone, is first to show such person that he/she cannot understand the matter by him/herself, when in fact evidence abounds of the power non-dominant learners have in shattering the hierarchical world of intelligence, for instance when a peasant's daughter is able to train herself to be a chemist without the knowledge of her boss (Rancière, 1991:11). Hence, Rancière (1991) proposes that the educator announce and broadcast publicly, especially to the poor, this inborn ability (of intellectual labour) they hold in order to raise their consciousness and reveal intelligence to itself (Rancière, 1991:18). Quite simply, Rancière (1991) warns that there may well be inequality in the manifestations of intelligence, but that there is no hierarchy of intellectual capacity. The distinction is in the fact that poor learners do not have the will to discover elite knowledge if nothing in school relates to their associations of lived experience. The warning Rancière (1991) issues here is that non-dominant learners have to resist the distractions that lead to intellectual laziness and refuse the willingness to retire from effort because it is a signifier of the mind underestimating its own power (Rancière, 1991:79). The value in the argument offered by Rancière (1991) is that learners draw upon their intelligence as a reified form of human agency to assert their equality not only with the teacher, but by extension with the broader society, and lastly with the whole of humanity. In this way, critical agents assert and seize their rights promised by democracy, namely freedom, equality and justice through intellectual effort and practical activity.

While Rancière (1991) advocates that learners do not succumb to the diversions of mental slothfulness, this should not obscure the fact that ideological hegemony is antithetical to the concept of democracy (Althusser, 1973; 1984). In order to trace the contours of ideological hegemony along a path of human agency, which offers resistance through social, cultural and psychological factors, it is necessary not to confine this inquiry to the narrow dimensions of purely economic and political conditions (Marcuse, 1967:13–27). In a thorough exploration of the manifestations of ideological hegemony of reason and knowledge, we are compelled to consider how, through domination, the ego loses the capacity to resist or autonomously interpret meaning or messages from the outside. This is necessary because the super-ordinates (Scott, 1985:290) or elite classes in society impose their own standards of beauty, reason and social norms on subordinates. These standards and norms are further propagated by schools, where the expectation is for learners to access education in the pursuit of freedom; however, they receive the containment of knowledge and reason within the conceptual and value framework

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of the established society (Marcuse, 1967). Teaching under these conditions is in direct conflict with the furtherance of democratic values (McLaren & Lankshear, 1994). It instead produces indoctrination and one-dimensional personalities, rather than multi-dimensional, democratic humans (Marcuse, 1967:10). The focus in teaching seems to have deteriorated to teaching for testing and standardisation, which reinforces a rather narrow idea of schooling, rather than the fostering of the democratic potential of learners. For this reason, critical scholars and educators (Giroux, 1980; hooks, 1994; McLaren & Lankshear, 1994; Steinberg, 2006) argue, there exists a need to strive toward a system of education that is emancipatory and that overcomes the warped morality of the established order. These educational theorists suggest that imaginative alternatives to public problems could potentially be revealed by using the powers of science for social welfare, or by teaching history from the perspective of the victories over oppression and the dynamism of resistance (Giroux, 1980; hooks, 1994; McLaren & Lankshear, 1994; Steinberg, 2006). However, these alternatives have not been sought vigorously because we have not fully tapped the possibilities of alternate visions of human life and the pursuit of autonomy, freedom and justice through human agency (Giroux, 1983). It is only in an attempt to exploit these alternatives that we can claim to be exploring the possibility of liberation and emancipation guaranteed through democracy.

Our current technocratic focus in education (Giroux, 1983) makes no attempt to seek out educational alternatives as it appears to be decidedly more process-oriented, as if to suggest that learners must be productively active rather than imaginatively active to explore alternative possibilities of being (hooks, 1994:13). If we accept that education is primarily a productive function and that its purpose is to produce, we neglect the most important dimension of education, which is to induce or influence thinking (Van der Meij, 1994). Within the framework of capitalist hegemony, education is no longer a practice but rather a form of indoctrination, coercion and seduction toward elitist ideology (Van der Meij, 1994). Indoctrination, coercion and assimilation of elitist ideology stand in direct violation of autonomy, freedom and justice (Van der Meij, 1994). In such a context, it becomes crucial to begin to interrogate the fissures that might exist in cultivating or exciting within learners the capacity for them to be seen as agents in constructing a new or different reality outside of elitist domination in order to make liberation possible.

2.12   What kind of student agency is made possible through schooling?

It would be counterproductive to set emancipation, as mentioned in 2.6, as a goal of education when we have not yet defined the process of education. Perhaps some of the guiding and evaluative questions that may shape the nature and character of a new educational landscape, free of superordinate domination, are:

–   What is education like and what is it really?

–   How does it compare with other enterprises?

–   Which forms may education take?

–   Where does it take place (Dillon, 2010:50–56)?

These kinds of questions form the bedrock of understanding how to think about education in order to understand how to act (Spivak, as cited in Brohi, 2014). This particular approach to education places greater emphasis on inducing the young in society to a different kind of morality that prizes the democratic and emancipatory potentials for all human beings, and not only those of the dominant elites.

Yet, any exploration into alternative views on education can easily spot the shortcoming in the assumption that education can simply be rationalised into specific procedures that will produce particular products (Chamberlain & Rothschild, 1984:1–10). The shortcoming in this way of thinking is the failure to recognise the uncertainty of education, which can be described as "interventions in the unknown with uncertain results" (Brezinka, 1997:267). This uncertainty can also invite an examination of the unexplored facets of learners as agents in their own learning; for example, the capacity of learners to self-recognise individual and personal deficiencies, for them to express a self-felt need, for them to rearrange their desires, and better yet, for learners to engage in sustained (positive) action without adult intervention (Dillon, 2010). It is within the context of such latitude (and self-understanding) that critical human agents can begin to intervene in their lived experiences to negotiate personal and even wider social transformation.

The above-mentioned alternative educational paradigms are pivotal in distinctly revealing the flaws in the normative view that knowledge is the subject matter of education. This normative view overshadows behavioural and affective overtures and overemphasises the cognitive features (Magrini, 2012; Greene, 1995). The detriment here is that we focus almost exclusively on knowledge sedimentation, and abandon the development of taste, attitude, propensity, action

and reaction in young learners (Schwab, 1983:241). In this way, learners are loaded with information and knowledge they cannot process because they have an untrained imagination (Spivak as cited in Brohi, 2014). Yet, it is within this neglected affective chasm where taste, attitude, propensity and action can and should be mined by critical agents to undercut the corrosive effects of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). These corrosive effects can be seen in the socio-political and socio-economic forces that influence curriculum, such as capital, the media and government (Giroux, 1983). One may not consider these forces as menacing, especially in so-called democratic forms of government (Barber, 1984). However, the danger lies in the fact that democracy as a concept may differ profoundly from democracy as a practice (Barber, 1984). If democracy as a concept is supposed to offer belief in social equality, justice, egalitarianism and classlessness, it fails on all these counts as a practice in most modern societies (Rancière, 2006; 1999). It is for this reason that strong, participatory democracy should be considered the preeminent factor to drive the curriculum over socio-political and socio-economic forces (Marx, 1967). Democracy, defined as above, provides the launch pad for critical agents to envision new realities and create new vistas, in which the normative values are entrenched in social equality, justice, egalitarianism and classlessness (Marx, 1967). These values should not be imposed, as in the case of ideological hegemony that brings about great inequality, injustice, inegalitarianism and class-consciousness; rather, they should be negotiated in a truly democratic fashion. So far, I have attempted to illustrate that students have much to overcome through the impoverished notions of institutionalised schooling, and I am considering ways for them to develop and effectively utilise agency in a bid to assert the autonomy, freedom and justice pledged and assured by democracy.

Perhaps another illustration of the unfortunate fragmentation of democracy in institutionalised schooling is evident in the way that teaching and learning take place. The kind of teaching that is educator-focused, teacher-led, traditional and transmission-based is often authoritarian, undemocratic and rigid (Freire, 2005a:154). That kind of teaching is driven by the internal logic that takes teaching as fact, and assumes that, if teachers teach, then learners automatically learn. Yet, this logic defies the understanding that human learning can and does take place in the absence of teaching (Dillon, 2004:85). Most of what we learn we are not taught; quite the opposite, we discover it through personal experience (Dillon, 2004). These facts (data on learners' performance, especially in mathematics and literacy) are supported by evidence that learners do not learn the bulk of what is being taught. Further to this, even with the moral guidance of the family, parents or religion, youthful experiences and failures do not leave us

when we mature into adulthood (Dillon, 2004). Put another way, this could mean that, no matter how many moral lessons we have encountered, we fail to learn or master extremely important life lessons time after time (Dillon, 2004). If teaching does not mean learning, then we are forced to consider how learning takes place. Could it be that the real-life experiences of learners do exponentially more in advancing learners learning than undemocratic, authoritarian teaching? Yet, as mentioned before, political and economic forces have greater leverage in the psychological, cultural and social development of learners than democratic factors. The instance of political and economic vectors acting upon marginal and disadvantaged learners raises alarm because not only do these learners have to battle the inherent material difficulties of being poor or marginal, they also seem predisposed to embrace the beliefs, values and norms of the ruling elite and accept them as their own (Gramsci, 1971). Within the framework of democratic education, it would make better sense to embrace an approach to the curriculum and teaching that takes as its basis the real, lived and original experiences of learners to inform theory and practice in education (Dewey (1916). This follows on the theory of constructivism proposed by Dewey (1916), in terms of which the learner interacts with the environment through self-guided activity that coordinates and integrates sensory and motor responses. These responses culminate in the process of learning that takes place through active manipulation of the environment (Dewey, 1916:14–18). In almost direct contrast to constructivism is Marx and Engel's theory of class struggle (Marx & Engels, 1867:325), according to which control over the means of production defines the human experience, rather than ideas and values. It is Marx's (1967) view that material circumstances have historically shaped ideas, and not vice versa (Marx, 1967). Thus it follows that education in a capitalist society cannot be autonomous or independent, since it is conditioned and determined by society's mode of production. The ideology of the ruling elite is furthermore a false consciousness that distorts social and material reality in order to keep people in their place (Marx & Engels, 1867:186). One of the ways that superordinate classes try to appease subordinate classes is to seduce them into believing in the ideology of meritocracy, where it is supposed that an individual can earn his/her place in society through personal effort (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Marx's (1889) theory seems to suggest that the subordinate classes are born into a world with a lowly, pre-determined fate based on socio-economic class, subscribing to a notion of determinism (Marx, 1889). To clarify the concept of determinism further, it supposes that everything that happens is the only possible thing that could happen (Burmeister, 2009). Thus, in a capitalist context, this would mean owners are destined to control the means of production, while workers are destined to live a life of suffering and oppression induced by capital and private property (Marx, 1889). These notions stand in

sharp contrast to constructivism, which seems to indicate that human beings have the capacity to understand, control and alter their environment through a sensory-motor consciousness, and learning through personal experience (Dewey, 1963). While determinism, on the one hand, suggests a definite and ultimate future and reality, constructivism, on the other hand, proposes a terrain of contestation and the imaginative possibility of transforming social and material reality (Dewey, 1963). Since the transformation of reality is incomplete without human agency, who better than the parents and learners in the subordinate classes to conceive of ways to alter undesirable outcomes positively?

If human agents are critical in the transformation of social and material reality, then it becomes crucial to interrogate the means by which disenfranchised classes (and here I mean to place special emphasis on subjugated students) can support, develop, change and challenge a democratic society (Murphy, Mufti & Kassem, 2009:89–115) to bring about such transformation. It can be asked whether rationalism could provide the dominated classes with the tools to defend democracy with its unquestionable belief that reason is the source of knowledge (Kincheloe, 2007b). Another possibility is for them to turn to empiricism, which fosters the notion that knowledge is arrived at through experience and proven through observable facts. But them the question is whether the mental tools and intentional agency are really all that is necessary to bring about a more democratic and egalitarian society and whether a situation of deep democracy is truly attainable in the midst of capitalist greed and corruption (Rogers, 1969:30–35). More importantly and above all the questions posed previously relating to agency, means and approaches to more luxuriant forms of democracy, I have neglected to address the most significant question regarding the education of the human agent. The question of ongoing debate, is whether education can be used to solve social problems.

2.13   Myth or reality: Education overcomes social structure

Halliday (1990:130–150) seems to think that education is inadequate to perform such a task while, on the other hand, Freire (1970:54–77) sees education as a means of addressing social problems and of transforming society along democratic lines. The emancipatory nature of education is described as 'the practice of freedom' in which human agents come to confront their problems and are active participants in their own recuperation (Freire, 2005a:177). If education is indeed inadequate to bring about social transformation, what other possible recourse exists to help marginal, disadvantaged and dominated groups to alter the bleak reality of capitalist hegemony? Should we consider deschooling, as proposed by Illich (1971:12)?

Deschooling advocates for the dis-establishment of schools as they currently exist (Illich, 1971). Illich (1971) understands the basis for this dissolution to be   motivated by the fact that schools globally support what is called the "hidden curriculum" (Giroux, 1977:42). Through the hidden curriculum, capitalist beliefs are instilled in all learners with the distinct aim and purpose to entrench the conviction that increased production and consumption will lead to a better life (Giroux, 1977). We can thus infer from the position of the hidden curriculum that learner agentic power is neutered and little room exists for transformation.

However, we also need to contemplate whether schools are the optimal places to find critical agents devoted to social transformation, and whether it is reasonable to call for the disbanding of schools as they currently exist, since schools also perform a social function. The question that then arises relating to class structure is who benefits most from the socialisation function of schools. In terms of hegemony and meritocracy, there is a bias in favour of the higher social classes, and education is seen as the primary instrument in deceiving the dominated classes to accept an unfair system unquestioningly (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Since schooling and education is a highly controlled practice, it invites the question in whose interest this control is exercised. Since the dominated classes are subject to ruling class hegemony, they face social control through what is termed the "repressive state apparatus" (Althusser, 1984:166), which is overt force exercised by the army or police on any group(s) dissenting against the established order. Further to this, subtle control is meted out through the values and beliefs that are imposed and shared, or even given the illusion of being shared through "ideological state apparatus" (Althusser, 1984:60). While hegemony seems pervasive, as in most oppressive structures, 'organic intellectuals' provide the fracture lines to penetrate and disturb the established order of the ruling classes (Gramsci, 1971). Organic intellectuals can be seen as critical agents in the cleft between elite classes and dominated classes in that organic intellectuals are able to mediate the goals and interests of different classes to win their consent (Gramsci, 1971:117). The position and power of such individuals would be derived from their investment in intellectual development, which is seen to be fundamental to the strengthening of democracy, since it is assumed that real democracy can only be achieved when everyone has the capacity to deliberate thoughtfully (Waghid, 2001:15–28). Yet, all the over-optimistic goals of full democracy and egalitarianism may be difficult to achieve, since these goals are predicated on certain assumptions;

- firstly, not everyone is capable of self-betterment;
- secondly, under the egalitarian myth, class becomes trivialised; and

- finally, social and economic mobility does not deny the possibility of class or that rifts in economic opportunity will dissolve (Kelly, 1995:168).

However, the concerns revealed above could be mediated by the 'organic intellectual'-embodied teacher, who could very well describe the kind of teacher Freire (2005a, 73:46) envisioned who would abandon the 'banking method' of teaching, which refers to a teacher who transgresses the normative view of teaching, which considers students empty vessels, void of consciousness (Freire, 2005a:75). As opposed to the authoritarian, traditional teacher, critical teachers are cognitive, not narrative; they foster the emergence of consciousness rather than submerging it; and they stimulate learners' creative powers in problem-posing situations in order to excite the critical potentials of learners to lead them closer to democratic, liberatory aims (Freire, 1970:99–111). These manoeuvres by teachers present alternative ways of approaching teaching and learning, and also serve to undercut the hegemony of the ruling class within schools by challenging the conventions of how we educate the young (Freire, 2005a). The supposed power of contravening the 'banking method' is to be seen in its ability to incorporate action and reflection upon the lived reality of the learner in order to transform it (Freire, 1970:46). The approach of problem-posing and problem-solving education, in turn, interrelates the problems of the world for greater liberation and freedom rather than oppression and alienation (Freire, 1970:17). It is in an atmosphere in which learners are confronted with problem posing that they could imagine practicable, applicable solutions to some of their greatest lived realities that demand transformation (Freire, 2005a:84). In this manner, learners become revitalised to an exploration of their own agency in interpreting their realties and gaining the confidence to solve their unique problems, rather than expecting external agency (Freire, 2005a:85).

Thus far, I have attempted to problematise the socialisation function of the school, as well as to insert human agency to buffer hegemonic posture. The focus now shifts from teachers as organic intellectuals, as I refocus in examining how to interpret equal educational opportunity, and whether equal educational opportunity could conceivably exist given that capitalist societies have a noticeable cleavage between the economically marginal and the elite classes. In relation to this matter, Gutmann (1987:128) analyses state intervention, and proposes three areas of interest, viz. maximisation, equalisation and meritocracy in terms of educational provisioning. Firstly, maximisation is described as the process in which the state devotes many resources to education to maximise learners' life chances. In the explanation, emphasis is also included to reveal that these funds are available at the expense of other government projects,

among others policing, stadiums or parks. Secondly, equalisation means the attempt to increase the life standards of the least advantaged up to the same level as the most advantaged. In striking contrast to the belief that education is a form of indoctrination (Marcuse 1964:50), with regard to equalisation, education is seen as the mechanism to overcome all environmental and natural causes of differential educational attainment (Gutman, 1987). Thirdly, meritocracy is the dedication to distribute all educational resources in proportion to the natural intellectual ability and willingness of learners to learn (Young, 1958). These must be the non-virtual, idealistic expectations of equalising education, since their inconspicuousness in advanced capitalist societies is glaring. In fact, in certain instances, education is seen as further dehumanising to less affluent learners because it highlights the gulf between the rich and poor in terms of resourcing, opportunity, achievement and standards (Giroux & Schmidt, 2004). If the above notions are used by state education authorities to justify their attempts to equalise education, they have failed miserably in their application of the 'ideological state apparatus' (Althusser, 1973). It seems as if, in such a context, much public pressure should be mounted by critical actors to confront the injustice and to challenge these actions on the basis of democracy, equality and justice. In 2.7 I placed substantial emphasis on teachers as critical actors or agents when personified as organic intellectuals before moving on to analyse state agency in equalising educational opportunity, but the most crucial aspect would be to advance a notion of learners as the critical actors or agents in addressing and challenging the concept of equal educational opportunity.

2.14   Towards a theory of critical learner agency

We may now ask how critical learners would be able to unveil the hypocrisy of a so-called democracy that promises choice, freedom and equality, yet delivers most things anti-democratic, viz. elitism, class-consciousness, consumerism and inequality. Could critical learners propose alternatives, such as education for civic consciousness or collective entitlement for all in a democratic polity (Kelly, 1995:99) and how would these critical agents address the distinctions along the lines of economic power and privilege? Would it result in learners envying the privileged and strive for personal upward mobility, or would they see that capitalism is not as homogenous and complete as it is purported to be? The elements of critical thinking could prove valuable to change agents, as its nature is to equip them with the ability to discover, communicate and implement choice in a democracy (Rancière, 1999). This leaves us with the question of how empowered learners working as critical agents might fiercely protect their right to democracy and strive to develop, create and expand a sophisticated

understanding of their circumstances by using reflexivity to gain access to knowledge that is emancipatory.

To answer the question above and to tackle the challenges faced by underprivileged learners, the proposals offered by Kelly (1995) to fix public education systems might be considered useful alternatives. Firstly, Kelly (1995) suggests that school programmes promote social skills and attitudes that lead to altruism, cooperation and social responsibility. Next, she proposes that the heritage of Enlightenment principles (Outram, 2006) become embedded in school culture. In so doing, the values of rationalism, democracy, egalitarianism and internationalism are esteemed. These proposals stand in stark contrast to the current culture in most schools, which is symptomatic of a culture of individualism. This culture is symbolised in the egoistic, competitive, atomised social relations that render emancipatory education unfeasible (Kelly, 1995).

While the recommendations above provide some comfort as a mode of resistance to hegemony, it is a small comfort taken in the light that Henry Adams (1918), who lived from the mid-19th century all the way through to the early part of the 20th century, asked a weightier question regarding educational equality, namely how to educate all students equally. Adams highlighted the difference between symbolic equality and substantive equality by indicating that formal laws do not act as guarantees of educational equality (Adams, 1918). The sorting of students in schools according to class or race, and screening of learners in terms of supposed intelligence, reproduce existing social, political and economic inequalities despite all the legislation to protect learner (citizen's) rights (Adams, 1918). The solutions to making education more equitable are not to be conceived of haphazardly or clumsily, because the forces aligned against democracy and egalitarianism are formidable and seem to have been more or less unconquered for a considerably time. It would seem as though we are currently still caught in the grip of working-class students "learning to labour" (Willis, 1981:107), while "high status knowledge of the privileged is gained at universities" (Apple, 2000:61). These distinctions pose a threat to democracy because they place parameters on who has the right to know what and when. In contrast, knowledge can never be privileged; it is a basic human right that must be accorded to everyone without distinction (Kelly, 1995). The question now is whether the pragmatic approach, as suggested by James (1907:70) will prove to be helpful. According to James (1907), in relation to the nature of action and conduct, it is necessary to deploy thought as a weapon to enable more effective action. It would therefore not be in the best interests of the lower classes not to have access to knowledge, or for them not to attend university, because they will lose out

on the opportunity to apply the scientific method of objective investigation of facts to human affairs (James, 1907). Stated simply, the lower classes would not be skilfully equipped to intervene meaningfully in their own lives to bring about transformation or undermine hegemony, anti-democracy and inequality. It is however also plain to see that in advanced capitalist societies, there is no incentive or immediate public profit in investing in disadvantaged learners, because they invariably do not have the power to vote (Wood, 2012). In contrast to the capitalist ethic, which prizes profit, the socialist ethic prizes democracy and supports counter-hegemonic ideas that explore critical questions and create alternative possibilities. The danger is that advanced capitalism is entrenched in modern societies; it is able to eviscerate the political power of the marginal and allow the political rights of the privileged to be somewhat exclusive. This 'exclusive privilege' exists because under capitalism, politics is focused on economics rather than on social issues, and in this arrangement there is but a slight chance of schooling in a capitalist state to affect marginal learners advantageously if the learners themselves do not struggle for self-emancipation.

We now return to address the intellectual empowerment of marginal groups and attempt to discover why education, and more specifically literacy, is valuable to their eventual self-emancipation. Freire (1970) worked with illiterate adults and illustrated the link between language and ideology. He declared:

> [It] would be extremely naïve to expect the dominant classes to develop a type of education that would enable subordinate classes to perceive social injustice critically (Freire, 1985:102).

From the above we can conclude that literacy and class are wholly intertwined, since literacy serves as a means of regulating access to social, economic and political goods (Barber, 1984). The higher the social and economic class, the greater the access which is obtained in influencing the political process and accessing better goods and services. Bell (1973) confirms the inextricable link between literacy and class in the concept of the 'knowledge economy' by stating that the intelligentsia utilises sophisticated literacy in an information-based economy while the lower classes are not equipped to deal with these concepts, but merely process data (Bell, 1973:3). This brings us to the "literacy myth" (Graff, 1979: xxii), which opposes the belief that literacy represents the magic bullet to solve a panacea of social ills. Perhaps this last statement has an element of truth to it – how else do people make sense of their realities if not through the dissection and understanding of the signs, symbols, nuances and meanings

embedded in language? It has become convenient in language to de-emphasise the social aspects in favour of the mechanical methods of cognition (Heath, 1983:40–69, 144). The social relations of capitalism however produce a particular culture, and language is its primary instrument, since language produces the literature through which the culture gains its consciousness, awareness and knowledge (Kelly, 1995). One clarifying observation should be made here: the language of the higher economic classes has hegemony over the language of the marginal classes, and the danger lies in the fact that this language is considered the official language and is used in government, schools, law, business and the media, among others. It therefore becomes the duty of marginal learners to develop or activate their agency in order to insert their language in the educational discourse for their self-preservation as equal and democratic citizens.

However, what seems alarming about the continued subjugation of marginal and disenfranchised groups is that many creative recommendations have been made as a way of realising public knowledge as a form of freedom, but many of these recommendations have yet to be concretised (Darder, Baltodano, Torres, 2003). It therefore possibly would be in the gulf between the recommendations and the actual, real, lived solutions to the problems of everyday life that marginal students might begin to articulate and propose a vocabulary of their counter-hegemonic interventions. This crevice opens up a space for non-elite learners to insert themselves as critical agents, for instance as they subvert hegemonic literature to reveal its anti-democratic characteristics.

With regard to language and knowledge, Flynn (1955) suggests three interesting approaches in relation to public knowledge and the practice of freedom and democracy. Firstly, there is the need for politically effective discussion that brings the social potential constituted by technical knowledge and ability into a defined and controlled relationship to practical knowledge and will (Flynn, 1955:270). Secondly, and more clearly emphasised, is the effect of public dialogue on democratic uses of science and technology (Flynn, 1955:270). Thirdly, there are the involvement of scientists and politicians and the public opinions of citizens at places such as universities (Flynn, 1955:271). The question is whether these can realistically be considered practical recommendations in the light of capitalist hegemony. Politicians and scientists generally act in the interests of capital and their financial contributors, and consequently lose objectivity. As remarked by Benhabib (2013), what we should strive toward is a democratically accountable discourse in which the agenda is set around the social needs of a society and their interpretations (Benhabib, 2013:41). These discursive activities should be aimed at

transforming society according to more humane values and goals, rather than the goal of profit generation.

2.15   The human 'will to power' vs to triumph over the technocratic society

With the above being said, it now becomes crucial to interrogate who in society has the power to bring about transformation that entails more transparency, democracy and humanity. Bowles and Gintis (1976:102–125) believe that it is a misconception that schools promote economic equality and positive human development. This misconception is exposed by the narrow consciousness and behaviour that schooling reinforces in learners and which is consonant with their participation in the labour force (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The authors contend, "as long as one does not question the structure of the economy itself, the current structure of schools seems imminently rational" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976:21). Their claims are supported by five criticisms against the inequality wrought in advanced capitalism, namely:

- economic inequality and personal development are defined by the property and power relationships that characterise the capitalist system;
- education does not maximise or minimise inequality; it instead perpetuates the social relationships of economic life by stratification into class, race, gender, dominance, sub-ordinancy, surplus labour, or disciplinary labour through the practice of arbitrary hiring and firing;
- there is a close correspondence between the social relationships that govern personal interaction in the workplace and school. This is characterised by the elements of power and authority in making marks (or grades) the focus of school, rather than learning and knowledge, and the correlation in the workplace with wages as a reward for specialisation, compartmentalisation and competition;
- authoritarianism produces docile workers, but in the same vein prepares room for rebels and misfits. These radical forces or critical human agents are the optimal elements to create social movements to criticise capitalism; and
- these criticisms should question how the transformation became so seamless, from an entrepreneurial economy to a corporate economy, with such little popular resistance (Bowles & Gintis, 1976:11–13).

Bowles and Gintis (1976) further suggest that the evils of capitalism are to be seen in the host of undesirable consequences it ushers in. The objectionable features of capitalism, which erode democracy are: the fragmentation of communities, deterioration of the natural environment,

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alienated work and inhuman working conditions, insufficient supply of social services, and an unequal distribution of income (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). However, if capitalism and the subsequent destruction it leaves in its wake are social constructs, then we can hope that critical human agents can engage with these problems meaningfully so as to transform them.

To centre their argument on the horrors of capitalist societies, the Bowles and Gintis (1976) contrast the democratic views of Dewey (1916:12) with the prevailing technocratic view (Kincheloe, 2007). Dewey imagined schools to perform three essential functions: an integrative function (from youth to participating in the adult world), an egalitarian function, and a developmental function. In contrast, the technocratic view is based on the logic that the economy is a technical system in which performance is based on technical competence. In this system, income inequality is based on an unequal distribution of mental, physical and other skills, and not on differences of birth, race and gender, among others. The technocratic view invites one of the sharpest criticisms levelled at educational and political reformers in that their distorted view seems to perceive education as a means of alleviating social distress without redistributing wealth and power or altering the economic system (Marx, 1961). In terms of transformation, the suggestion here is that the economic life of a society has to be democratised to the point where all relationships of power and authority are based on participation and democratic consent. In such a scenario, education could possibly move to expose the critical power learners, parents, teachers and entire communities possess by facilitating an understanding of how the oppressive nature of capitalism might be eradicated and what might replace it (Cole, 2008:25).

An understanding of how capitalism works and how it might be eradicated could begin by admitting the different notions of experience, intelligence and interpretation (Magrini, 2012). Perhaps this analysis of society through education might allow us to see class constructs for what Nietzsche (1968:171) termed "the will to power". By its definition, life is characterised as an endless struggle for domination amongst competing centres of power. We thus can deduce that in a given situation, even the dominated have power. The critical element would then be for the dominated to realise and act upon this in-built power in the interest of their own liberation and survival (Freire, 2005a:37, 45). If it is indeed true that there is no limit to how the world can be interpreted (and experienced), and that reality is in fact inherently plural and objective truth is impossible, we should assume that we all construe the world from our own viewpoint (Cole, 2008:39). It is in the richness of the diversity of experience, intelligence and interpretation that avenues to alternative realities and infinite possibilities of living become

apparent (Freire, 2005a:24). Who better than learner agents to examine all possibilities of the local experience in an effort to embolden them to develop to their full human capacities, and to allow the burgeoning of identities outside of the stale, imposed identities dictated by elite society?

It would be helpful to digress from learner agency for a moment and consider an in-depth analysis by way of a definition of the alternative realities that exist outside of the confines of the scientific approach of fact and knowledge intrinsic to modernism (Outram, 2006). The postmodern alternatives to the "truth" of science are described by Atkinson (2002:73) using eight thought-provoking descriptors, namely

- resistance to certainty and resolution;
- the rejection of fixed conceptions of reality, knowledge or method;
- embracing the notions of complexity, lack of clarity and multiplicity;
- the acknowledgement of subjectivity, contradiction and irony;
- irreverence for traditions of philosophy and morality;
- the deliberate attempt to unsettle assumptions and presuppositions;
- the refusal to accept boundaries or hierarchies in ways of thinking; and
- the disruption of binaries that define things as either/or.

This exhaustive list of alternatives poses a threat to the conventions of modernism, which is almost entirely reliant on guarantees, only-one-right-way solutions, simplicity, compliance and objectivity (Outram, 2006). It is this very logic of only-one-right-way solutions that has undergirded the capitalist system so faithfully that it has progressed to become a behemoth and, in extremely advanced capitalist terms, is now referred to as 'neo-liberalism' (Harvey, 2005; Giroux, 2012; Vally, 2007). One may well ask what is 'liberal' about neo-liberalism. As a global phenomenon, it does not promote liberation, freedom, opportunity or equality for the world's working-class masses; in direct contrast, it promotes free markets and free trade between rich corporations (Martinez & Garcia, 2000). Martinez and Garcia (2000) highlight five prominent features of neo-liberalism that illustrate its global reach and caustic effects:

- firstly, the liberality applied to 'free' or private enterprise with limited government intervention (no price controls, de-unionisation, low wages), no matter how detrimental the social ramifications (Martinez & Garcia, 2000);
- secondly, the cutting of public expenditure in the areas of social services, such as health, housing and education, and infrastructure (maintenance of roads, bridges, water supply),

leaving the poor in society vulnerable and without social services (Martinez & Garcia, 2000);

- thirdly, deregulation, or lack of government oversight of everything that could diminish profits, creating less protection of the environment and less protection of workers' rights (Martinez & Garcia, 2000);

- fourthly, diminishing of the public sphere through the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, goods and services to private investors (Martinez & Garcia, 2000); and

- lastly, decimation of the community by replacing it with individual responsibility, thereby pressurising the poorest in society to find solutions to their social problems on their own (Martinez & Garcia, 2000).

In summary, I have attempted to show the negative effects of capitalism and how advanced capitalism, on the one hand, threatens participatory, emancipatory democracy, yet also compels transformative agentic forces to coagulate and become more vociferous in their demand for equality.

As temporal, spatial conditions begin to demand agentic power, we need to be mindful of Althusser's (1973:128) suggestion that transformations occur when contradictions and the level of development allow for such a change. Which brings us to our next question, namely whether we should wait for these changes to occur naturally (if they are indeed part of nature), or whether there are enough contradictions to allow agents to alter the dynamics of advanced capitalism under neo-liberalism. If certain forms of labour are able to use existing means of production to transform existing materials into new products, if new concepts are transformed into science, if new products are transformed into economics and if new social relations are transformed into politics (Marx & Engels, 1867:874), has it not become time to exploit the contradictions inherent in capitalism to transform society? If so, then we have to determine which force will be formidable enough to challenge capitalism at individual level as well as collectively. Burbules and Berk (1999) present us with a view to the intellectual weapons indispensable in the fight against ideological hegemony, neo-liberalism and undemocratic forms of power. They advise that the goal of critical pedagogy is to urge teachers to help learners become more sceptical about commonly accepted truths. This discernment would allow learners to perceive the inaccuracies, distortions and even falsehoods that limit freedom efficiently (Burbules & Berk, 1999).

Practically, this would mean that learners become empowered to recognise faulty arguments, hasty generalisations, assertions lacking evidence, and truth claims based on unreliable authority, ambiguity or obscure concepts (Burbules & Berk 1999:62). The emphasis is entirely on allowing learners to develop and expand skills in formal and informal logic, conceptual analysis and epistemology (Burbules & Berk 1999). In order to elevate epistemic adequacy, learners should strive to present valid arguments, provide supporting evidence and supply conceptual clarity (Burbules & Berk, 1999:6). The question is, however, whether this approach would be adequate in and of itself, or whether there is (are) some other element(s) necessary outside of the recommendations of agency projected by Rancière (1991), De Certeau (1984), Apter (1985) and Scott (2007) to ward off the ingrained messages transmitted through neo-liberalism, ideological hegemony, social class and schooling. In an attempt to answer such questions we can begin to establish more finite responses to what makes liberation and emancipation possible for all agents in a strong democracy.

2.16   Summary

While Chapter 1 carried a report on the ideological and educational management perspectives of formal schooling, this chapter carried a review of the cognitive abilities and consciousness of critically agentive students to help formulate a theoretical concept of critical student agency. First, I examined popular resistance as a form of agency, and then I considered how critical agency is revealed in Africa (see 2.2). Thirdly, democracy was problematised when positioned within a critical pedagogic framework, because the latter strives toward an emancipatory aim, while particular features of democracy prove to be incongruent with liberatory aims for non-elite learners (see 2.3). Next, Freire's critical literacy projects in post-colonial Africa were appraised with a view to help form a picture of how "reading the word and reading the world" (Freire, 2005a:20) might lead to heightened emancipation for post-colonial subjects who have to deal with an equally destructive neo-liberal ideology (see 2.5). In this case, some might argue that a colonial logic is synonymous with neo-liberal ideology, as both operate on exploitation. I further focused on the agency of teachers through a Freirean lens by considering how teachers could be seen as organic intellectuals and, by implication, cultural workers by incorporating empowering pedagogic approaches to advance critical student agency (see 2.7). Thereafter the discussion turned to the distinct features of critical pedagogy that are determined to be emancipatory in order to establish a strong link between learner intelligence (further developed by critical pedagogy and critical literacy) which will manifest as critical student agency (see 2.8).. This subsequently led to an argument offered by Rancière (1999), namely that equality of

intelligence admits all humans as equal to any other humans, creating a vacuum to begin to imagine the type of schooling that is optimal in promoting critical learner agency through the exercise of high intelligence (see 2.11). While capitalist social relations kept being problematised throughout the discussions, Rancière's (1999) adoption of the universal teaching method and Freire's (1970, 1973, 1985, 2005a and 2005b) emancipatory pedagogy began to point toward valid educational alternatives that will spur the type of critical learner agency that might lead to some sort of social transformation (see 2.4 through 2.11). Without overstating the merits of Rancièrean and Freirean educational philosophies, these theories inspire boundless promise that stands in the place of learner ideas, aspirations and objectives that are enclosed in a technocratic system in which thought is stopped (Marcuse 1964:21). Instead, these theories open up a window on a world that accommodates a multitude of learner roles, identities and encounters (Rancière, 1999:128), and thereby provide further impetus for research aimed at trying to understand and encourage learner self-mastery via critical learner agency.

Chapter 3

Critical pedagogy and critical discourse analysis: Methodological matrimony

3.1   Introduction

Chapter 2 considered a Rancièrean notion of pedagogy to embolden critical pedagogy in a situation of strong democracy. In this chapter, I will begin to outline the methodology that was used in the current research study, intertwined with the research procedures, by way of a thorough account of the methodology. Firstly, CDA is presented in relation to its assemblages with critical pedagogy. Thereafter, the principles and procedures in selecting, organising and analysing the data will be discussed. Following that, CDA, which is defined as the analysis of text (documents) and context (the space in which text and action unfold), is defined and explained by looking at its theoretical origins and its procedures in particular contexts. Next, the focus will shift to communicative agency to see how speech and text are theorised within the context of democratic citizenship education. Finally, policy with regard to teacher preparation is studied from the angle of student (aspirant teachers) and teacher (university lecturers) roles and expectations to understand how critical pedagogy is conceived of within these policies. It is imagined that official policy will reveal which meanings and values are highlighted within the policy, and how notions of critical student agency (evidenced in school classrooms) might be accommodated as a result of the policy.

Using texts to understand social phenomena

3.2   Against a technocratic, reductionist view of how to measure critical student agency

Judging from the preceding statements (see 3.1) it becomes evident that, in dealing with a complex research question, one can easily be seduced toward a tendency to measure human phenomena in order to resolve the question. The chaos and fuzziness inherent in wanting to measure critical student agency would however lead to a reductionist view that suggests a narrow strait: that there can either be much critical student agency or little critical student agency. This approach strives to quantify human behaviour and to represent it in a static, technocratic, functionalist fashion. Yet, in contrast, in order to investigate whether critical student agency is sufficient to bring about a measure of equality in a classroom, school, community and society, the research methodology has to respond to the phenomenon of critical student agency and how it manifests in these arenas. According to this view, it becomes possible to rely on empirical evidence (however scant it may be) to make an interpretive deduction

within a critical conceptual framework of data sources to arrive at a reasonable conclusion of whether agentic students might bring about self-emancipation and equality.

Additionally, Gummesson (2003) helps justify my methodological choice when he argues that the conflict between the quantitative and the qualitative method is pseudo-conflict simply because:

> Mathematics, statistics, formal logic and computer talk are artificial and condensed languages, which can sometimes help us see things, sometimes not. The spoken and written language is less precise but far richer – not to mention the non-verbal language of such subtle signs as gestures, facial expressions and symbolic objects.

Thus, the ascendency of technical rationality premised on knowledge along with productive efficacy cannot simply be extended into the realm of the personal and cultural world because of the irregularities of human functionality (action), prediction and control (Dunne & Pendlebury, 2003:194). At the juncture where technical rationality reaches it limits, critical pedagogy might be able to pick up the slack and function at the level of local and individual engagement with culture, community and in the particular context of the school. This pedagogic encounter is exhibited through the engagement between two primary agents: the teacher and the student (Bussey, 2008:21). The teacher uses agency to mediate between the curriculum and the life world of the student to teach, but the truly critical teacher has even deeper insight, which is that teaching really takes place in the middle and muddle, and not in teaching and practice (Semetsky, 2011:145). Subsequently, it is within these spaces created by agentic actors in pedagogical encounters that many modes of interpretation present themselves in a continuous hermeneutic spiral of trial and error in which theory generation and theory testing takes place (Semetsky, 2011). These places open up as the site that probes beneath the surface reality of the prescriptive and conditioned context of linear education, where critical agents may emerge and become empowered in addition to being in command of the forces that determine context (Bussey, 2008:23). It is in these educational spaces, concealed by the form of rationality that only valorises curricular success, where we might be less interested in the representation of the curriculum but rather in what their users make of it as an exercise of agency, power and democracy (Giroux, 1988). In an investigation of critical student agency, we can turn to the notions set forth by De Certeau (1984), as he describes the useful incorporation of tactics and strategy to maximise on agency. De Certeau (1984) argues that a tactic must constantly strive to manipulate events in order to turn them into opportunities. These tactics are characterised by clever tricks, "hunter's cunning" (De Certeau, 1984:xix) knowing how to get away with things,

and the use of language to persuade, seduce or change the will of another through rhetoric (De Certeau, 1984). In addition, another logic that dominates action is the concealment of its connection with power. De Certeau (1984) for example suggests that an agent can insinuate him/herself into the author's text as he/she poaches on the experiences of the author, is transported into it, and pluralises him/herself in that text, which is not an expression of self-creation. This way, the agent defangs and immobilises the power of technical systems that function to diminish individuality in proportion to the expansion of such systems (De Certeau, 1984: xix). This technical notion of constraining individuality is exactly what is resisted in Waghid's idea of dismantling rigid teacher/student hierarchies in intimate pedagogic relationships of friendship. In his view, students are able to open themselves up to the improbable, while teachers extend their range of possibilities and learning, for both agents advance beyond one particular pedagogic encounter, literally taking pedagogy out of bounds (Waghid, 2014:19).

It is in searching the realm of possibility and the improbable in educational encounters (as features of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005b) that research within a hermeneutic paradigm assisted the researcher in firstly, interpreting the human behaviour and action (speaking, writing, behaving, thinking, interacting, valuing and feeling) of her sources. Secondly, behaviours and actions could be accounted for in a transparent and comprehensive way. Thirdly, the account could offer conceptualisation and condensation as verification of understanding and meaning; and finally, the researcher could consequently offer possible alternative interpretations (Gummesson, 2003).

Therefore, in a study that relies on the practice of agency through critical pedagogy, it is advantageous to refer to De Certeau as he theorises that practice has an art of its own, as its procedures depend on a vast ensemble that makes it difficult to delimit (De Certeau, 1984:34). He contrasts this sharply with the art of theory, which he describes as "an individual science granting itself the conditions that allow it to encounter things only in its own limited field where it can 'verbalize' them, taking care to exclude the things they deem do not constitute the field" (De Certeau, 1984:61).

Taking De Certeau's (1984) view, if we were to consider critical student agency in practice, we might be confronted with a myriad of variations; yet, as De Certeau describes theory above, we can infer that CDA provides a necessarily narrow lens to limit a field (agency) to allow for a more focused analysis. De Certeau (1984), however, also cautions that the analyst uses

judgment, which is subjective as it incorporates imagination and understanding. As it relates to this study, the researcher therefore had to evaluate whether critical student agency was made evident (transparent and powerful) to the point where it reasonably could be inferred that critical student agency could bring about transformation that meets the terms of justice, freedom and equality as promised under democracy. It is therefore with social transformation in mind that I proceed in 3.3 to an exploration of the resemblance between CDA and critical pedagogy to establish the prominent features upon which they hinge. In 3.2 I have attempted to provide an introductory discussion of the methodological choice for this study as grounded in the interpretivist paradigm (further to be coupled with critical methods), which opposes positivist rationality.

3.3   How does CDA resonate with critical pedagogy?

What follows is precursory to 3.4, as it states an affinity between CDA and critical pedagogy but does not yet give a robust account of CDA. The necessary interpretive analysis is reserved for the justification of CDA as an applicable methodology. To begin with, literacy and 'conscientisation' or consciousness raising for transformational change are two of the prominent (although not exclusive) features of critical pedagogy that cohere intimately with CDA (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007:252). To substantiate this claim, Freire argues that literacy education could be used for liberation or domestication, which is to mean that domesticating literacies teach literacy from the point of view of superior power, inviting false communication that preserves the status quo (Freire, 1993:35). Similarly, Wodak (2001) proposes that CDA strives to make opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest via discourse analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001:67). To illustrate this point, the quotation from Capdevila provides an interpretation of how the media are complicit in maintaining an oppressive order by promoting the views of the elite ruling class:

> News givers (the media) have come to adopt the position of mediators. This shift reflects economic pressures to make news a more 'saleable commodity' in order to win more readers and advertising possibilities. News givers are animators, sometimes authors and even principals, when in reality they are transmitting the voices of social power-holders (Capdevila, 2011:6).

From the above quote, it can be inferred that the media act at the behest of capitalist (elite) interests to sell information as a commodity, rather than acting in the interests of democratic citizens who rely on an independent media to disseminate the truth in order for them to

deliberate more wisely. Taken from the above scenario, the media act in two ways to entrench capitalist hegemony: firstly, by persuading the public (the selling of news) and, secondly, by creating a false consciousness (by making it appear that the public act out of free will). All the while the unsuspecting public are oblivious to the stronghold of ideological hegemony (Althusser, 1984). CDA, as a critical paradigm, in turn analyses discourse in context to examine the extent to which language, power and ideology work to maintain social hierarchies, while critical pedagogy uses consciousness raising through problem posing to oppose dominant power and transform oppressive situations (Freire, 1993:8). This way, critical pedagogy and CDA swear adherence to one another in that they look at text and discourse historically as −

- barometers of social processes through a discourse–historical approach (Wodak,1989); or

- a dialectical-relational approach (Fairclough, 1989) and its "embeddedness" with elite power; or

- a socio-cognitive approach (Van Dijk,1983) in which texts act as vehicles for social change, all in the interest of obtaining more symmetrical relations of power (Forchtner, 2009:4).

Following Burbles and Berk (1999:65), who confirm the belief that society is divided by relations of unequal power, these researchers (Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 1983; Wodak, 1989) call for a position held firmly in critical pedagogy and CDA, which is that fostering a critical capacity in citizens is a way of enabling them to resist such oppressive power. In its commitment to exposing unexamined beliefs and assumptions in ideology criticism, critical pedagogy shows much kinship with CDA as a transformative social justice approach (Freire 2005a). With the above in mind, further discussion will follow in 3.4 to describe the research process using critical pedagogy as the knowledge domain, and CDA as the methodological tool in analysis to arrive at the principles that help define critical student agency.

3.4   Principles and procedures of the inquiry using critical pedagogy and CDA

This subsection provides details of the research map that was used to investigate the everyday experiences of school students and teachers; as well as university lecturers and aspirant teachers to see how the theoretical meanings proposed in official education documents compare with actual teaching and learning.

Critical pedagogy as a theoretical construct and pedagogical approach provides the knowledge domain that links official education policy, teacher training programmes and classroom

teaching and learning. Critical pedagogy is made visible throughout educational discourse in South African official documents [(OBE); (RNCS); (NCS); (CAPS); Bachelor of Education programmes; South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA); and Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE)]. Thus a basis exists that legitimises an examination of cases involving lecture hall pedagogy, and classroom pedagogy to test the everyday experienced meanings of critical pedagogy over its idealist and theoretical meanings. The major premise that critical pedagogy is a principle in South African education sets an expectation that democratic education may be observed in classroom and lecture hall encounters; and therefore allows a minor premise that critical student agency may be on display. Simply stated, if the principles of critical pedagogy are taught and learned, then students might be better positioned to critically question, resist and transform anti-democratic practices in education and society as a whole.

Since no international nor South African educational literature has completely addressed the issue of critical student agency, this study acts as the most direct attempt to theorise the phenomena. Having no direct access to prior knowledge of critical student agency, certain pre-determined criteria of critical student agency had to be established to influence how data was selected. Operationally, the selection of textual data was based on the researcher's philosophical values (such as democratic frameworks that challenge hegemony, and which provide educational equality and value for all students, not only elite and middle-class students); theoretical preferences (critical pedagogy), and methodological procedures (CDA). Therefore, five studies were selected to investigate the phenomenon of critical pedagogy in teacher education programmes at university level to clarify how education policy (with an emphasis on critical pedagogy) was made visible in the practice of teaching. In addition, official policy documents concerning teacher training were studied to provide direction as to what elements of critical pedagogy are featured therein, so it might be inferred what perception policy designers have of a criticality that may be visible in teacher training programmes as well as teaching practice in school classrooms. And lastly, four studies involving teaching and learning in a working-class context were isolated as qualitative, textual data to help clarify and identify the general themes of critical student agency. It should be reiterated here that the cases selected for further study had not been awarded the status of presenting objective fact, but they were considered sufficient for making connections and suggesting implications in a theory on critical student agency.

Following the principles identified in 3.2 and 3.3, critical pedagogy and CDA are connected in a relationship where both can be considered socially responsive approaches. This meant that as

a teacher researcher I used interpretive analysis through CDA and moved from the position of student and teacher experience and related it directly to the abstraction of policy imperatives. Furthermore, I had to move back and forth between student and teacher experience and my own reflection to establish meaning within two frameworks viz. critical pedagogy, which has a degree of legitimacy and legibility; and critical student agency (a newly theorised concept) which I was investigating more directly. As such, the cases that were selected as data sources provided me as researcher with different knowledge and a deeper understanding of pedagogical practice, as they involved rich descriptions of the life-worlds of students and teachers. The narratives that emerged from the data were understood as specific (relating to one individual) and general (relating to a group of individuals). In this way participant words, actions, feelings and thoughts [as mediated through the interpretation of Jansen (1999), Molteno (1987), Fataar and Du Plooy (2012), and Evans and Cleghorn (2012)], provided the variation that helped me develop a typical essence of what critical student agency is so I could understand the phenomenon as a whole. Practically, this meant that each case was analysed at the descriptive level; and secondly all accounts were synthesised to identify the general themes of critical student agency, so I could access the explicit and implicit dimensions that inform a theory of critical student agency.

The focus now shifts to providing reasonable justification for a CDA methodology and, since the sections below are dense, an outline is provided: firstly, immediately following this section, the methodology will be defined in 3.5, and its theoretical origins will be traced to establish fully that there is indeed alignment in the use of CDA within a hermeneutic, critical and philosophical research project. Secondly, tracing the theoretical genesis of CDA will begin with Wodak's (2001) reaction to the responsiveness of CDA in ideology criticism, as well as its ability to reveal asymmetrical power relations, in order for the researcher to draw a parallel of how CDA might relate to language analysis in pedagogic encounters. Next, the strength, purpose and aim of CDA, according to the accounts of CDA theorists and followers (such as Capdevilla, [2011]; Fairclough, [1989]; Van Dijk, [1983] and Wodak, [1989]), will be explored. This exploration will probe how agents engage in discourse in numerous ways to exercise communicative agency. In practice it could, for example, happen in encounters in which individual discourse occurs between judge and defendant, mother and daughter, doctor and patient, as well as institutional or professional discourses, which may be labelled therapeutic discourse, organisational discourse or racist discourse (Van Dijk, 2000:371). In this fashion, one can expect the strength, purpose and aim of CDA to help reveal the possibilities of critical

student agency by analysing pedagogic encounters. Following the theoretical origins of CDA, an attempt is made to relate how the theory of CDA does or does not align with the practical application of CDA in the case of a communication (major) postgraduate student performing an analysis of newspaper articles covering the events of university student protests, and whether the assumptions of CDA support the practice of CDA in a real-life encounter. Penultimately, I follow Fairclough on an analyst's journey of what CDA looks like in practice by describing, interpreting and explaining CDA from the perspective of dealing with actual texts from real life (Fairclough, 1989:109–140). Following this tutorial by Fairclough, I again attempt to seek coherence between his theorising and my own endeavour to analyse official teacher policy and training, as well as actual pedagogic interaction in classrooms critically. Finally, I provide a snapshot of a pedagogic encounter relating to how the Council for Higher Education (CHE) describes critical pedagogy in its teacher (read as university lecturer) roles.

3.5   Justification for the research paradigm and methodology

The interpretive paradigm that was followed in this research project has fallen under much scrutiny in the realm of the reductionist notions embedded within positivist science (Semetsky, 2011:145–155). Yet, reliance on the infallibility of quantitative research methods is couched in the notion that:

> quantitative methods require unambiguous cause and effect relationships established through numbers (as facts), but as we know, human life is in many ways far more ambiguous and softer, therefore more transient explanations are required in practice to describe human thinking, language and action (Gummesson, 2003:5).

However, refusal to admit to the fragility of facts and that speech and action cannot be wrenched free of speaker and context (Noddings, 1993:144) is to miss that all research is in fact interpretive, as it demands of the researcher judgment, own experience and wisdom (Gummesson, 2003:3). It is on this basis that I argue that to follow an interpretive qualitative research method is the most profitable method, since it provides the elasticity necessary to interpret human speaking, writing, behaving, thinking, interacting, valuing and feeling (Magrini, 2012). In addition, Waghid (2010) provides further justification for a repulsion of an encyclopaedic inquiry into the academic discipline of philosophy of education, since this approach obscures the "conflicting, incommensurable and contending viewpoints on the subject" (Waghid, 2014:25). To assume that the academic discipline of philosophy of education is a collection of neutral facts would be a way of saying it precludes itself from interrogation,

scrutiny, criticism and self-interpretation, which is in sharp contrast with the theoretical notions of a philosophical discipline, such as critical pedagogy, for example, which renders everything vulnerable to questioning (Waghid, 2014:25).

To deal with interpretation scientifically, Gummesson (2003) suggests incorporating the art and science of hermeneutics as a paradigm. In this specific case, hermeneutics was appropriate to help answer the research question as this study dealt with written, verbal and nonverbal communication, which was investigated through student and teacher encounters. Through the examination of these pedagogic encounters, the researcher strove to understand, through analysing teacher and student actions, whether critical pedagogy is able to empower critical student agency to the point where students assert their rights for equality as democratic citizens. This approach of investigating classroom interaction is endorsed by Gummesson (2003:5) who suggests that languages and words are prerequisites for social life, since humans name phenomena (events, things) to aid in our understanding of them, and to communicate with others. Thus, interpretation becomes part of our daily practice in the continuum between thoughts, written and spoken words, observations, non-lingual expressions and feelings. Further to this, it is Gummesson's (2003) belief that hermeneutics seeks to help us find meaning in these routines so that they can be interpreted appropriately to reflect what students and teachers do in their practice. By this, it is meant that 'tacit knowledge becomes transformed into words by the researcher' (Gummesson, 2003).

To refine the limits of an investigation following the hermeneutic approach to qualitative analysis, some steps the researcher should adhere to are suggested:

- the ability to be constructively critical in interpreting the speaking, writing, behaving, thinking, interacting, valuing and feeling of one's sources, consciously striving to prevent speculation and bias from one's own ideology and assumptions (Gummesson, 2003:5);

- texts, words, behaviour, thoughts, interactions, values and feelings should be accounted for in a transparent, rich and complete way without dismissing contradictory evidence (Gummesson, 2003:5);

- the account must offer conceptualisation and condensation, or else the researcher has not contributed interpretation and meaning (Gummesson, 2003:5); and

- to increase credibility, the researcher should offer possible alternative interpretations and argue both for and against them (Gummesson, 2003:5).

The above-mentioned strategy is envisioned to take readers closer to reality by providing not just a mere detailed description, but also a thorough and scholarly account of the phenomena being studied. However, the limitations of a purely descriptive analysis might not have advanced this research project to the point of reasonably answering the research question. Even though Gummesson (2003) suggests a critical approach, it is not immediately clear what his definition of 'critical' is as it is used here. Is it critical because it passes judgment or is negative, or is it critical as in the tradition established by the Frankfurt School theorists, such as Horkheimer (1974) and Adorno (1973)? To be critical in the sense of the Frankfurt School thinkers is part of the interpretation of Reisigl and Wodak (2001), who say:

> 'Critical' means not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, being self-reflective in my research, and through these processes, making opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest. 'Critical', thus, does not imply the common-sense meaning of 'being negative' – rather 'sceptical'. Proposing alternatives is also part of being 'critical'.

I deemed it appropriate to insert the interpretation of what it means to be critical by Reisigl and Wodak (2001), particularly because Wodak is one of the originators of what we now call critical discourse analysis. She describes in Kendall (2007:56) how CDA was conceived:

> At that time, when text linguistics and speech act theory were becoming en vogue which then also led me from my primary focus on sociophonology to the in-depth qualitative analysis of text and discourse.

CDA and social transformation

3. 6   Towards an understanding of the theoretical genesis of CDA

As evidence of the theoretical reach of CDA, each theorist occupies a particular position within the development of CDA theory, with Ruth Wodak's (1989) specific focus being on a discourse–historical approach, while Norman Fairclough (1989) assumes a dialectical-relational approach. Teun van Dijk (1983), on the other hand, developed a socio-cognitive approach to discourse analysis (Forchtner, 2009:4). I further believe that interpolating Wodak's (1989) perspectives within this CDA is necessary as it presents a poststructuralist female (other) theoretical and practical conception of literary analysis, which was developed in tandem with the more widely recognised and acknowledged (male) voices of Fairclough (1989) and Van Dijk (1983). Full representation of the 'other' is foundational to this particular study of critical

student agency as it provides insight into the experiences of working-class students who are otherwise neglected and overlooked within middle-class educational discourses.

To return to the above-mentioned definition of the word **critical**, it becomes necessary to enhance and embolden the descriptive interpretive field with a critical perspective and, since the interaction between two agentic forces in the pedagogic encounter requires discourse, it seemed most appropriate to follow CDA as the methodology. In addition, within the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy – within which this research project was located – the necessary coherence is provided in terms of the critical paradigm, as in both instances (critical pedagogy and CDA), injustice and asymmetrical power relations are questioned in order to enact transformation. In keeping with the critical paradigm, CDA on its own can be described as a methodology that requires and enables a vigorous assessment of what it means when language is used to describe and explain (Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past & Institute of Historical Research [IPUP & IHR], 2007).

The agenda in critical studies is set around the need to explore often-opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes systematically to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power (Fairclough 1995a: 132).

Ordinary people, rather than being represented in text, act out the text itself in their everyday lives as symbolic of their fight for recognition as intelligent, thinking beings and, by extension, active agents (Fairclough 1995a). In contrast, a-critical master explicators (Biesta, Bingham & Rancière, 2010: 8) convert competence into authority as they master a language that regulates the discourse (De Certeau, 1984: xxii). It is in the battle for power that ordinary language is relegated to the fringes and the artificial language that science valorises and impels us to master, that a prominent discourse is developed that establishes a hierarchy of what reality is. This battle for power further legitimises the need to investigate the agentic force that students may use and display in discursive practices that might inform their capacity to bring about democratic transformation toward greater equality and justice.

As agentic students engage in discursive practices, we need to be cognisant that language, texts and communication are socially constructed and should be understood in their unique and particular context. This brings with it the understanding that texts do not 'only describe the world but they imbue it with meaning, fabricate it, shape perspectives and represent a particular

reality' (IPUP & IHR, 2007). Discourse understood as above may be considered as an "active relation to reality" (Fairclough 1992:41). Fairclough (2003:26) delineates three characteristics of discourse, which describe its operation within social life as "part of the action", namely genres (ways of acting), discourses (ways of representing), and styles (ways of being).

Firstly, **genres** refers to a particular way of manipulating and framing discourse. Examples of genres are church sermons, constructed interviews and political speeches (IPUP & IHR, 2007). Genres are significant because they provide a framework for an audience to comprehend discourse, and therein lies the danger that, by its very quality, a genre may be the locus of power and domination, as well as a positive force of resistance (IPUP & IHR, 2007). In as far as power and domination are inscribed in discourse, this investigation sought to discover the ruptures that might exist for the dominated, popular classes in society who use ordinary language to carve out their own space in establishing a discourse of power (Fairclough 1989; 1992; 1995b; 2003). However, it currently would appear that they simply have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations of language. If we were to look specifically at the Christian church and its discourse, which demonise the practices of traditional religions by framing their agency in a negative light and reducing it to superstition, rituals and voodoo (De Certeau, 1984:17), we can appreciate how discourse can control and manipulate, but we also need to consider how it can be employed resourcefully to emancipate.

Secondly, another characteristic of discourse in social life is **discourse** (or **representation**), which is crucial in assessing the means by which apparently similar aspects of the world can be appreciated and understood from different perspectives or positions, for instance how teacher and critical student agency might be revealed in the pedagogical encounter.

Finally, **styles** refers to the ways in which discourse is used to constitute a sense of being and identity, and how identification is located through the application and manner of particular discourses (Wodak, 2002; 1989; Fairclough, 1993; 1995b; Van Dijk, 1983; 1984) . In relation to the pedagogical encounter, a deeper understanding of the construction of student and teacher identity might be revealed. However, herein lies another problem for those who develop discourses of power aimed at domination, because they assume that their sense of being and identity is superior to all others and circumvents the richness of the phenomena being studied to be respectfully dealt with. De Certeau (1984:13) describes discourse in philosophy as being like a group of savage, primitive people who hear the expressions of civilised men, put false interpretations on them and draw the queerest conclusions from it.

This above-mentioned analogy illustrates that the social effect of a discourse is dependent upon the audience accessing, comprehending, using and resisting it (Fairclough 2003:11). Discourses are thus always competing against one another for dominance, power and control (Foucault, 1980:35). While there is the suggestion of struggle or competition, we can infer that certain discourses are more powerful than others in society. It can furthermore also be assumed that, in the deepest struggles for recognition and equality, agents present themselves to counter-balance the domineering discourses. As the Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past & Institute of Historical Research document (IPUP & IHR: 2007):

> An obvious example would be the government or legal codes which prescribe the boundaries of operation in everyday life. There are however more subtle domineering discourses which function to maintain perceptions and attitudes. These may operate on a subtle level; van Dijk (1991) for instance examined the racist discourses which operated within the British press. By practicing certain modes of exclusionary discourse, particularly the use of pronouns, 'we', 'us', and 'them', newspapers in Britain were shown to participate and propagate in a discourse of a dominating, White, overwhelming middle-class Britain. The mode of reporting was shown to be less subtle as the, 'dominant definition of ethnic affairs has consistently been a negative and stereotypical one: minorities or immigrants are seen as a problem or a threat, and are portrayed preferably in association with crime, violence, conflict, unacceptable cultural differences, or other forms of deviance (van Dijk 1991: 20). Critical discourse analysis therefore examines the form, structure and content of discourse, from the grammar and wording employed in its creation to its reception and interpretation by a wider audience. The employment of verbs, pronouns and nouns within discourse is as much part of this analysis as the assessment of the content and tone of the discourse. The methodology facilitates an assessment based upon more than just simple quotations but upon what the discourse is doing and what it is being asked to do in its production, dissemination and consumption (IPUP & IHR: 2007).

Therefore, CDA is defended as being critical because it operates on the logic of not taking anything for granted, opening up alternative readings (justifiable through cues in the texts), self-reflection on the research process, and making ideological positions manifested in the respective texts transparent (Kendall, 2007). On this basis, I have taken the liberty of quoting such a large chunk of text in the preceding section (in reference to IPUP & IHR) because, in

order to deconstruct texts, it is impossible to provide simple, short, telling examples, since these examples exclude the rich socio-political and historical contexts that are foundational in a textured analysis (Wodak & Reisigl, 2002:398).

While I have thus far painted a rather gloomy and depressing picture of the way in which elite discourses affect the marginal in society, the most notable development within CDA is its ability to deal effectively with phenomena such as identity politics, which deals with transition and social change, language policies, and on integrating macro social theories with linguistic analysis (Kendall, 2007:80).

So even when a discourse is developed to oppress and subvert popular power, vigilant, critical and pro-democratic agents create fracture lines to seize the moment in order to produce, and disseminate a counter-discourse that could be consumed by non-elites to restore power relations symmetrically in society (Giroux, 1992) . The above-mentioned facts cohere with the aims of critical pedagogy, which strives to promote transition and social change in order to facilitate the greater measures of emancipation and equality promised under democracy (Rancière, 1999). Furthermore, De Certeau (1984:19) presents a novel way in which the art of practice (which can be interpreted as 'needing agency') differs from theoretical models in non-dominant cultures. His example includes the use of simulation and dissimulation in the telling of (folk) tales, where the agents frequently reverse the relationships of power and ensure victory for the unfortunate in a fabulous utopian space (De Certeau, 1984). It is in this space where the weak are protected from the weapons of the established power (De Certeau, 1984:19–23). Similarly, critical student agency might reveal its authority in relation to self-emancipation and a struggle for equality in the dynamic relationship it has with established power.

Despite the fact that I am advocating for a CDA methodology, we dare not lose sight of the tensions that exist between CDA and the normative nature of methodologies. Wodak (Kendall, 2007:60) responds to this challenge by stating, "dogmatism is directly opposed to being critical because normative views will be defended on the values and interests they advance in research" (Wodak cited in Kendall, 2007:60) and CDA also defends its own values and interests from a critical social standpoint. Wodak (cited in Kendall, 2007) thus suggests that a way to overcome this challenge is to be aware that researcher evaluations and judgments require much context knowledge, and that norms must be adequate for specific cultural or situational contexts (Kendall, 2007). In addition to the tension between methodologies, the call for interdisciplinarity in CDA reveals the menacing idea that sensitive topics (such as genocide and

anti-Semitism), which might be perceived as threatening to established power, will become even more transparent under the CDA gaze. Further criticism from loyalists and apologists of normative methodologies is that CDA is non-objective, while Wodak (cited in Kendall, 2007) feels these accusations are evidence of "reinvention and repetition of assaults on alternative research methodologies which had taken place in other disciplines long ago" (Kendall, 2007:42). What Wodak (cited in Kendall, 2007) believes to be a solution to these criticisms "is to implement careful and detailed linguistic analysis while also venturing into the domains of macro social theory" (Kendall, 2007:43). Wodak (cited in Kendall, 2007) also accepts the position that CDA should not be defined simply as following one specific methodology, because CDA is shaped by the theory that informs the investigation (Kendall, 2007). I reiterate that critical pedagogy has resonance with CDA, as both strive toward revealing asymmetrical relations of power that work in the interests of the elite classes, while democracy creates the expectation of emancipation and equality for all. In this instance, critical student agency might reveal how speech acts (discursive and linguistic practices) suggest or do not suggest greater social action on their part toward unsettling capitalist hegemony and ideology in the struggle for emancipatory democracy. To further clarify CDA, Reisigl and Wodak (2001:94) distinguish between three dimensions of criticism: text-immanent criticism, socio-diagnostic criticism, and prospective (retrospective) criticism. It is within the text-immanent criticism and socio-diagnostic dimensions that the current investigation concentrated its energies to describe and explain the interrelation of language and social power to arrive at a layered account of the potential for and of critical student agency.

According to Fairclough (1995a: 747), the social analysis of discourse, is understood in terms of human matters, interconnections and chains of cause-and-effect which may be distorted out of vision. Hence, criticism is essentially making visible the interconnectedness of things.

This statement helps to clarify the unspoken and subtle ideological perspectives that become obscure and foggy during communication. Given the positions and orientations of the key theoretical developers of CDA, viz. Wodak (1989), Fairclough (1989) and Van Dijk (1983), we gain the impression that CDA could adhere to the thinking inherent in literary criticism, Marxism and the Frankfurt School, with strong undercurrents of ideology criticism and class struggle (Wodak, 2002:4). Ideology has matrimony with CDA in that it aims to make transparent the ways in which meaning is constructed in society as it questions how ideology establishes and sustains relations of domination in society (Thompson, 1990). In an understanding of ideology as the way thought shapes social reality (Eagleton, 1994), the

Frankfurt School thinkers like Marcuse (1964) elaborate on the distinctions between scientific theory and critical theory to illuminate the agentic potentialities within the critical paradigm to question, refuse and unsettle the notion of absolute reality. Building on the Frankfurt School's anti-positivist notions, Wodak (2002) interprets the distinct aims and goals of scientific theories as divergent to those of critical theories (Wodak, 2002: 5–6). Scientific theories are defined by instrumental use, where the concentration is on manipulating the natural world by understanding matter (Wodak, 2002: 5). In contrast, critical theories aim to make human agents aware of hidden coercion in order to free them so that they can determine their own, true interests (Wodak, 2002:5). Secondly, the cognitive structure that informs scientific theories is found in objectifying the subject (Wodak, 2002). There is therefore a distinction between theory and the objects to which the theory refers, so that the theory becomes divorced from the object domain it describes (Wodak, 2002: 6). Dissimilarly, the cognitive structure that enlightens critical theory is reflective, as the researcher is always part of the world he/she is studying (Wodak, 2002: 6). Finally, scientific theories and critical theories diverge in the confirmation of the evidence used to determine whether or not the results of inquiry are acceptable (Wodak, 2002:6). In the case of scientific theories, confirmation is provided in quantitative, absolute terms (Lather, 2004: 762), whereas for critical theories, human behaviour and action are presented in qualitative approximations (Magrini, 2012). Therefore, it would be unhelpful to continue to obscure and objectify non-elite students by masking the complexity of their realities in quantified data (Lather, 2004: 767). A theory of critical student agency proposes to shatter the anonymity to with non-elite students by describing and understanding their subjectivities, all in an effort to engage more ethically with them (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010).

Wodak (2002:10) argues that CDA demystifies discourses by deciphering ideologies as it works to expose language and, if not for the power it gains by the use of powerful people, how that language on its own is immobilised. CDA thus chooses the perspectives of those who suffer (the marginal, non-elite, sub-ordinate classes) as it analyses the language use of those in power, who are in fact responsible for the inequalities (Fairclough, 1989; Van Dijk, 1983, 1984, 1991, 1993, 2000; Wodak, 1989). In its analysis, CDA allows us to come to understand the transmitting of knowledge, the organising of social institutions and the exercising of power (Wodak, 2002: 10). Consequently, texts are sites of struggle in which two viewpoints are presented, and CDA provides the theorising and description of social structures and processes within individuals to create meaning with texts (Fairclough & Kress, 1993:133–168). CDA differs in relation to pragmatics and sociolinguistics on the basis that, in the latter, context

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variables are naively correlated with an autonomous system of language (Kress & Hodge, 1979). This way, CDA avoids the deterministic relationship between texts and social reality by reminding us that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted in time and space Kress & Hodge, 1979). Furthermore, although dominant structures are legitimated by the ideologies of powerful groups, possibilities of resistance to unequal power relations that appear as social conventions must be fought for (Van Dijk, 2000, 2004). CDA thus seeks to expose those societal conventions that are portrayed as stable, neutral and 'given' conventions in the construction of meaning, and to incite resistance, which is seen as the breaking of conventions (stable discursive practices) in acts of creativity (Fairclough & Kress, 1993:133–168). Wodak (2002: 12) further notes that, in sociolinguistics, context is trivialised as being "not linguistic" and therefore accommodates notions of static sociological variables, when in fact context is transient and unique and should account for the textured responses from counter-hegemonic 'others' who strive to recover their creativity and fight for more balanced and equitable relations of power (Freire 2005a: 160-164).

In summary, Wodak (2002) relies on the work of Kress (1989) in summing up the responsiveness of CDA, particularly in pedagogic encounters. To do this she focuses on Kress's (1989) basic assumptions of CDA that were salient in its formative development and were later elaborated on in the theory. These include assumptions, such as, firstly, that language is a social phenomenon. Secondly, not only individuals, but also institutions and social groupings, have specific meanings and values that are expressed in language in systematic ways. Thirdly, texts are the relevant units of language in communication. Fourthly, readers or hearers are not passive recipients in their relationship to texts; and ultimately, there are similarities between the language of science and the language of institutions (Kress, 1989:445–466). A central aspect of Kress's (1989) work is his attempt to understand the formation of the individual human being as a social individual in response to available resources, particularly the content of educational curricula in terms of representational resources and their use by individuals in their constant transformation of their subjectivities (Wodak, 2002:15).

While I have thus far attempted to present Wodak's (2002) account of how CDA has developed, the focus now shifts (through illustrative example) to Hall's (2011) study of three of the United Kingdom's highest-circulation broadsheet newspapers, to show how CDA works (and to show how I appropriated it in this study). To invoke Wodak (2002) again, I provide an expansive text, as this is necessary for an elaborate study of the socio-historic and political dimension of the discourse. In an effort to contextualise the selection adequately, the reporting relates to

students demonstrating over planned increases in university tuition fees. In so doing, it provides the foundational basis upon which I planned to test whether Kress's assumptions in CDA have any resonance with Hall's (2011) attempt to examine speech acts in the mainstream media. For the purpose of the comparison, reference is made only to the methodological dimension of Hall's (2011) study, and does not focus in any way on his analysis. In its stead, a critical overview is provided of the assumptions of the researcher and the particular ideology that is on display. This serves as a methodological demonstration of how I proposed to use CDA in an exploration of critical student agency in the upcoming chapters viz.4, 5 and 6.

3.7   Understanding how CDA relates to speech and text analysis in classrooms

Hall operates on the assumption that the media fulfil a societal function by reflecting and shaping public opinion through informing, deliberating and witnessing (Hall, 2011:6). He proposes that mass media inform society by telling the citizens what the world looks like, deliberate by motivating public debate, and witness by making a moral claim (Hall, 2011:6). The methodology he employs is specific in describing that the three broadsheet newspapers held various political opinions, from being liberal to more right-leaning persuasions, and that the unit of analysis was speech acts written by journalists and did not take into account opinion pieces, editorials or reader contributions (Hall, 2011:5). I relate Hall's purpose, which was to examine speech acts in the print media of three newspapers via journalistic communication, to Kress's (1989) assumptions in CDA to establish whether they cohere. Once more, I shall invoke Wodak, who iterates that "simple, short, telling examples" are inadequate in revealing socio-political and historical contexts in CDA (Wodak, 2002: 8); thus I provide the full account.

Firstly, Kress (1989) argues that language is a social phenomenon and, in Hall's (2011) study, journalists gathered news on behalf of society in order to inform, deliberate and witness. Stated differently, journalists tell the public what the world looks like, and on this basis, the public are motivated to debate key issues in order to make a moral claim that prompts a particular type of action. Secondly, individuals, institutions and social groupings have specific meanings and values that are expressed in language in systematic ways. Hall (2011) mentions that the political orientations of the three newspapers were skewed toward either a liberal or a right-wing perspective. Thirdly, according to Kress's (1989) assumptions on CDA, texts are the relevant units of language in communication, and Hall (2011) explains that the front page articles in his study were speech acts (letters, words, clauses, phrases, sentences) written in text by journalists. Kress (1989) proposes that readers are not passive recipients in their relationship with texts,

while Hall insinuates the same by declaring that in witnessing, the reader is called to action. Finally, Kress (1989) observes similarities between the language of science and the language of institutions; and in Hall's (2011) exposition there is a correspondence between the prominent political orientations and the tone of the reporting. As Kress's (1989) theoretical assumptions are reflected against the life world that Hall (2011) presents in his account of reporting on student protests, there seems to be a very high degree of coherence and consistency. However, some critical elements also need to be admitted in relation to CDA. Hall (2011) treats ideology, power and inequality too casually or not at all, and his inattention to these concepts is problematic in that, under democracy, these concepts are crucial to an independent and critical media. It is not enough simply to advocate for information, deliberation and witnessing toward action when hegemonic ideology remains untroubled and unquestioned. If the media are stewards for the ruling elite, citizens can expect little or no hope for equal relations of power in society, as the media function at the behest of established power. In this manner, they have the instruments (words and ideology) to shroud reality in their particular conceptions of what the world looks like by using the opaque language of science and institutions. Against this logic, texts are not deciphered according to the driving ideology (liberal or left-wing, for example), unequal power relations or social inequality, and the news is portrayed as being natural, neutral, objective reporting. This way, language is passed off as transparent and obvious, when in reality it works to conceal ideological hegemony.

The problem with the acceptance of such logic is that ideology, power, inequality and even the strength of democracy are not interrogated, so citizens remain passive rather than to become participatory. Therefore, even in the light of Hall's (2011) exposition of the student protests, much remains unsaid about how the media might portrayed this event by territorialising it and making it appear as an isolated incident that would be resolved soon so as to restore order, thereby minimising the defence to act in the interest of democracy for freedom, justice and equality. The link here (with critical student agency) is that it is within the conceptualisation of texts as sites of struggle that critical agents exercise their creative potential and fight for a measure of equality.

Now, if we were to refer back to Hall's (2011) example of media discourse we would be able to unravel it in its component parts either as a study of linguistics, sociolinguistics or pragmatics, or even as a combination of all three sub-disciplines as subjects of language study (Fairclough, 1989:6). According to Fairclough (1986), linguistics is described as language analysis that fragments vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, turn-taking and non-linguistic

textual features (such as visuals) in order to undertake text analysis. On the other hand, sociolinguistics is the analysis of situational context, whilst pragmatics is the science of language use (Fairclough, 1989:6–10). In an attempt to render lucid the opacity of the ideological hegemony of the ruling elite, ordinary citizens need to employ common sense as well as develop a consciousness of the fact, to use Hall's (2011) example, that the journalist, just as the researcher, is not ideologically neutral. By this we may infer that it would be highly improbable that journalists report from a marginal, non-elite, subjugated position (given that the newspapers were three of the highest circulating papers in United Kingdom.), so the reader has to judge the article with a fiercely sceptical lens.

So far, I have addressed media discourse, and now attempt an abrupt shift from discourse analysis to language analysis, which is done simply because each discourse is embedded in language and, in order to undertake an analysis, some formal features of language need to be considered. To this Fairclough (1989) responds by providing three steps that are necessary in text analysis, viz. description, interpretation and explanation. Firstly, in describing language, Fairclough (1989) proposes that the analyst focus on grammar, which is to mean the sound systems of language (phonology), the grammatical structure of words (morphology) and of sentences (syntax), and the more formal aspects of meaning (semantics) (Fairclough, 1989:6–10). Secondly, the analyst makes an interpretation of the relationship between the text and interaction, and finally, in explanation, the analyst connects the relationship to the broader social context. From the above process, we see that the analysis graduates from the first level, which is language analysis in linguistics, to the second level in sociolinguistics – with the emphasis on context, and finally to the last level, which is pragmatics, as it explains the social significance of interactions.

Progressing to a more precise method to perform a textual analysis, Fairclough (1989) reiterates that all analysis is interpretive and that the researcher asks these basic questions: What is in the text? What is in the interpreter? This could mean that the text provides cues from the formal features (vocabulary, grammar and punctuation, among others), as well as the background knowledge of the researcher. This implies that the interpreter imposes a particular ideology in meaning-making, which further carries implications for news dissemination via the media as broadcasting the beliefs, values and attitudes of the established order or ruling elite.

It is for the above reason that Fairclough (1992) advocates that textual analysis ought to receive greater recognition as part of the methodologies of social science on the basis that it has

significance as a theory, a method, a socio-historical barometer and a political force, to empower the disadvantaged in their fight for an emancipatory, strong democracy (Fairclough, 1992:193–217). In this instance, Fairclough (1992) rests his justification on the theoretical grounds that language is widely misperceived as transparent, so that the ideological effects of language are overlooked (Capdevila, 2011). Thus, the methodological motivation here is that texts constitute major evidence for grounding claims about social structures. The historical reason is that texts are sensitive barometers of social processes, movement and diversity, and can therefore provide a good indicator of social change. The political reason is that, through texts, social control and social domination are exercised, and indeed negotiated and resisted (Capdevila, 2011:13). The conclusion to be drawn is that CDA sees texts as a powerful basis for analysis, but what is also important for the analysis is what is absent or omitted from texts, which legitimises their claim of criticality. In the same way that it is critical of ideology, CDA advocates for the democratisation of discourse by collapsing the power asymmetry between people of unequal institutional power. Discoursal democratisation is linked to political democratisation, and to the broad shift from coercion to consent, incorporation and pluralism in the exercise of power to awaken possibilities of empowerment and change (Capdevila, 2011:8).

3.8   A closer look at the purpose and appropriateness of CDA methodology

Building upon Fairclough, Capdevila (2011:8) proposes that CDA should equip serious scholars of discourse (students, teachers, policy designers, and so on) with the capacities of critical, creative and emancipatory practice. This begs the question of how exactly to excite a critical, creative and emancipatory practice within students. In response, Fairclough (1989) elaborates upon numerous practical strategies to describe, interpret and explain discourses. To begin with, textual analysis may take into account the vocabulary used, so the reader must be aware of the experiential value of words and strive to identify the kinds of words that may be ideologically contested. For instance, Fairclough (1989:116–117) provides an example of the word 'coon' as it was used in a racist context. Another feature of language analysis is grammar, and here Fairclough (1989:122–123) cautions the critical reader to observe whether agency is unclear, whether processes are what they seem, and whether sentences are active or passive, or positive or negative. Further to this, he creates awareness of the use of pronouns (we, you, and us) and, more importantly, the way they are used (Fairclough, 1989:125). Next, he asks the discerning reader to note how simple sentences are linked together, as well as how interactional

conventions are used in ways to illustrate how one participant controls the turns of the other (Fairclough, 1989:124). The above-mentioned approaches could be viable in developing the capacity to vitalise agency in CDA, as critical agents could be empowered to understand the production, form and reception of discourses in order to expose and transform discourses to reflect a more emancipatory practice. In so doing, the opaque structures of power and their accompanying ideology have less opportunity to work against the democratic ideals of participation, transparency, equality and justice.

We now turn to Fairclough's (1989) understanding of the values of the features of discourse used to make meaning, viz. experiential, relational and expressive, where experiential values give the reader cues of how text producers experience the natural and social world, and this is expressed in the content, knowledge and beliefs embedded in the texts they produce. Further to this, relational values provide the reader with cues of social relationships enacted via the text in discourse, while expressive values provide evidence of the producers' evaluation of reality via their social identity. Finally, to solidify our skill in excavating the critical elements to bring about textual meaning, Fairclough recommends four steps in assisting readers to describe, interpret and explain a text critically using CDA. To begin with, the reader must be aware of the surface utterance in discourse, which is the knowledge of language, sounds, marks on the paper, words, phrases, sentences, phonology, grammar and vocabulary (Fairclough, 1989:142–143). Next, the reader must make meaning of the utterance in discourse by using semantic propositions to assign meaning by using grammar (Fairclough, 1989:142–143). Thirdly, the critical agent needs to draw connections between utterances in discourse in order to arrive at a coherent interpretation and to be able to make logical inferences (Fairclough, 1989:142–143). Finally, the text structure and point (i.e. the topic) of the discourse should be observed in order to determine how the entire text hangs together for global coherence so that a summary interpretation of the text as a whole may be made (Fairclough, 1989:144). To simplify the methodology in describing, interpreting and explaining discourse using CDA in a situational context further, Fairclough proposes that the reader ask, "What is going on? Who is involved? In what relations? What is the role of language?" (Fairclough, 1989:149). Here, CDA is given potency as a theory, a method, a socio-historical barometer and a political force to unmask ideological hegemony and asymmetrical power relations to help critical agents assert their rights as equal democratic actors. Much time has been devoted to advancing and justifying why CDA is an appropriate methodology in discovering pedagogical encounters that may highlight the presence and potency of critical student agency, the focus now shifts somewhat

and we revisit a concept insinuated throughout this study, namely democratic pedagogical encounters, a salient feature in critical pedagogy (Waghid, 2010).

3.9   Considering the role of communicative agency in democratic citizenship education

To begin with, I move from the premise of democracy as articulated by Barber (2003:x), who characterises progressive "strong democracy" as an instance where people pool their resources and find the common will to undertake common tasks. In this light, it would seem that human agency is the cornerstone of a strong democracy, since it demands civic engagement and citizen participation to thicken thin democracy. In order for the fruits of democracy, viz. autonomy, freedom and justice, to be actualised, it requires a well-informed citizenry who are enlightened enough to exercise discretion as a form of agency. Human agency is an imperative to democracy since, according to Butler (2011), it provides freedom to act (and by implication speak, think, deliberate, protest, vote, criticise and raise consciousness). The freedom alluded to above raises the expectation that, in democratic citizenship education (Waghid, 2011:17), student agents will not only have the freedom but the propensity, disposition and skill to engage in text-immanent and socio-diagnostic criticism. Under these conditions, CDA is synergistic with critical literacy, as it strives to delve deeper into meaning-making by checking the validity of claims and exposing fallacies, as well as contextualising objects of investigation and objectifying the ideological basis of claims so as to reveal the ideologies as products of a historical process (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009:100). Democratic education, as reflected through a CDA methodology, might allow agentic students to see texts as sites of struggle and contestation, which are prime conditions for inviting democratic deliberation, where "competing narratives and significations create civil spaces" for strong democracy to thrive (Waghid, 2010:21). In order for democracy as advocated for in critical pedagogy to thrive, conditions of equality are however necessary. Whilst material equality has not yet been attained, it might be plausible to entertain a Rancièrean conception of equality of intelligence in the hope of attaining a more practical form of democracy in pedagogic engagements.

In an attempt to achieve equality of intelligence, Rancière (1991:xvii) believes that there is only one way for students to begin to criticise their teachers' knowledge, and that is by them dismantling authoritarian structures and becoming peers so that they may have equality of intelligence. It is with this in mind that Rancière (1991) advocates for a position of equality from the outset, rather than equality as a goal to strive for in the distant future. Following Rancière (1991), Waghid (2014:1) refuses the "acknowledgement that students are less

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authoritative in educative relations, and that teachers have to initiate activities on account of their [teachers'] pedagogical authority". He argues, "critical pedagogy requires that students become more authoritative and less vulnerable to the pedagogical authority of teachers" (Waghid, 2014:1). As evidenced in a strong democracy, "students and teachers should mutually engage one another in just relations" (Waghid, 2014:1). Waghid challenges the thinness of democratic educational encounters and calls for a disruption in pedagogic engagement to the point where critical student agency is fortified as it emboldens agentic students to take risks toward the improbable, unexpected and unheard of (Waghid, 2014:15). This way, students are empowered to recover their creativity as they go beyond what is given, and as they go beyond constructed meanings to redeem their own voice (Waghid, 2014:23). Waghid draws on Greene (1995) and recommends the virtues of critical pedagogy as an antidote to the "disenfranchisement, effacement and abandonment" (Waghid, 2014:27) of undemocratic educational encounters. Agentic teachers in critical pedagogy are identified by "carving a space for others in which they can undertake responsible tasks, protest injustices and overcome dependencies" (Greene, 1995, as cited in Waghid, 2014:24). Critical pedagogy as described above enables students to recover a critical, creative and emancipatory practice that goes against traditional reading and literacy (for example), which "undermines inventiveness, imagination and surprise and that is pedagogically trapped in mediocrity" (Waghid, 2014:24). An enabling and empowering pedagogy allows students to explore the dimensions of the meaning of knowledge through its content, as well the social relations it develops in conjunction with the social identities it constructs in them as subjects (Fairclough, 1989:171). Agentic students may however still be stifled by master narratives and grand explanations from master explicators (Rancière, 1994:120) if they have not confronted themselves as thinking and speaking beings with equal intelligence to others. It is through the act and exercise of pedagogic equality that students may come to see their own ability in self-engagement with texts, as they are required to think for themselves and offer their own explanations. This exercise, being a practice of emancipatory democratic education, acts as verification of equality of intelligence (Waghid, 2014:31–33). Waghid entertains an interesting and refreshing notion of the practice of democratic education in his call for disruption and dissensus. For agentic forces, disruption signals a break with the order of things through the expression of their intellectual equality as it releases possibilities for new identities and new ways of doing and being (Waghid, 2014:34). As a practice of democracy, dissensus or disagreement brings into view the things that could not previously be seen or heard, and sets them open to deliberation (Waghid, 2014:34). Waghid's call for belligerence and distress, disagreement and dissensus in democratic

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engagements illuminates the synergy of democratic education with the tradition in critical pedagogy and CDA, which raises consciousness, criticises, refuses, challenges, remains sceptical, does not treat events or behaviour as common sense, exposes complexity, tests reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, is self-reflective, reveals opaque structures of power relations and ideologies, and proposes alternatives (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 111). In short, critical student agency under these conditions matures when it is able to display equality of intelligence in a critical way so that a CDA does not simply mirror the values, beliefs, norms and standards of the ruling elite (as disseminated via the media, the government or school), but awakens criticality in students. And, whilst I have approached the methodological aspects of CDA from a researcher's perspective, the self-same methodology may be flexible enough to be used by critical agents – be they students, teachers, lecturers or parents – since literacy and reading require us to provide descriptions, interpretations and explanations. With this in mind, the focus now moves to the practical application of the methodological assumptions of CDA in an analysis of the South African CHE's criteria and minimum standards for the Bachelors of Education (BEd) degree. This is done with a view to investigate how critical pedagogy is located within the requirements for teacher qualification that will help us understand how much room is made within education policy for critical student agency.

3.10   CDA of the CHE standards for the BEd degree

The CHE is guided by the Norms and Standards for Educators (NSE) (Department of Education [DoE], 2000), which specify that graduate teachers should possess strong subject and educational theory competence at the end of the programme. While there are no distinct criteria that specify that prospective teachers are obligated to enrol in modules containing critical pedagogy in the teacher education programme, the official state policy, the NSE, does exhibit progressive education theory in its language, viz. prospective teachers should "[f]oster self-reflexivity and self-understanding", and they should "[d]evelop students as active citizens and enable them to develop the dispositions of citizenship in their learners" (DoE, 2000:8−11). Furthermore, the CHE (DoE, 2000) states explicitly that, in its quest for transformative learning, it has embraced constructivist notions of cognitive development and relied on the theories of learning premised on best practices of adult educationalists like Freire (1970), who employed conscientisation to change the way adult learners see the world and act on it (Freire, 1970; Higher Education Quality Committee [HEQC], 2001:12). Furthermore, the CHE defines the character and practice of the academics who educate prospective teachers as single-minded and critical individuals who:

- create powerful learning environments that focus on student activity, interaction, variation in task demands and the application of knowledge to real-world problems;

- provide opportunities for students to test, extend, reflect on and revise their ideas;

- change students' ways of seeing and thinking about the world;

- avoid deficit models of education to promote critical as opposed to reproductive academic literacy;

- assess different forms of knowledge and critically frame competing discourses by active re-organisation of students' cultural and cognitive frameworks; and

- invite such an approach to teaching and learning that entails an interaction in which the epistemologies of different types of knowledge and discourses are made explicit and open to question (HEQC, 2001:12).

Inasmuch as the roles of students' (in this case, aspirant teachers) in critical pedagogy are not explicitly defined in the qualifying criteria of the BEd degree, the roles of the teachers (lecturer and faculty), as seen above, are made abundantly clear in the HEQC's approach to the quality management and improvement of higher education, since it reverberates in the sentiments of progressive and transformative pedagogies, such as critical pedagogy. Progressive concepts such as the "student-centred approach to learning", "problem solving for real-life contexts", "reflexivity and praxis", "critical literacy", "knowledge criticism" and "critical questioning by revealing and challenging underlying assumptions" are some of the hallmarks of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005a, NSE, 2000, SAQA, 2000:18). This entails a seemingly severe commitment (as suggested by the HEQC [2001]) on the part of the academics at universities to entrench the philosophies of critical pedagogy, but less so for the student, as the NSE barely hints at the robustness of progressive pedagogies (two categories reflect elements of criticality) (DoE, 2000). Perhaps it is a case of the university staff modelling the features of progressive pedagogies in order for them to be learned and assimilated in the teaching craft and the profession at large. Furthermore, individual university faculties are responsible for the formulation of an appropriate curriculum for their programmes (Samuel, 2002), and this may account for the rather scant detail provided by the HEQC (2001) in delimiting the qualifying criteria for the BEd degree. It is for this reason that the actual analysis that is reported place in Chapter 4 tried to provide a more holistic account of actual student and lecturer encounters as seen through the lens of teacher preparation programmes that fuse transformative learning into their curriculum through critical theory.

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3.11   Summary

In this chapter, I have sought to provide adequate justification for the chosen methodology (CDA) and why it is advantageous in a study of critical student agency in critical pedagogy. This was premised on the fact that an interpretive paradigm provides the latitude for the researcher to form judgments and to use own experience and wisdom within a CDA methodological framework. Practically, this was beneficial as it would allow me to look at a seemingly neutral (or commonly used) phrase such as 'previously disadvantaged' and to judge, by using my own experience and wisdom, whether this was a euphemism to denote race adversely or whether it was the most appropriate phrase to signify a particular group of people. Further to this, CDA activates a critical antenna that asks which ideological meaning lies behind such a seemingly innocuous and politically correct phrase. CDA as a methodology empowers research to go beyond the boundaries and limits of what appears innocuous, inoffensive and innocent on the surface. This is exactly this kind of thinking that provides much synergy within the philosophical realm of critical pedagogy as it seeks to question taken-for-granted assumptions of being and reality. Further to this, critical pedagogy and CDA create an understanding of agentic force, since discourse is socially shaped, but within discourse there is the possibility of an exit point where the agent may be able to constitute a different, more appropriate or better discourse. Finally, in critical pedagogy, CDA may stand out in its appropriateness to advocate for the emancipatory freedom, justice and development of full human potentiality under democracy. What follows in Chapter 4 is a report on an investigation of how critical pedagogy manifests in teacher education policy, Bachelor of Education (BEd) programmes and lecture room pedagogy in order to gain insight into the prospects of critical pedagogy in school classrooms. This sets up the concrete terms to examine critical student agency, because if official education policy engages critical pedagogy, it provides the reference frame for me to ask what do students do with critical pedagogy in relation to their agency?

Chapter 4

Ways in which critical pedagogy resonate with teacher education policy, Bachelor of Education programmes and lecture room pedagogy

4.1   Introduction

Chapter 3 advocated on behalf of the applicability of the chosen methodology (CDA) (see 3.1, 3.2, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7), as well as the procedures that were followed in investigating the veracity and potential of student agency (see 3.4). This chapter reports on an exploration into how critical pedagogy might appear in relation to teacher education policy, Bachelor of Education (BEd) programmes and lecture room pedagogy. More specifically, the chapter simultaneously provides a critical analysis of curriculum reform (as seen primarily from a higher education vantage point) within a post-apartheid timeframe with occasional retrospective glances to account for the historicity of South African education and its ramifications in recent times. As such, only slight reference will be made to apartheid education legacies, with the bulk of the emphasis on post-apartheid curriculum reform, as well as the further revisions that necessitated a gradual overhaul of the initial reforms up to the present-day realities of official policy and its reverberations in higher education and beyond. Schematically, the chapter is organised into five case studies of university classroom engagements, curriculum reform through outcomes-based education (OBE) and its accompanying curriculum, Curriculum 2005 (OBE/C2005), as well as the National Curriculum Statement and the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (NCS CAPS). The structure of each theme (case study and policy analysis) is firstly an interpretation of the theme, followed immediately by the CDA. Furthermore, in dealing with policy I shall invoke Wodak (as cited in Kendall, 2007) in an appeal for leniency in the liberality with which I shall engage in the CDA methodology and the extensive (sometimes direct) quotations it warrants. My defence is based on an understanding that, in order to deconstruct texts justifiably, it is impossible to provide simple, short, telling examples, since these examples exclude the rich socio-political and historical contexts that are foundational in a textured analysis (Wodak, 2002a:8). It must be admitted (and has previously been stated elsewhere [see 1.13]), that the empirical studies presented here are a collection of historical texts, where the key texts form the basis for the analysis. They are therefore not authentic to this researcher, (which is to mean that the data was not personally generated by me through fieldwork) but are methodologically permissible under CDA (Fairclough, 2003). However, texts on teacher agency, as a minor unit of analysis of critical student agency is necessary

because education policy assigns responsibility to classroom teachers to teach the principles of critical pedagogy to their students. In this way, as the researcher I may develop insights into how teacher agency engages and promotes, or obscures and neglects the principles of critical pedagogy (criticality, scepticism, activism, transformation and so on), and how this might influence the emergence, development and visibility of critical student agency. The learning that will be extracted from this chapter is crucial to the synthetic positions I will make (in the upcoming chapters 5, 6 and 7) on critical student agency.

Citical pedagogy in policy and teacher development

4.2   Pedagogic encounters: Reflections from a lecturer during critical practice

The sections that follow below (4.2.1; 4.2.2; 4.2.3; 4.3; 4.4; 4.5 and 4.11) help provide structure to an argument that maps how education policy statements incorporate certain principles of critical pedagogy. On account that critical pedagogy is fighting for its own legitimacy as an ethical educational approach, it has not been made fully transparent and recognisable in popular educational discourses. Yet, the appearance of critical pedagogy in the post-apartheid education policy discourse links it directly to teacher development in South Africa. This then sets up the terms of reference that critical pedagogy as an ethical educational practice, is an integral part of democratic education and should be present in lecture hall pedagogy to help develop criticality in aspirant teachers. Further, an expectation exists that criticality in teachers' classroom practices should be easily seen, and by inference, critical student agency might be seen in student behaviour that questions, resists and transforms established power.

4.2.1   Policy in practice

This subsection looks specifically at how the education policy frameworks are interpreted by a university lecturer through the case study that he documented.

The CHE, together with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), pledged allegiance to the relevance of OBE as the guiding vision for education reform, as it leads with a set of principles and guidelines that frame education and training activities (SAQA, 2000). Furthermore, the outcomes and assessment criteria specified by OBE and the philosophy of OBE are understood to provide the necessary "mobility and progression within education and training and career paths, while bringing coherence, integration, access and portability to education and training" (SAQA, 2000:23). It is with these policy mandates and vision as the focus that I investigated the coherence between

the SAQA assessment criteria for the BEd degree in view of the fact that I could not reconcile (see 3.9) why critical pedagogy was ascribed to lecturer or academic behaviours, but not clearly defined for aspirant teacher roles. In what follows is, firstly, the SAQA criteria that might cohere with concepts within critical pedagogy, such as **critical thinking**, **problem solving for real-life contexts**, **reflexivity**, **challenging dogmatism** and **embracing diversity** (HESA, CHE & HEQC, and 2001:12). Following this analysis, is a reflective account by a critical pedagogue during pedagogical encounters. The lecturer, Waghid (2001) provides an illustrated narrative of what a critical learning episode might look like in practice.

To begin with, SAQA (2000) delineates:

> The BEd (Hons) will provide professional educators and leaders at a post-graduate level with a clear understanding of theories and theoretical frameworks, which underwrite education systems. This qualification will deepen the expertise of educators; broaden the leadership base in the field of education, training and development.

In addition, the SAQA outcomes for the BEd degree are aligned with the NSE, as the assessment criteria specify that graduates should be able to display the following competences, skills and attributes:

> The ability to identify and solve educational problems by using critical and creative thinking to arrive at responsible decisions; collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate educational and related information from primary and secondary sources; provide a critical understanding of education in general, and critically analyse and evaluate knowledge in their area(s) of specialization (DoE, 2000; SAQA, 2000).

Judging from the above-mentioned assessment criteria to meet the standards for graduation, as well as the (critical) character and practice of the academics who lead the training, it would not be amiss to assume that a level of criticality is being fostered in BEd degree programmes. Incidentally, the initial BEd degree (undergraduate) programme specifies even more categories (six) in which to display criticality (DoE, 2000; SAQA, 2000), so perhaps it is fitting to presume that criticality is being further entrenched ("deepened and broadened" as per SAQA, 2000) in a postgraduate programme, as the postgraduate programme defines at least four additional categories of criticality (DoE, 2000) However, the assumption would have to hinge on the definition of **critical** and an understanding of **criticality**. A domesticated conceptualisation of **critical** would render teacher training as well as pedagogical practice in classrooms sterile. Further, this would prove unhelpful in fostering an attitude of scepticism, or revealing

complexity and the ability to propose alternative solutions to real-life problems as conceived of in critical pedagogy. While I have tried to problematise the concept of **critical** as it appears in the theoretical conceptualising of official policy documents (DoE, 2000) we now focus on a particular pedagogical encounter that might provide an enlightened and comprehensive understanding of what it might mean to be a critical pedagogue.

4.2.2   Preamble to the case

This particular case was selected on the merit of it providing great potential as a window on how the enactment of critical pedagogy in a university lecture hall might occur. Firstly, by virtue of its title alone (*Reflexivity, democracy and praxis: Reflecting on a critical moment in classroom pedagogy*) the case gives seven indications of its synchronicity with critical pedagogy, viz. in a twelve-word title, the words **reflexivity**, **democracy**, **praxis**, **reflecting**, **critical**, **classroom**, and **pedagogy** are conversant with the theory and practice of critical pedagogy. Secondly, the perspective this case presents is seen in relation to how some in-service teachers negotiate the practice of critical pedagogy as democratic and self-reflexive, with the university teacher facilitating rather than dictating the processes, providing a model for how critical pedagogy might appear in schools. Thirdly, this case inspired an attitude of how human agency can be conceived of in critical pedagogic encounters when teachers express themselves in thought, action and becoming. In other words, the teachers in this case were seen to display attributes of critical agency such as self-directedness and self-organisation. Furthermore, they raised critical issues as a means for educational and social transformation over the social reproduction of especially the most undesirable features of capitalist social relations. Having justified and accounted for the preference of this case as presenting aspects of critical pedagogy and human agency, what follows is the sequential events as they unfolded in the initial investigation.

4.2.3   *Case 1*

This subsection is a precis of the study Waghid (2001) conducted in 1999.

The context in which this pedagogic encounter took place is framed by the author (Waghid, 2001) having been in the second semester of the academic year 1999 within a post-graduate course (honours level) in Comparative Education for students who were mostly in-service teachers, social and/or community workers and adult basic education practitioners (Waghid, 2001:29).

Historically, this was a period of rapid transition from the apartheid curriculum to a more progressive conceptualisation of education under democratic rule (Nkomo, 1981; Vally, 2007:39). Waghid (2001:29) describes his posture at this time as one bent on "refiguring and reconceptualising classroom pedagogy toward principles of democracy, reflexivity, and criticality to cultivate and advance reflexive democratic discourse". Moreover, the rules of reflexivity, as described by Waghid (2001:29), namely "equal participation, negotiation, dialogism and solidarity", were going to be essential in his pursuit to promote critical classroom pedagogy. To this end, the topics of engagement focused on students' reflected possibilities of transformation and liberation, and these latter themes were fused with political, economic and socio-historical power relations that promote context-specific values and interests (Waghid, 2001:30).

Regarding the content of the course, Waghid (2001:30) describes it has having contained a core body of knowledge with the accompanying critical readings that would spur in-service teacher students to participate in critical reflection on and personal rethinking of knowledge and the production of shared meanings. The lecturer (Waghid, 2001) provided students with analytical summaries of the readings and the students were asked to interpret the texts within the context of their social and everyday life experiences in order to engage with possibilities of transforming society (Waghid, 2001:30). In doing so, the lecturer (Waghid, 2001) acted as facilitator in the pedagogical process by relating abstract theoretical and methodological perspectives to situational examples of lived experiences (Waghid, 2001:33). Correspondingly, the students reciprocated this critical posture by reflecting through debate and questioning the knowledge advanced in the readings to align their thinking with how the issues might resonate with their understandings and ways of seeing the world (Waghid, 2001:30). As a result, they became so emboldened through the pedagogical encounters that they literally refused the lecturer's analytical summaries and opted to navigate their individual perspectives through the construction and reconstruction of meanings beyond what the lecturer had imagined or propositioned (Waghid, 2001:30). While the lecturer maintained the role of facilitator, it began to emerge that these conditions for collaborative inquiry and critical reflexive thinking opened up possibilities for students to reflect on, to challenge and to reconstruct knowledge to the point where they graduated to a sophisticated understanding of educational developments in South Africa (Waghid, 2001:30). Simultaneously, these pedagogic routines also allowed the lecturer to reflect on his practice and to enrich the democratic, critically reflexive discourse with an understanding (according to Burnheim, 1985:5–9) that democracy works best through

participation, as legitimately interested parties have equal chance to participate and make informed choices (Waghid, 2001:31). This particular understanding of pedagogic practice rejects authoritarian and centralised control, which undermines diversity (Waghid, 2001:31) In its stead, reflexive democratic discourse embraces an approach to meaning-making that is not predetermined, but which is continuous and constructed according to the students' prejudices, assumptions and socio-historic settings (Waghid, 2001:31). Consequently, as evaluation of ideology, reflexive democratic discourse empowered the students to carve out a space that resisted privileged representations and dominant discourses, which marginalised minorities and degraded knowledge to mere instrumentality (Waghid, 2001:32).

Finally, while this pedagogic encounter demonstrably validates that the students were empowered to pursue their own interests, display diversity of knowledge, and critically engage in contextually relevant learning episodes, the lecturer had to disclose the limitations inherent in critical pedagogy within the South Africa context:

- firstly, the lecturer saw the emancipatory and transformational aims of critical pedagogy as being too ambitious, since South Africa faces the challenge of students from diverse backgrounds who possess unequal levels of "educatedness" (Waghid, 2001:35); and
- secondly, knowledge is relational and should be understood in the context of its production, distribution and assimilation; therefore, we should be vigilant against hegemonic power that subordinates the marginal in society (Waghid, 2001:35).

While I have provided an account of a lecturer's reflection on pedagogical encounters in which critical pedagogy was on full display, I move immediately to establish whether there is any resonance between the SAQA outcomes for the BEdHon) degree, which highlight criticality, and the features of critical pedagogy that were illustrated in the lecturer's reflection.

To begin with, I shall take the liberty of merging the SAQA outcomes from the initial undergraduate degree with the above-mentioned postgraduate degree (since these are outcomes already achieved, a precondition for this postgraduate degree). The SAQA outcomes were to read academic texts critically, discuss content critically, solve problems, (including social problems), and to engage critically with education policies.

4.2.4   CDA of the case

In this subsection, I report on my analysis of the postgraduate SAQA outcomes, namely −

- the use of critical thinking for responsible decisions;

- the ability to evaluate information critically;
- the critical understanding of education;
- the ability to analyse and evaluate knowledge; and
- the reflections of critical pedagogy in the Comparative Education course.

The analysis revealed that there appeared to be remarkable symmetry between the outcomes of the undergraduate degree programme and the Comparative Education course, as the pedagogic encounter mirrored all six outcomes that were identified as markers of criticality. Similarly, in the postgraduate course in Comparative Education, students firstly had to exhibit criticality by way of negotiating meanings and making responsible decisions in reflexive democratic discourse (Waghid, 2001:35). Secondly, in refusing the lecturer's analytical summaries, students indicated their meaning-making capabilities and the need to seek their own meanings as a sign of criticality (Waghid, 2001:35). Thirdly, the students' ability to understand the education developments in South Africa critically was evidence of their collaborative inquiry and reflexive thinking (Waghid, 2001:36). Lastly, the rejection of certainty and the reconstruction of knowledge with a view to transformation and emancipation empowered students to analyse and evaluate knowledge critically (Waghid, 2001:36). With the above being said, it might be fair to confirm that the outcomes specified by SAQA for the BEd degree (undergraduate and postgraduate) have been reflected in and shown to resonate directly with the concepts within critical pedagogy, such as **critical thinking**, **problem solving** for real-life contexts, **reflexivity**, **challenging dogmatism** and **embracing diversity** (Freire & Macedo, 1987). After this discussion that establishes coherence between the official policies (DoE, 2000; SAQA, 2000) and of teacher preparation in a BEd programme, the next section relates to how the themes of ideology, democracy, agency and equality manifested in policy and in the lecture room we encountered.

The ideology that permeates the official policy is one that resembles technical rationality in that the human agents are acting in the best interests of the state and not for themselves. The fact that competence is measured via outcomes suggests an economic and management orientation, while the emphasis on value added, efficiency and accountability further entrenches this belief (Malcolm, 1999:200−207). Under such conditions, there is little optimism for democracy to flourish optimally, since the marginal can expect little to no equality. While the policy promises alignment between education and training to expand access to and opportunities for employment, it neglects the most crucial factor in education and training, which is the abysmal

chasm in student achievement at the primary and secondary phases of learning by disenfranchised and economically marginal students (Fataar, 2012:119). In contrast, the Comparative Education course was able to avow greater allegiance to equality, democracy and intentional agency. Firstly, in the above course, the underpinning ideology was steeped in constructivist, progressive education in which students were allowed to construct their own meanings, offer deliberation as an act of democratic participation, and organise for collective social action (transformation and emancipation) (Waghid, 2001:35). Equality was exhibited by students having to acknowledge their prejudice and assumptions, as well as their willingness to compromise without resentment to achieve satisfaction for all (Waghid, 2001:35). Thirdly, democracy was on display through collective participation, and the belief in equality and individual liberty in a bid to obtain emancipation and transformation (Waghid, 2001:33). Ultimately, both student and teacher agency was highlighted through critical engagement and participation, personal meaning-making and reflexivity (Waghid, 2001:36). Meanwhile, the term **critical**, which was problematised previously, still remained ambiguous (as it sometimes also is described in critical pedagogy in the sense that it could generally relate to reasoned judgment, or it could expressly relate to critical consciousness (Freire & Macedo, 1987) to facilitate individual emancipatory practice. Consequently, motivated by the need for a more lucid understanding of how to develop the cognitive skills necessary for critical thinking (judgment), I invested much energy in the upcoming section, diving into an analysis of a critical thinking study in a teacher training programme.

4.3   Pedagogic encounters: Critical thinking abilities among prospective educators

4.3.1   Preamble to the case

Since the concept of **conscientisation** or consciousness raising in critical pedagogy is central to critical thinking in so far as it requires reflection, questioning and judging information (Freire, 2005a:69), this case was chosen as a means to approach the ideals versus the realities of critical thinking abilities of prospective teachers. Secondly, SAQA (DoE) highlights critical thinking as a cross-field outcome for a BEd qualification which sets an expectation that graduating teachers are proficient in critical thinking and able to teach students how to think critically. Thirdly, the study took place at an institution located in a previously disadvantaged community, and since 80% of the nation's struggling students (Fataar, 2012) attend schools in previously disadvantaged communities, it could be assumed that the prospective teachers will teach in these facilities. Furthermore, the study addressed participants in all phases of the

school: junior primary, senior primary and secondary school (Lombard & Grosser, 2004), which gave an even crisper angle from which to predict the incidence of how critical pedagogy, through critical thinking, might be enacted in actual school classrooms. Fourthly, this study raised an important question about the capacity of university teachers and their capacity to think and to instruct critically. This, the authors (Lombard & Grosser [2004]) indicate, was deficient. They also show how this might affect the capacity and conditions for critical thinking to flourish or even be transferred to prospective teachers; and ultimately to students in school classrooms. Lastly, this case sensitised the researcher to how human agency in critical pedagogy may be constrained when critical thinking abilities are difficult to teach and learn, which might impede the holistic development of students and their ability to evaluate ideology, inequality, racism and sexism. What follows immediately below is the actual research as it emerged in university classrooms.

4.3.2   *Case 2*

This subsection is a summary of the study Lombard and Grosser (2004) conducted in relation to the thinking skills of prospective teachers.

Lombard and Grosser (2004) advocate, on the one hand, that teacher training programmes should be reinforced by critical thinking to compensate for the dearth of well-trained pedagogues, while on the other hand they also support a belief that critical thinking allows students (and teachers) to develop to their full human potentialities. With these two guiding principles in mind, this study was directed in part by allegiance to the South African Qualifications Authority's (SAQA) critical cross-field outcomes (DoE, 2000) which specify that learners should be able to identify and solve problems and make decisions by using creative and critical thinking (SAQA, 2007:7). To this end, Lombard and Grosser, (2004:214) pursued an "exploratory research approach, to establish the critical thinking abilities of a group of prospective educators in order to determine to what extent the ideal of cultivating critical thinking is compatible with the educational reality". This quantitative study was conducted at a college of education in a previously disadvantaged community in Gauteng, a province in South Africa, even though the student biographical information revealed that they represented different ethnicity, age, gender and socio-economic groupings (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:214). The relevance of the study was provoked in part by previous research by Lombard and Grosse (2004), which indicated that "higher-order thinking skills (in critical thinking) are unlikely to develop simply as a result of maturation, but also that they are notoriously difficult to teach and

learn" (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:212). This implies that students develop these cognitive skills best through effective, direct instruction. But there was also the uncomfortable and honest admission by Lombard and Grosser (2004) that teachers themselves may not possess the cognitive skills for higher-order or critical thinking, which will inhibit the actualisation of critical thinking in pedagogic encounters; thus, from their perspective, this point needed deep consideration.

Subsequently, the researchers sought to unravel what makes critical thinking so complex, only to discover that "there is also no uniform, clear cut and concise definition of critical thinking" (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:212). They rested on the notion advanced by Walsh and Paul (1988:13), namely that "[c]ritical thinking does not refer simply to intelligence". In fact, Walsh and Paul (1988:13) aver that critical thinking is a "[cognitive] skill that can and needs to be improved in everybody". Within the context of the wide-raging perspectives on critical thinking, I will use Lombard and Grosser's (2004:212) explanation of how Lipman (1988) describes critical thinking:

> Critical thinking is more complex than ordinary thinking. It involves inter alia the following: careful argumentation which avoids guessing; making logical conclusions based on criteria; providing opinions substantiated by proof; moving away from believing to assuming; and moving away from assumptions to hypotheses (Lipman, cited in Lombard & Grosser (2004:212).

From the above-mentioned definition of critical thinking it could be inferred that coherence is forged with critical pedagogy, which refuses the notion of taking things for granted or applying common sense to potentially hegemonic ideology. Furthermore, seeking to undertake an in-depth investigation of what critical thinking is, Lombard and Grosser (2004), drew on McPeck to elucidate and rendered the following:

> McPeck (1990:34–35) believes that critical thinking comprises of the following workings: Firstly, there is a critical component, which refers to the ability to reflect, question and judge information effectively. Secondly, in order to facilitate critical thinking, a strong knowledge base in the specific subject area where the critical thinking skills are to be utilized is a prerequisite. Thirdly, the capacity to use language is essential to execute critical thinking. And lastly, according to McPeck (1990:42), is that critical thinking also requires willingness on the part of the learner to become involved in problem situations where reflective scepticism is required (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:212).

The above shows how the full-bodied alignment with critical pedagogy truly emerges, as critical thinking requires the human agent interested in transformation, democracy and the pursuit of living to his/her full human potentiality to reflect, question, judge, develop a strong knowledge base, use language (to be able to deliberate and articulate) and have a robust spirit of scepticism. In addition, it is within the spaces where doubt, uncertainty and cynicism are accommodated that fault lines emerge to rupture and shatter the ideological hegemony that strives to incarcerate, dehumanise and deprive human agents of their rights to the fruits of democracy (Freire, 2005a: 145). Furthermore, the pursuit of justice is crucial to an understanding of the transformational and emancipatory objectives within critical pedagogy. What follows immediately below is an apt description by Lombard and Grosser (2004) concerning critical thinking skills in action that is in symmetry with the revelatory characteristics of critical pedagogy and CDA, namely –

> to distinguish between provable facts and assumptions, to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, to determine the accuracy and credibility of a statement, to identify ambiguity, to identify unstated assumptions, to determine prejudice and the strength of an argument or assumption (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213).

However, Lombard and Grosser (2004:213) established the relationship between the absence of critical thinking and South African education as evidenced in the: low, concrete levels of thinking during information processing. This implies that learners cannot construct their own knowledge and formulate an own viewpoint (Ennis, 1985a:44–48). They are deficient in evaluating, classifying, analysing, identifying relationships and making conclusions (Lipman, 1988:38–43) and they are lacking in the ability to solve problems through logical inquiry and evaluative decision-making (National Council of Teachers of English, 1989). Furthermore, learners are under-prepared in skills to think creatively and critically (Moore *et al*., 1985, as cited in Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213).

Even more worrying, according to Lombard and Grosser (2004:213), who follow Howie and Hughes (1998), is the fact that: "Grade 12 South African learners performed poorly in subjects like Mathematics and Physical Science (subjects which require high levels of abstract thinking) during an International Mathematics and Science Study in 1995" (Lombard & Grosser 2004:213),

The aforementioned details are pivotal in providing the context for Lombard and Grosser's (2004:213) assertion that critical thinking cannot occur in an impoverished pedagogical

encounter in which teachers are implicated in dominating classroom interaction, as too much time is devoted to –

- instruction where the views of educators on the nature of knowledge acquisition are limited to the memorising and recalling of facts;
- where there is minimal focus on the construction of knowledge and thinking skills;
- where teachers are not sure how to teach thinking skills or how to evaluate them;
- where the majority of the curricula do not focus on cognitive development at all; and
- teachers are moreover primarily concerned that they will not complete the curriculum if they also have to address the development of thinking skills as well.

To answer their question, "Are educators able and empowered to think critically in order to initiate the cultivation of critical thinking skills among learners?" (Lombard & Grosser, 2004: 213) Lombard and Grosser, utilised the *Cornell Critical Thinking Test Level X and Z* (Ennis, 1985b), as it is the most recent test available and measures practically all aspects of critical thinking. Hardly surprisingly, the findings revealed a high deficiency with regard to critical thinking abilities (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213). To illuminate, in the results of a battery of seven tests, where N = 88, the scores were abysmal, with the test on deductions reaching 46.13% as the highest score, and the score for semantics reaching a meagre 24.79%, while the test on definition garnered 34.65%. Lombard and Grosser (2004:215) say about the interpretations of the scores:

> It was obvious that the respondents excelled in none of these. It was interesting to note, though, that a slightly better performance was observed in sub-test one (deduction). The respondents' performance in sub test six (definition) raised concern about their ability to form and give meaning to concepts a self-evident ability for any successful learning. The results of sub test two (semantics) were also noteworthy because of the lowest average percentage obtained.

The disclaimer provided by the researchers was that the deficient scores in sub-test six (definition) might have resulted because of the language proficiency (or lack thereof) of the English Language Learners (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:215). As a result, by revealing this data, the researchers stir up a host of intriguing questions about teacher development programmes, as they may be complicit in what is revealed in research conducted by Clough (1989:7), Goodlad (1984) McPeck (1990:42), Schlechty (1991:40), Engelbrecht (1995:11−12), Sonn (2000:259) and Schraw and Olafson (2003) of actual pedagogic encounters, which is that:

> … learning is not measured in terms of the learners' competence as thinkers, but rather in terms of their competence as reproducers; teachers teach learners what to think and not how to think; teachers seldom create a climate for thinking and show little appreciation for the individuality and openness of learners; of facts. Poor cognitive abilities are also nurtured (or at least nurtured in part!) by instructional techniques, which emphasize rote learning; teachers themselves are products of schooling and training systems, which focused on rote learning. The majority of the teachers themselves lack cognitive skills and do not know what and how to teach them (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213).

Motivated by the vision of the SAQA imperative to enable students to identify and solve problems, and make decisions by using creative and critical thinking (SAQA, 2007) Lombard and Grosser (2004) demonstrate and echo the discontent of Jansen (1998) and Morrow (2001) that the lofty ideals of the national education outcomes-based approach and its accompanying curriculum (C2005) are somewhat impractical. The pedagogic encounters (studied by Clough (1989:7), Goodlad (1984) McPeck (1990:42), Schlechty (1991:40), Engelbrecht (1995: 11–12), Sonn (2000:259) and Schraw and Olafson (2003) in schools reflect and is corroborated by Lombard and Grosser's (2004) research, that schools are overrun with –

- teachers who teach students what to think;
- teachers who subscribe to rote learning;
- dogmatic teachers who do not create opportunities for openness and individuality; and
- teachers who measure student thinking by the standard of producing facts (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213).

The scenarios described immediately above resonate closely with the apartheid-era ideology of fundamental pedagogics (Samuel, 2002:402) and less with the curriculum and pedagogic practice that promote the democratic ideals of equality and the corresponding vigorous student and teacher agency that is essential in a strong democracy (Barber, 2003). In conclusion, Lombard and Grosser (2004:215) suggest, "[that teacher] training programmes be developed to provide the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for ensuring sustainable holistic development".

Thus far, I have woven together education legislation and the pedagogic practice in two separate scenarios of higher education (BEd) programmes in search of the cardinal elements of critical pedagogy. In the first instance, critical pedagogy was visibly present via reflexive democratic discourse, and in the second instance, it was distressingly absent via the lack of critical thinking abilities in aspirant teachers. As these scenarios provide more recent accounts of incorporating

criticality into teaching and learning routines, I shall provide a more dated (yet historically appropriate) account in 4.4 of how a university made the transition from an apartheid curriculum to a constructivist, post-apartheid curriculum, in my attempt to glean the potential for critical pedagogy to be nurtured in the university's BEd programme. The inclusion of this pedagogic encounter is to provide a historically and contextually rich encounter of apartheid and post-apartheid curriculum development and education, education policy standards, pedagogic engagement, and societal transformation as seen through the lens of a university teacher.

4.4 Pedagogic encounters: The institutional perspective – pressures and priorities for teacher education curriculum design

4.4.1 Preamble to the case

While the last two cases of pedagogic encounters (see 4.2 and 4.3) took place in the Western Cape and Gauteng, both provinces of South Africa, this particular case took place in KwaZulu-Natal, making the selections far more inclusive (and progressively so down the list of the five cases in this overall case study) and less provincial so as to provide an overview of teacher preparation programmes throughout the country. As such, this case was specifically chosen because it provided a sequential map of how curriculum design was reconstituted to create distance between the restrictive apartheid educational ideologies while embracing more progressive educational approaches. Secondly, the current study (Samuel [2002]) revealed the complexities of transformation to the point that it could be understood that critical pedagogy necessarily has to confront the messy and contradictory nature of change, which helps caution against the romanticism that may be attached to theories of alternative methods and perspectives in education. Thirdly, in this case, we became intimate with the institutional arrangements both internally and externally and their effects on the human agents, viz., the teachers, students and communities and the way critical theories and social justice issues began to shape the culture of the school; and how this might inform how teacher agency in this institutional sense might be commensurate with teacher agency in school classrooms in need of transformation. So, while these cases (see 4.2.3; 4.3.2; 4.4.2; 4.5.2 and 4.11.2) point more directly to the architecture of South African education (policy imperatives; education institutions; lecture hall pedagogy; university student dispositions and ability), they provide the basis for the deduction theorem that will be made about critical student agency in 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10. Thus, in the succeeding

sections of 4.4, the actual case will be laid out followed by a CDA, to help develop a synthetic position of critical student agency in chapters 5 and 6.

4.4.2   *Case 3*

This subsection is a summary of the study Samuel (2002) reflected on regarding university curriculum reformulation during the waning years of apartheid.

South Africa's educational landscape in the early 1990s found itself in the enviable (or unenviable, as Samuel [2002] intimates the pressure of such a process) position of being able to carve out new pedagogic identities as epistemological and ontological shifting boundaries came into view. Embracing this change was precisely how a historically disadvantaged faculty of education within an initially racially exclusive univesity of education chose to characterise itself in relation to curriculum design (Samuel, 2002). In so doing, the rigid, authoritarian, rote learning that characterised the past, as seen in the philosophy of Fundamental Pedagogics of the apartheid era (Samuel, 2002:402), was transformed into a more progressive interpretation of what it meant to become a teacher. The official government policy was based on the pedagogically progressive learner-centred approach of OBE and its accompanying curriculum, Curriculum 2005 (C2005), with a decidedly transparent, egalitarian and integrated approach to knowledge (Chisholm, 2002:10; Morrow, 2001:88–89). It is within this context that the former University of Durban-Westville (UDW) sought to transform its BEd teacher development programme, formerly the BPaed (Bachelor of Pedagogics) degree, into the BAGET (Bachelor of General Education and Training degree) by redesigning the curriculum over a six-year period (Samuel, 2002:405). The university teachers were faced, on the one hand, with internal levers of trying to transform a mono-racial institution to embrace greater diversity, as well as to transcend the philosophies of fundamental pedagogics, and on the other hand, the external forces of having to adhere to national standards of accreditation in the form of the NQF and SAQA standards (Samuel, 2002:404–405). Coupled with the aforementioned challenges were the changing conceptual approaches of staff toward accommodating more critical educational theories, which would have an effect on curriculum design and delivery, all the while striving to create a relevant, contextually appropriate and cost-effective curriculum that reflected the new imperatives of OBE and C2005 (Samuel, 2002:397).

The preceding section introduces an attempt to understand how teacher preparation programmes unfolded at institutions of higher learning in the prelude to and aftermath of the demise of apartheid. While the disclaimer is that this vignette presents an over-generalisation

of how teacher training occurred (and is still occurring), it does provide a snapshot of how a particular programme (BEd) in a predominantly black (60%) university (Samuel, 2002), serving a mostly working-class student population, developed future teachers for the teaching profession within the framework of the new curriculum (Samuel, 2002). Firstly, curriculum designers had to account for the diversity of the cohort by understanding their backgrounds and educational legacies. Thus, it would have been negligent to have considered the student population as a homogenous group (Samuel & Stephens, 2000); curriculum re-designers would therefore have had to be cognisant of the fact that students "emerge from educational legacies formed in different homes, families, communities, primary and secondary school settings" (Samuel, 2002:400). With this understanding, "geographic, linguistic and class perspectives pointed to the uniqueness of individuals in the cohort and this necessitated curriculum interventions that would accommodate the biographical profile of each student" (Samuel, 2002:400). Secondly, the university curriculum designers had to admit and attend to the deficiencies of the majority in the cohort with regard to the weak subject-based competencies with which they entered the institution, as evidenced in their final-year (school graduation) or matriculation results. Consequently, the university's teacher education curriculum needed to devise programmes that showed "qualitative improvements in particular subjects in order not to perpetuate the cycle of poor teaching and learning in English, science and mathematics" (Samuel, 2002:400). Next, the university curriculum planners understood that the cohort of new student teacher recruits were probably first-generation university students and therefore lacked academic role models. The staff therefore provided opportunities to help transition the new students into post-secondary teaching and learning. Subsequent to this intervention, the staff had to guide and develop competency in students with regard to subject choices, as the students were not inclined to study subjects that were in high demand in the teaching profession (due to the scarce skills), such as science, and the under-representation of African students studying English. In contrast, there was an over-subscription of female students in the Arts and Humanities, and this gave rise to no progress in the university's targets for race and gender equity under the terms of transformation (Samuel, 2002:400–408). To this end, the university sought to transform the profile of prospective teachers by providing incentives for better prepared students in order to combat the negative image that the teaching profession as a whole was experiencing (through the media, and the rationalisation and redeployment policies of the government), and the haemorrhaging of new enrolments in teacher development programmes at the university (Samuel, 2002:408). Following this, the curriculum designers set their sights on transforming the school contexts within which teaching practice occurred by making it an

imperative that practice teaching had to be done at sites that were foreign to most students (Samuel, 2002:401). This measure was enacted with the intention that students engage with 'foreignness' on the basis of deliberately "challenging socially, racially, geographically culturally, and gendered heritages" (Samuel, 2002:401). This attempt was so bold that the curriculum designers had to reflect on the implication that this might destabilise the cultural ethos of schools. Nevertheless, it was considered precisely for the fact that the preceding curriculum honoured and perpetuated hierarchies of opportunity and privilege for some individuals (Samuel, 2002:401). The motivation here was therefore to foster alternative conceptions of how teachers could be prepared in order to reconstruct the education system, and this necessitated a review of the old curriculum by the university teachers. While attention was thus far drawn to the curriculum reformers' valiant attempts to validate diversity, remediate deficiencies, provide academic role models, engage with 'foreignness' as a way to combat privileged hierarchies, and generally to develop aspirant teachers holistically (personally, academically and professionally), the focus now shifts to the particular curricular dimensions necessitated by this transition.

According to Samuel (2002), the old BPaed curriculum could be described as a "front-loaded curriculum" (Zeichner, 1983:3–4), which means it advanced a subject-based knowledge and, as such, created a propositional knowledge base of a particular subject, which can be interpreted as the deepening of 'codified knowledge' (Eraut, 1996). This consequently created an instance where subject content was taught with no apparent linkages to engaging the pedagogical process of teaching, learning and assessment when working with young learners in a school environment. Unsurprisingly, the abstract theoretical analysis of the psychological, philosophical and sociological understanding of education as seen in the BPaed curriculum coincided with the apartheid ideologies inherent in Fundamental Pedagogics. Samuel (2002) describes it further as "Fundamental Pedagogic interpretations of learning as being the process of enculturing children to the adult world in a moralistic enactment of principles of Christian national education (CNE), the goals of the former apartheid state" (Samuel, 2002:402).

In the light of the above ideology, the faculty at the university concerned grew more and more disenchanted with its dogmatic approach to curriculum formulation, and this was spurred on by newer and younger staff members, who displayed an open reproach of the fading apartheid ideologies in the 1990s and were well persuaded to usher in new winds of thought. Thus, the changing of the guard invited the critical education theories of Apple (1979), Freire (1973) and Giroux (1975; 1995), embraced sociology of education preoccupied with social justice, and

applied a psychology of education turned toward the social construction of knowledge (Samuel, 2002:402). In the new BEd programme, gone were the obvious separations between theory and practice, as inter-disciplinary studies, postmodernist education studies and curriculum policy analysis heralded in a new dispensation. Under this new dispensation, university lecturers began to see students as resources in the curriculum by incorporating student knowledge and unique experiences as part of the new discourse (Samuel, 2002:402). Furthermore, in this reconstructed curriculum, university lecturers favoured an action research orientation and transformed their supervisory engagements during school visits to them being more of a mentor than someone interested in classroom management, discipline and record-keeping (Samuel, 2002:402). In this new arrangement, student teachers were inspired to engage in critical reflective practice as they saw they had the opportunity to create an identity by their actions and role as a teacher, and to celebrate the value of theory and practice as they charted their own trajectory of professional development (Samuel, 2002:403).

Following this account of the curricular amendments instituted in the BEd programme at UDW, I shall attempt to prove whether there is coherence or dissonance as it relates to OBE and C2005 as the educational approach and curriculum policy that foregrounded education in post-apartheid South Africa, as well as the SAQA purpose and assessment criteria (SAQA, 2007) for the BEd degree as it relates to criticality.

4.4.3   The alignment between OBE/C2005 and SAQA

This subsection deals with curriculum evolution and its framing of teaching and learning from the perspective of initial teacher training (at university) and how this training is funnelled down in school classrooms with regards specifically to criticality.

To begin with, Chisholm (2002:9) understands C2005 as a planned process of and strategy for curriculum change underpinned by elements of redress, access, equity and development. To achieve these, C2005 employs methodologies used in progressive pedagogy, such as learner-centeredness, teachers as facilitators, relevance, contextualised knowledge and cooperative learning (Chisholm, 2002:9–10). This way, C2005 breaks with the racist, authoritarian, rote learning of Fundamental Pedagogics and promotes egalitarianism and critical thinking (Samuel, 2002).What is more, C2005 is participatory and inclusive as it sees teachers as curriculum planners, while endorsing community participation. According to Chisholm's description of C2005, it is safe to say that the post-apartheid efforts of UDW in transforming its BEd programme seem to be in accord with almost all the elements outlined in C2005 as UDW

transformed a mono-racial student population to embrace diversity, teacher curriculum planning, learner-centeredness, amongst others by using student experience as a curriculum resource, and by using critical and social justice theories and community engagement (Samuel, 2002). Similarly, the accounts of curriculum reform at this particular university gave rise to a remarkable synthesis with the holistic timbre within critical pedagogy, which seeks to rupture the fragmentation and myopic sentiments of hegemonic curricula, and also synthesises with C2005 in its quest for redress, equity, access and development (DoE, 2000). After establishing coalescence between critical pedagogy, OBE and C2005 and the BEd degree at UDW in terms of the curriculum reconfiguration and re-conceptualisation, the attention is diverted to the SAQA imperatives of the BEd degree and to provide a snapshot of what a classroom pedagogic encounter at the time of OBE and C2005 implementation (Jansen, 1998) really rendered in order to push the analysis further.

Firstly, SAQA (2014) states the purpose and rationale of the BEd degree as:

> The BEd is an initial teaching qualification for candidates to be registered as fully qualified professional educators in schooling. The qualification accredits the development of professional competence informed by sound knowledge and understanding of their area/s of specialization and of educational theory.

Furthermore, the elements in SAQA (2014) policy identified as promoting criticality, which was inscribed in OBE and C2005, are as follows, namely the ability to:

> Read academic and professional texts critically; integrate and use the knowledge in their own studies and in their teaching; critically discuss the content of curricular knowledge in their area/s of specialization, and apply appropriate values and conceptual frameworks to problem solving in the relevant fields of knowledge; manage learning environments democratically and in ways that foster creative and critical thinking; take appropriate action to assist or refer learners in the solution of personal or social problems; engage critically with education policies, procedures and systems which impact on institutions and classrooms, as well as on the national education and training landscape.

In the light of the synchronicity recognised between critical pedagogy, C2005 and the BEd degree at the UDW, what follows is the harmonies or disharmonies that manifested in an actual pedagogic episode in a Grade 1 classroom in 1998. This particular indulgence is necessary to test the tentative hypothesis that was presented above, since no account was given in the UDW case study of how well aspirant teachers had met SAQA qualifications criteria, or how well

they implemented OBE and/or C2005. These are the exact words and sentiments expressed by a teacher of a Grade 1 class in 1998 as reported in Jansen (1999:3):

> You find it very noisy, and when you're trying to teach you're trying to do different things with different groups. The noise level, it can be too high. Because then you can't work with others on a quieter level. So you've got to control that some way. I find that quite difficult. It is a very noisy OBE. And it is quite stressful not only for the teacher, but also for the children.

While it would be safe to present the disjuncture between effective teacher development (as presented by the case study of UDW) and the lack of successful implementation of OBE in a linear fashion, the reality is far more intricate, and for the purposes of this discussion, I limit my discussion to three points. Firstly, it is hardly logical to believe that twelve years of apartheid education can be eradicated by four years of post-secondary education in the case of the UDW students. Secondly, many teachers within the teaching profession who graduated during apartheid were not previously bound by the NQF and SAQA, and thus had disparate levels of preparedness (Chisholm, 2002:2). In addition, Ischinger (2008:296) states:

> For many black teachers, neither their school education nor their teacher training obliged them to study mathematics, or science. They were now required to teach an altogether new curriculum and to exhibit a set of competences that the most highly skilled professionals anywhere in the developed world would find difficult to demonstrate.

Thirdly, the lack of sustained teacher development and training in OBE, as well the lack of material and infrastructural support, made it near to impossible to implement the new curriculum innovations successfully (Jansen, 1999). On the basis of the evidence above, the expectations of OBE and C2005 in theory and the actuality of its manifestations in schools rendered a blemished verdict on the success teachers actually had in the field. While OBE and C2005 promoted a child-centred, teacher-facilitated, cooperative learning approach, the Grade 1 teacher above expressed her unspoken loyalty to apartheid education in her desire for control in an authoritarian, teacher-centred, quiet classroom. In so doing, she inadvertently testified to her lack of classroom management in doing differentiated, coordinated group work as well as her incapacity in her role as facilitator in a cooperative learning environment. Instead, she equated her professional inadequacy in dealing with learner differentiation as being stressful, and incorporated learner voice as 'own voice' when she spoke unsolicited on behalf of learners. Yet, this illustration is not unsurprising, given that in some instances teachers had only one training session from education officials who themselves could not proficiently articulate OBE as methodology (Jansen, 1999). We now contrast the Grade 1 teacher's comments with

liberatory and emancipatory practices valorised in critical pedagogy as we focus on ideology, inequality, agency and democracy. The ideology the teacher espoused was that favoured by the apartheid state in its emphasis on authoritarianism, rote learning, teacher-centred teaching and obsession with content (Morrow, 2001:88). This ideology evidently supported the racist, dominant, elitist system that allowed apartheid to flourish (see Samuel's quote on Fundamental Pedagogics previously cited in 4.4), which simultaneously immobilised teacher (and student) agency, perpetuated inequality by not acknowledging difference or "foreignness" (Samuel 2002:401), and unashamedly violated any fragment of democracy. In the teacher interview above, the teacher failed to raise her consciousness to a different reality in which noise could be interpreted as active pedagogic engagement, deliberation and meaning-making in learner-led pedagogic episodes. In such pedagogic episodes, learner agency is bolstered and allowed to roam in cooperative learning groups in which meaning is negotiated based on (along with other things) difference, lived experience and problem solving. However, the above analysis does not suggest that university teacher training programmes are wholly inadequate in manifesting critical pedagogy (as promised via OBE, C2005 and SAQA), since this would sidestep the ghosts of apartheid education, as well as the ineffective training and unpreparedness of teachers of OBE and/or C2005 implementation in classrooms.

Having given an exposition above of the disharmony between curriculum reform, official education policy and classroom practice, I report on an investigation into the relationship between critical thinking skills and the academic language proficiency of prospective teachers. Admittedly, what appears to be emerging slowly is that critical pedagogy, which is understood internationally as a marginal educational approach (Pozo, 2003), has an unhappy habit of not being very visible in the pedagogic engagements (or literature) of university lecture theatres in South Africa. Better yet, when critical pedagogy does make an appearance it is invariably linked with critical thinking, which is to suggest perhaps that this is the way critical pedagogy is conceptualised in South African education. Furthermore, official education policy corroborates this assertion, as has been cited in the sections above (SAQA, OBE/C2005, HEQC, and NSE). What follows immediately below in 4.5 is an account of a study of the deficient levels of critical thinking skills and academic language proficiency in prospective teachers.

4.5   Pedagogic encounters: The relationship between the critical thinking skills and the academic language proficiency of prospective teachers

4.5.1   Preamble to the case

This study is differentiated from the first case on critical thinking skills (see 4.3) as it reports on the correlation between two groups of English Language learners (ELLs) in a first-year BEd degree programme and their academic language ability (Grosser & Nel, 2013). The significance of this study is premised on the direct link that Grosser and Nel (2013) make between deficient critical thinking skills and poor performance in language proficiency (and by implication numeracy and science). Additionally, the fact that the students were in their first year of study and that the researchers sought to address this dearth in critical thinking ability in the inception year created promise that the researchers took it seriously that teacher training curriculum needed an overhaul in order for graduates to be competent teachers in school classrooms. This identification of the problem (as a sign of human agency) inspired confidence that enhanced higher-order, critical thinking skills and targeted intervention in university programmes may translate into a greater emergence of critical pedagogy in school classrooms. Furthermore, the diversity of the research participants (Afrikaans-speaking and English home language-speaking students, from predominantly ex-Model C schools and the English second and additional language-speaking students from predominantly township schools) entrenched the heterogeneity of the group in terms of gender, culture, home language as well as different teaching and learning backgrounds from which they emerged (Grosser & Nel, 2013:2). The above-mentioned attributes provide a wide a perspective from which to locate the problem and the consequent remedial efforts necessary for a more pronounced display of critical pedagogy and critical agency to manifest in classrooms objectively. What follows, is a summary of the original empirical study and my interpretation of its findings and conclusions.

4.5.2   *Case 4*

This subsection is a precis of the study Grosser and Nel (2013:2) reported on regarding the relationship between critical thinking skills and the academic language proficiency among prospective teachers.

Firstly, Grosser and Nel (2013:2) clarify the two ways in which language was conceptualised in this investigation. On the one hand, language was understood as receptive, enabling the user to understand, and on the other hand, the way language is utilised (by the user) is understood as expressive (Grosser & Nel, 2013). With that being said, Grosser and Nel (2013) situate the relevance of their study in the understanding that universities need to enhance their teacher training curriculum; and this is further motivated by the peculiar difficulty identified by Higher Education South Africa (HESA, 2009), namely that in 2009 only 50% of first-year students at

various South African universities were proficient in English as an academic language (Grosser & Nel, 2013:4).

Grosser and Nel (2013) submit that, in an academic context, students are expected to think critically and argue about topics, all the while displaying good language proficiency. They propose that this is achieved when students are able to elaborate on an argument and develop its implications, as well as to understand, analyse and evaluate arguments and opinions effectively (Grosser & Nel, 2013:3). Furthermore, effective argumentation is satisfied when students show an ability to support their assertions with details and to recognise central ideas in texts (Grosser & Nel, 2013:3). These latter skills also have manifestations in student responses, when students are able to state opinions clearly, which in turn references their ability to read critically for academic purposes. However, this process is especially problematic for ELLs, as it hinders their capacity for communication, rendering students passive in the process of information giving (Grosser & Nel, 2013:3). As a result, passive reproduction of facts reduces students to succumbing to rote learning, as it makes the process of learning easier to handle (Grosser & Nel, 2013:3). Yet, rote learning further curtails student ability to carry out higher-order cognitive operations in the language of learning (in this case, English), which confirms that the students lack cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Grosser & Nel, 2013:3). Furthermore, Grosser and Nel (2013) identify the centrality of CALP in higher education and higher-order thinking as the productive competence to convey knowledge through writing, and at the same time admit that the majority of learners in South Africa are ELLs and that this negatively influences their academic achievements (Grosser & Nel, 2013:4). Following this interpretation of Grosser and Nel's (2013) theoretical foundations and framework, I shall immediately turn to the empirical investigation that was defined by the theory. To clarify the features of tests as an effective measurement instrument of critical thinking, Grosser and Nel (2013:5) say:

> The test used to determine the language proficiency of the participants was the TAG (Toets vir Akademiese Geletterdheid) (Afrikaans) for the participants with Afrikaans as Home Language and TALL (Test of Academic Literacy Levels) (English) for English Home Language and English second or additional language speakers. The TAG and TALL tests were developed to identify the extent of academic preparedness of at-risk students before they started their studies at a higher education institution Grosser and Nel (2013:5).

Furthermore, the TAG and TALL tests also tested "critical thinking skills such as making deductions, formulating definitions, identifying cause and effect relationships, and

distinguishing between main ideas and detail" (Grosser & Nel, 2013:5). Thus, using the above instrument, the authors were able to discuss the findings, which revealed that:

> The sub-test inference appeared to be the most problematic to the participants with a low mean of = 5.80 out of 16, while sub-test analysis proved less problematic. Furthermore, students experienced difficulties in the test on making interpretations, and these included the sub-skills of categorization, decoding significance and clarifying meaning (Facione, 2009). Here, the average score obtained by the participants, x = 8.98, could point to the fact that problems in comprehending and expressing meaning are experienced. It is clear from the results obtained for interpretation that the skill appears to be still emerging in the participants and requires purposeful efforts to be enhanced through instruction (Grosser & Nel, 2013:5–6).

Furthermore, according to Grosser and Nel (2013), the findings seem to suggest that the students might not yet have had command of the reasoning standards that play a role in "critical thinking, namely clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic" (Paul & Elder, 2004). The absence of these reasoning standards is crucial in affecting the elements of thought. This, in turn, obstructs the development of intellectual traits such as "intellectual humility, intellectual autonomy, intellectual integrity, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance, intellectual empathy, open-mindedness, fair-mindedness and confidence in reasoning" (Facione, 2009; Paul & Elder, 2004).

Grosser and Nel (2013:8) further say that what was startling for them was that the Afrikaans-speaking students from westernised backgrounds, characterised by analytic thought where it is assumed that critical thinking processes should be operative (Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norensayan, 2001), apparently also have problems in executing tasks that demand critical thinking.

What was perhaps not surprising, as it was revealed in the first research study (see 4.3) (Lombard & Grosser, 2004), is that science teachers in South Africa are deficient in applying critical thinking skills to argumentation, "or that the typical university student cannot comprehend what he/she reads" (Grosser & Nel, 2013:11). Even more alarming, according to Grosser and Nel (2013), is that a large percentage of first-year aspirant teachers have poor to very poor academic literacy skills, namely academic language proficiency and critical thinking skills (Grosser & Nel, 2013:11).

To this challenge, Grosser and Nel (2013:13) suggest purposeful intervention to cultivate critical thinking skills and to promote the development of academic language proficiency,

which needs to be infused in the training of prospective teachers. In addition, some type of evidence needs to confirm whether students' critical thinking skills are improving (Grosser & Nel, 2013:13). Furthermore, university instructional practices need to provide pre-service teachers with models of good critical thinking practices, otherwise the ideals of SAQA (1997) will be betrayed (Grosser & Nel, 2013:13).

Practically, Grosser and Nel suggest a set of classroom techniques that could be utilised by lecturers. Firstly, there are the purposeful questioning of information and conclusions provided by students, interrogating the ideas that underpin their reasoning, questioning the assumptions that support their point of view and the implications of what they assert (Grosser & Nel, 2013:13). Secondly, the authors argue that universal intellectual standards should be promoted explicitly during teaching and learning, by requesting students to elaborate on what they are saying, to illustrate what they are saying with examples, to provide detailed, accurate, logical and relevant explanations, to probe beneath the surface to deeper matters and issues and to consider alternative viewpoints (Grosser & Nel, 2013:13).

In summary, Grosser and Nel (2013) advocate that critical thinking skills should be developed through university instructors via "suitable, purposeful, systematic instruction and modelling; and that prospective teachers (especially) develop critical dispositions and attitudes for effortful thinking" (Grosser & Nel, 2013:14). Following the summary of the study, I now move to an analysis of the themes of ideology, equality, agency and democracy as they relate to the study.

4.5.3   CDA of the case

This subsection deals with the textual evidence of the case to establish whether there is coherence between critical pedagogy, education policy, teacher preparation programmes and lecture room pedagogy by looking at specific themes.

Firstly, the authors (Grosser & Nel, 2013) are reflecting themes we have encountered before (see 4.3) (one of the authors co-authored the first study on critical thinking that was analysed). I chose to pursue this study for analysis in the expectation that new revelations might emerge. In their findings, Grosser and Nel (2013) confirmed that students (first-year students, in this case) could read critically since they did not possess higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, the study corroborated earlier results that students were passive reproducers of information and proceeded through rote learning.In adding to new knowledge, the specific test results revealed that students were especially deficient in inferencing skills, as well in interpreting, which means

that the participating students could not categorise, decode significant information and clarify meaning independently. While I have branded the study as being somewhat familiar, it did make for an interesting and rich comparative analysis with the former.

To begin with the analysis, students' lack of critical thinking skills and language proficiency violates the SAQA markers of criticality, which are among the essential outcomes for graduating as a teacher (SAQA, 2000). SAQA (2000) specifies at least six critical categories in its assessment criteria for the BEd degree that need to be satisfied. As established previously (see 4.2), these criteria comply with the core curriculum (for general and higher education), in which students in the school classrooms should be competent. In addition, Grosser and Nel (2013) highlight the inadequate skills university lecturers have in creating the capacity to develop critical thinking skills in university students.

These university lecturers, in turn, violate the expectations of the Higher Education Council (HEC) by perpetuating –

> deficit models of education by promoting reproductive as opposed to critical academic literacy; by disallowing students to critically frame competing discourses; by not forcing students to question, test, extend, reflect on and revise their ideas; and lastly by not challenging students in their ways of seeing and thinking about the world (HEQC, 2001:12).

Consequently, Grosser and Nel (2013), become complicit in this travesty (particularly Grosser who co-authored the first study). In the report on this study, Grosser makes recommendations for university teachers to design purposeful interventions to cultivate critical thinking skills, as well as to provide effective modelling of these skills to prospective teachers. Yet, in 2007, Grosser herself identified this indigestible and shocking reality in aspirant teachers, and has yet to report on her individual efforts to remediate the dilemma meaningfully. This leads one to infer that the lingering and compelling grip of the apartheid curriculum ideology is virulent in pedagogic encounters, in that students display the tell-tale signs of rote learning and mimicry and are passively engaged rather than actively negotiating their own learning through "intellectual autonomy, courage, perseverance, empathy, open-mindedness, fair-mindedness and confidence in reasoning" (Facione, 2009; Paul & Elder, 2004). Furthermore, student dependence on teachers for meaning-making models the transmission or 'banking' (Freire & Faundez, 1989:89) method of education, and suggests an inequality of intelligence between the teacher and the student (Rancière, 1991: xvii). This thinking forecloses on active negotiation and debate (in agency), which are hallmarks of democratic education. Moreover, the inclusion

of race comparison achievement and the abhorrently distasteful and unbalanced conclusions drawn from it, reflect on the authors' (Grosser & Nel, 2013) uncritical assumptions, racist ideology, maintenance of inequality and smothering of democracy. To this end, I believe a more critical, balanced account would have given an improved historically and contextually grounded approach to language and culture. Finally, in surveying the last two analyses of pedagogic encounters in institutions of higher education – one being an account in which the new curriculum is being planned and implemented, and the other, which problematises the prevalence (or not) of critical thinking and language proficiency – one has to pause and admit that it is scarcely appropriate to allow the curriculum to go unproblematised. With this in mind, I now draw attention to the example provided previously (see 4.4.3), of the Grade 1 teacher (Jansen, 1999), to position the curriculum debate that follows below contextually. Furthermore, this topic is precursory and will receive even more consideration in Chapter 5, in which school classroom pedagogic encounters are discussed more elaborately.

How curriculum matters

4.6   Curriculum reorganisation and implementation: OBE/C2005

This subsection is aimed at understanding the underlying ideology that shaped curriculum reformulation (from apartheid education to progressive education) focused on social transformation. Yet policies on social transformation are not a definite guarantee that socially ethical pedagogy is funnelled into teaching practices in classrooms. Thus the discussion provides the foundation for a synthetic argument aimed at theorising critical student agency. If critical pedagogy is adopted as an ethical pedagogical approach in democratic education, how is it manifest in actual teaching and learning through daily teacher and student practices and experiences? Further, how might we access the explicit and implicit dimensions of a theory of critical student agency by looking at the connections between official education policies; teacher programmes; lecture hall pedagogy, and teacher classroom practice of education policies on critical pedagogy?

The study of which the Grade 1 teacher was part was conducted in 32 classes in two provinces of South Africa with a view to answer the question "How do Grade 1 teachers understand and implement outcomes-based education in their classrooms?" (Jansen, 1999: 4). Researcher observations during the pedagogic encounters revealed that the teachers were visibly unprepared to implement the new curriculum, OBE and C2005. This was in part due to the fact that the state had hurriedly settled on a complex curriculum policy to overhaul the legacy of

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apartheid education (OECD, 2008). And, while OBE and C2005 sought to embody the social values of a transformed democratic society that had shed the authoritarian nature of teaching and learning under apartheid (Fiske & Ladd: 2005:155−157), the lack of sustained teacher development and training in OBE, as well the lack of material and infrastructural support, made it abundantly difficult to implement the new curriculum innovations successfully (Jansen, 1999:14).

OBE via C2005 presented many challenges for implementation for various reasons, and this necessitated a Ministerial Committee (the Curriculum Implementation Review Committee) to review curriculum implementation difficulties in 2009 (Becker, 2013:195). Some of the committee findings confirmed that teachers were not averse to OBE via C2005, but that there were obvious material challenges they faced, viz. in the structure and design of C2005. This was especially noted as it related to:

- the complex language and confusing terminology;
- 'overcrowding' of the curriculum, progression, pace and sequencing in design;
- a lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy training;
- inadequate learning support materials;
- variability in quality and often unavailable follow-up support;
- an insufficient level of understanding;
- variable limited transfer of learning into classroom practice; and
- time frames which were unmanageable and unrealistic (Chisholm, 2002:29−32).

4.7   Curriculum critiques: Instrumentality, un-democratic exclusivity, hierarchical

While teachers voiced their discontent with OBE and C2005 at functional level, academic criticism ideologically exposed the unsavoury underbelly of OBE and its accompanying curriculum as being anti-democratic and couched in instrumental rationality (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2010: 144). To this end, Morrow (2001:91−93) suggests that the twelve critical outcomes outlined in OBE (DoE, 2000) collapsed education into training, and as such followed scientific rationality in that students were trained as animals are trained – to be workers for industrial specification in a production process, and what is troublesome is that the worthwhileness of this practice was never questioned. According to Morrow (2001:95), what the policy overlooked was the need for critical reflection and the capacity to consider alternatives, as it annihilated the flexibly intelligent ability of students (and teachers) to cope with non-routine emergencies. Furthermore, Morrow follows Peters (1965) and contends that

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the emphasis on outcomes misinterprets education as an end, when in fact it is "not to have arrived at a destination but to travel with a different view" (Morrow, 2001:97). Morrow's (2001:97) biting criticism continues as he challenges the (anti-)democratic dimensions of OBE and C2005, since he sees freedom as it is inscribed in the policy as being a "misleading illusion", as the national policy was given to schools (without prior deliberation) and prescribed inputs and outputs, which suggested that students were "raw materials" and that schooling turned them into finished "products". This kind of logic eviscerated the students' human aspiration and imagination, since intentional human agency cannot be defined in terms of inputs and outputs, but only by the focused effort of the student (Morrow, 2001:98). In addition, Morrow questions the reasonableness of giving teachers outcomes and expecting them to design their own programmes (Morrow, 2001:101). In Morrow's view, the emphasis should be less on outcomes and more geared towards practices and achievements. In so doing, student performance is not the marker of learning, because learning itself comes from the student's mind and is constructed (Morrow, 2001:102). Morrow (2001:104–105) further suggests that teachers may lay claim to reporting objectively on learning by drawing inferences from student performance, and clues from students' claims and introspective reports on the extent to which the student is trying to participate in the practice. The above-mentioned account challenges the policy's claim of transparency and its commitment to democracy when it is foregrounded by an instrumentalist ideology that sees education as training for outcomes; its (the policy's) lack of accounting for deliberation on the part of students and teachers; and its neutralising of intentional human agency, as students' and teachers' feelings were not accounted for (foreclosing on the right to interpersonal agreement on standards).

With these criticisms in mind, I shall now turn to Shalem and Slonimsky's (1999) account of teacher evaluation criteria and obligation as an undemocratic practice as these authors draw upon the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 1998). The DoE's policy document, the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 1998) has two main purposes. Firstly the document wants "to put forward its vision of teacher development to indicate the norms and standards of competence that should be met by all teachers and all other educators", and secondly, "the DoE uses the norms and standards as the basis for criteria by which it evaluates qualifications for employment" (DoE, 1998:2). Shalem and Slonimsky (1999:15) contend that it is a false assumption on the part of the state, that it can give access to the good qualities of teaching practice by transmitting clear and explicit criteria. Furthermore, the implication is that, if the state has provided criteria, it (the state) can act as a pedagogue who teaches the goods of the

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practice (Shalem & Slonimsky, 1999:7). Rather, they propose that, as standards and specifications, the criteria are the means that the state uses to regulate knowledgeable practitioners and, that teacher performance and assessment are the criteria for competence; which supposedly translate into competent students (Shalem & Slonimsky, 1999:5). However, the problem for Shalem and Slonimsky (1999:14) is the questionable availability of educators who are sufficiently competent to teach for competence and judge it, and the assumption that there is a common culture of teacher education. According to these authors, the challenge of the state is to enhance epistemological access to the goods of practice in the pedagogic project. They argue that this cannot be done by using criteria as the "promissory note for access to the goods of practice" (Shalem & Slonimsky, 1999:7). Furthermore, Shalem and Slonimsky (1999:8) problematise the state's conception of democracy when they ask, "Can we be given criteria? How do we come to agreement on criteria? When do we invoke criteria? How can our obligation to criteria be evaluated?"

This way, the state's instrumental conception of regulation and development holds very little promise of change in practice. Building on this criticism, Shalem and Slonimsky (1999:19) invoke Cavell's (1976; 1979; 1990) definition of criteria, which, simply stated, says that we cannot arbitrate between conceptions of good and bad criteria as our epistemological bases are unreliable and inconsistent (when taken together), and that our conceptions of criteria rely on prior understanding of practice, which tells or provides the criteria of practice while it does not disclose or create it.

Under these conditions, Shalem and Slonimsky (1999) point to the undemocratic nature of the 120 criteria 'given by the state' and the instrumental exchange teachers are supposed to show by passing the state's instrumental checklist as a sign of obligation to the imposed criteria (Shalem & Slonimsky, 1999:22). On display in the above argument is the state's technocratic ideology in imposing criteria for teacher and student competence. Furthermore, the legislative process would be seen to be concluded in bad faith, as there was no dialogue between teachers and the state, all the while teacher agency was silenced and immobilised, indicating a loss of freedom and independence (Shalem & Slonimsky, 1999:23). A closer analysis of the state's design of the new curriculum (i.e. C2005) and its concomitant norms and standards for teachers appear to corroborate Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatus (ISA), except that, whereas Althusser (1973) conceived of ISA as social agencies working in the state's interest (church, family, school, media, law, trade union), here the state itself showed its intention in transmitting its technocratic values in schooling by subjugating teachers and students to its will

(Morrow, 2001; Shalem & Slonimsky, 1999). In 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 I have studied the hierarchy of how state education policy is formulated and how it is intended to be implemented in school classrooms. Yet, academics and scholars provide a different account of how policy enactment occurs in lecture rooms, which infers that one cannot simply make the deduction that criticality is a feature of South African education policy, thus it should be seen in teaching and learning in South African classrooms. Therefore, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 provide deeper insights into the material realities and inherent complexities of lecture hall and classroom practice, and how the idealism of policy is grappled with. These insights are imagined to fuel the theorisation of how critical student agency might emerge in the midst of the tensions between official policy and classroom practice.

4.8   Curriculum revisions: RNCS, NCS/CAPS replaces OBE/C2005

The insights proffered by Morrow (2001) and Shalem and Slonimsky (1999) were in tandem with the tide of discontent that reverberated throughout South African education during the mid-1990s through 2001 with regard to the implementation of OBE and C2005. Two major dissatisfactions highlighted by the Minister of Basic Education were teacher overload and difficulty in implementing the curriculum (DoE, 2011). These dissatisfactions necessitated changes in the structure and design of C2005, yet the DoE appeared to take care that the language and spirit of the curriculum remain loyal to an egalitarian pedagogy and allegiance to human rights values (DoE, 2000: 1-3). Conversely, scholars like Jansen (1998); Vally and Spreen (2014); and Becker (2013:258) argue that it tended towards a more behaviourist, instrumental nature. The above-mentioned changes in policy resulted in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS 2004), and this curriculum policy document went through a second review that culminated in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The review and reform of the RNCS took place with the following results in mind:

- that the curriculum would be more accessible to teachers;
- for the mapping of assessment standards;
- to bring about changes in curriculum terminology;
- to facilitate the reduction of learning areas; and
- for the development and distribution of textbooks (Motshekga, 2011).

In other words, the revision of the NCS resulted in CAPS in 2011, which demarcates what each teacher in every subject should teach, when to teach it, and how to do the accompanying

assessments. To assess how far NCS CAPS has strayed from OBE and C2005, a review of the current principles and aims of South African education in the light of the revised policies is appropriate. The principles favoured in the NCS (DoE, 2011:8) are:

- social transformation;

- active and critical thinking;

- high knowledge and high skills;

- progression;

- human rights, valuing indigenous knowledge systems;

- credibility;

- quality and efficiency; and

- providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries.

Taken as such, critics and supporters may argue that these principles promote either a functionalist or progressive pedagogy. Furthermore, the aims of education as outlined in the NCS are described in the following manner (DoE, 2011:9):

> To equip learners with the skills to: identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking; work effectively as individuals and with others as members of a team; organize and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively; collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes; use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

4.9   Curriculum ideology: NCS/CAPS – constructivist or behaviourist contentions in higher education

Judging from the above principles and aims of education (see 4.7), we are confronted with the crucial question of whether teacher development is adequate to meet the demands of the NCS and CAPS, irrespective of whether we consider it egalitarian or behaviourist or technicist in nature. To attempt to answer the above question, I shall focus on three studies: a report reviewing national policies for education by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2008), *The Initial Teacher Education Research Project* (Taylor, 2014) and to a lesser extent, educational outcomes in relation to teacher development (Fiske and Ladd,

2004). Two studies cite that the post-apartheid state's haste to reform education resulted in an unusually high reliance on policy statements and regulations as a means to build a new society through education (Fiske & Ladd, 2004:176, 262; OECD, 2008:297). This premature rush to reform education did not accommodate an understanding of education as being a "complex and gradual process" needing much reflection (OECD, 2008:297). Consequently, the state's adoption of a hierarchical approach inherited from the past, taken together with the lack of teacher engagement in drafting the new policies, was short-sighted (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:173, 240; OECD, 2008:297).

What follows below, is an account of the quality of human resources and the material state of higher education institutions (HEIs) after apartheid. To begin with, the apartheid educational heritage was one fraught with contrasting policies and traditions, as well as 'weak human and material resources' (Fiske and Ladd, 2004; OECD, 2008). This, coupled with the state's rationalisation of colleges of education and higher education facilities for teacher development, created further challenges for effective policy implementation (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:115; OECD, 2008:305; Samuel, 2002:408). Two specific challenges were highlighted by college and university staff: one was the reservations they held about the suitability of new policies for the South African context, and the second was their inability to translate these "sophisticated" policies into practice (Fiske and Ladd, 2004:157; OECD, 2008:305):

Additionally, the post-secondary education institutions were also grappling with their own internal challenges, as mentioned before (see 4.4), rationalisation was in effect with 50% of staff at these institutions being employed on a part-time basis (OECD, 2008), so staff could not arguably be expected to serve as exemplars of the new policies (OECD, 2008).

Further to this, the effect would be felt in staff attentiveness to their academic and research work and, since they were 'overstretched' it was unlikely that they would effectively and meaningfully attend to the labour-intensive process of teacher development, such as small group work or individual attention to students (OECD, 2008:306; Taylor, 2014:17). Accordingly, teacher education was particularly difficult to achieve in poorly resourced facilities that lacked laboratories and information technology infrastructure (OECD, 2008:306). Not only did the above impediments manifest in the institutions themselves, but they negatively affected the quality of practical experience in terms of the supervision, monitoring and feedback that are necessary during student intern episodes (OECD, 2008:306; Taylor, 2014:10). Following on the summary of challenges to the effective implementation of the new

government policies as they relate to post-secondary staff, the focus now turns to the students who attend these facilities, since they are the enforcers of said policies in schools. We first look at student recruitment, and then at student preparedness. Following that, practice teaching or student internship will be discussed and, lastly, the three phases of teacher development are described. This is done with a view to understand the quality of teaching in school classrooms as well as to forecast how pinciples of critical pedagogy are filtered into school classrooms. Further, insights might emerge on the prospects of how critical student agency may develop in school classrooms.

Institutions of higher learning are challenged to attract quality applicants to their teacher education programmes (OECD, 2008:306; Taylor, 2014:7−10). This aspect is even more worrying as there has been a decline especially in attracting African students with a proficiency in indigenous languages (OECD, 2008:306). According to the OECD (2008) report, students end up in the education faculty by default and have no intention of teaching in South Africa (OECD, 2008:307). Furthermore, most prospective teachers have poor levels of literacy and numeracy skills, and their mathematics and science proficiency is very weak, resulting in a shortage of these skills in schools (OECD, 2008:307; Taylor, 2014:15, 19). In the light of the human resource challenges in faculties of education alluded to in 4.4, staff at the universities are unable to respond to student needs in large classes, which exacerbates the problem of remediating these deficiencies (OECD, 2008:307; Taylor, 2014:10).

The OECD (2008) report goes on to criticise the initial phase of teacher preparation at universities as an overemphasis on theory rather than on practical, strategic action and, as a result, students are unprepared (on account of secondary school deficiencies) or under-prepared (university does not remediate the deficiencies) in knowledge content (OECD, 2008:308). Taylor, however, contoverts certain elements of these findings and states that at some universities, practice is preeminent over theory (Taylor, 2014: 11). Yet, there is no dispute that the duration and quality of on-site classroom practice − which lasts for six weeks in the first three years of a BEd degree and six months in the final year − is affected (sometimes positively, but mostly negatively) by the nature of the school, the quality of leadership, the interest of the staff, and a modest chance of exemplars of best practice (OECD, 2008:308; Taylor, 2014:10). It is with these above-mentioned facts in mind that the OECD (2008) report recommends synchronicity between the practices of the lecture hall and the classroom so as to minimise the lack of effective supervision and mentoring of novice teachers. Moreover, Taylor (2014:11)

calls for greater "structural and conceptual coherence" in initial teacher education to overcome weak content, pedagogic and contextual knowledge. In addition, postgraduate training for teachers in the form of induction is non-existent, with a scant 80 hours allocated (but perhaps not enforced) for in-service development (OECD, 2008:309), reinforcing the need for more robust practice-teaching episodes. After this exposition of the reception and implementation of the new policies and regulations in higher education and a snapshot of how teacher development occurs therein, we now return to a question posed earlier, viz. whether teacher development is adequate to meet the demands of the NCS CAPS (see 4.8).

The NCS CAPS policy framework contains the following ideals, namely that students −
- be proficient in science and technology;
- be provided an education that is comparable to that in other countries;
- display critical thinking;
- exhibit high knowledge and skills; and
- value indigenous knowledge systems.

Firstly, judging from the above studies (Fiske and Ladd, 2004; OECD, 2008; Taylor, 2014), which illustrate the lack of expertise in mathematics and science and the infrastructural difficulties in facilities to accommodate modern technology in post-secondary teacher education, it seems improbable that teacher development is adequate to meet the demands of the official policy. Secondly, university faculties are overstretched with high student-to-teacher ratios. This, coupled with student deficiencies in literacy and numeracy, seem to suggest there is only a slim chance that critical thinking skills could be taught adequately so that prospective teachers might teach it in their (future) classrooms. Thirdly, bullet points one and two (above), taken together and attached to the fact that prospective teachers display shallow knowledge content, bear slight promise that such teachers will display high knowledge and skill in their pedagogic practices. Fourthly, the fact that education faculties find it hard to attract African students with a proficiency in indigenous languages creates the impression that indigenous knowledge systems will not be promoted during pedagogical engagements. Finally, for all the motivations provided above as plausible reasons why teacher development is inadequate to meet the demands of the NCS CAPS, teachers and students provide minimal prospects of being comparable to other countries. This statement is made in the light of Tsunke's (2012) analysis of an international literacy benchmark for Grade 4 learners, in which it was found that 29% of

those who wrote pre-PIRLS,[3] did not reach the lowest pre-PIRLS benchmark. "Approximately 90% of Grade 4 learners tested in English or Afrikaans attained the lowest international benchmark, while between 24% and 57% of children writing in the nine official African languages did not achieve it" (Tsunke, 2012:1). While I have attempted to align the NCS with teacher development, and forecast the probability that student development in university programmes is synchronised well enough for effective pedagogical projects in classrooms, I now turn to the NSE (DoE, 2000) to analyse whether there is any particular resonance between the norms and standards for teachers, university preparation programmes and classroom practice.

The NSE policy document outlines three competences that are further characterised by the assessment criteria as seen in the seven teacher roles (DoE, 2000). The first competence that teachers should "apply" (the exact terminology used in the policy) is **practical competence**, described as the demonstrated ability, in an authentic context, to consider a range of possibilities for action, make considered decisions about which possibility to follow, and to perform the chosen action (DoE, 2000:4). Secondly, **foundational competence** is described as the instance where the student teacher "demonstrates an understanding of the knowledge and thinking that underpins the action taken" (DoE, 2000:4). Thirdly, **reflexive competence** is described as the instance where the student teacher "demonstrates the ability to integrate performances and decision-making with understanding and with an ability to adapt to change and unforeseen circumstances and to explain the reasons behind these adaptations" (DoE, 2000:4).

Taken on the whole, the competences teachers should display imply a level of progression in that the first level (practical competence) indicates decision-making with action in mind, which progresses into the second level of competence (foundational competence). This, in turn, suggests the philosophy that underpins the thinking to perform the action, while the third level (reflexive competence) intimates the sophistication to be able to integrate action and provide the thinking that legitimates such action. Thus, the criteria for competence in the NSE policy seem innocuous in and of themselves, but when aligned to how teacher development programmes at universities function, they expose the dissonance between the expectation and the reality in that prospective teachers have poor levels of literacy and numeracy skills and are

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[3] Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2011), which is one of the largest international reading literacy assessments of its kind (Tsunke, 2012).

deficient in subject content, pedagogic and contextual knowledge (Taylor, 2014:15, 19). Furthermore, it becomes problematic if we follow the findings that the majority of teachers have been immersed in theory over practical strategic action and, ultimately, devote too little time to classroom practice (OECD, 2008:306–308). All of this creates the impression that the criteria are overambitious and do not take into account the level of teacher proficiency, making the expectations too demanding and unrealistic.

Moreover, according to the NSE, the above-mentioned competences need to be evident in seven highly specialised roles, with each of them having their own sub-categories and criteria (DoE, 2000:6). The first role of teaching is the teacher as learning mediator and, within this role; the teacher should demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context (DoE, 2000:6). Yet, there is no indicator that education students have sound knowledge in relation to teacher development; quite the opposite, since prospective teachers are not generally considered high-quality candidates based on their secondary school academic performance (OECD, 2008:306; Taylor, 2014:10). Secondly, in the role as interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials, "the educator will understand and interpret learning programmes, as well as design original learning programmes" (DoE, 2000:6). However, in teacher education programmes and school practice, if there is an overemphasis on theory (over practice, content, context and pedagogy) there is nothing to suggest that student teachers may be proficient in this role (OECD, 2008:308). In the third role, in which the teacher assumes the function of leader, administrator and manager, he/she should be able to make "decisions appropriate to the level [they teach], manage learning in the classroom, and carry out classroom administrative duties efficiently" (DoE, 2000:6). Taken in the context of insufficient time allocated to classroom practice in the teacher training programme, little confidence is developed in thinking for future teachers to succeed in this role (OECD, 2008:307). Fourthly, as scholar, researcher and lifelong learner, the teacher should "achieve ongoing personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research" (DoE, 2000:7). While this is necessary, there is little convincing evidence that the initial teacher preparation, the lack of an induction programme and ineffective in-service programmes fully equip teachers to carry out this role (OECD, 2008:308; Taylor, 2014:10). Furthermore, in the community, citizenship and pastoral role, the teacher should "practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others" (DoE, 2000:7). However, if it is to be assumed that the curriculum is highlighted in capitalist, functionalist ideology based on

greed, competition and consumption (Rogers, 1983:30–35), and that there is almost no indication that this role is taught or modelled in a teacher development programme (OECD, 2008), it seems like a wishful, baseless fantasy that we could even expect teachers to satisfy this role. Penultimately, in his/her role as assessor, the teacher should "design and manage both formative and summative assessment in order to interpret and use assessment results to improve reaming programmes" (DoE, 2000:7). Due to the high student/teacher ratios and very little indication that future teachers receive skilled monitoring and feedback during practice teaching, coupled with the fact that there is almost no confirmation of mentoring, it is hard to believe that student teachers can fulfil this role effectively (OECD, 2008:306; Taylor, 2014:10). Lastly, teachers as learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialists should be "well-grounded in the knowledge, skills, values, principles, methods, and procedures relevant to the discipline, subject, reaming area, phase of study or professional or occupational practice" (DoE, 2000:7). Conversely, all the deficiencies of the teacher development programmes already mentioned above, viz. academic deficiencies, professional under-preparedness, and a lack of commitment to teaching, strongly corroborate the positions of Shalem and Slonimsky (1999) and Morrow (2001) that the policies are of a functionalist and hierarchical nature, and help cast light on the dissonance and severe misalignment between the norms and standards for educators and the inadequately prepared teachers who enter the classrooms as beginner teachers (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:5).

Inasmuch as I have tried to present a picture of the official state policy in relation to teacher education programmes, it cannot be overlooked that policy makers adopt particular worldviews and develop local policy within global contexts (Rizvi, 2008). Rizvi interprets Noddings' (2005) view that progressive education policy makers emphasise global citizenship centred on social justice, social and cultural diversity, educating for peace, and treating the earth as a unified place. In contrast, policy makers with a neoliberal and managerialist education perspective (Lather, 2004:759), emphasise Gardiner's (2006) skills-based paradigm with a focus on students' cognitive flexibility, cultural sophistication, and ability to work collaboratively in diverse groups, all framed by an economic imperative for global interconnectivity (Rizvi, 2008). Taken together, NCS CAPS and NSE policy is predominated by a behaviourist, skills-based ideology (Gardiner, 2006) rather than a constructivist ideology (Noddings, 2005) in the following ways:

- both policies favour high skills and knowledge (science and technology, research and programme design);

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- NSE adopts a managerialist approach (skilled decision-making, assessment); and
- NCS CAPS has high regard for global (economic) competitiveness

However, the above policies reflect constructivist tendencies to a lesser degree by making an educational commitment to indigenous knowledge systems (NCS CAPS) and by insisting on the community, citizenship and pastoral roles of teachers (NSE). Thus, Lingard and Rizvi interpret Green's (1996) notion this way: policy designers display "dominance of a particular organisational paradigm that brings together the hegemonic convergence of a particular way of thinking about educational policy making and governance" (Lingard and Rizvi, 1998:62). Lingard and Rizvi (1998:63) also argue that we should guard against overstating that economic globalisation inevitably dissolves local political and cultural significance as sites of national policy making. Consequently, Lingard and Rizvi (1998) relate the practical example of the Hawke–Keating educational policy regime in Australia (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998) that was justified by a particular conception of globalisation, one that strove to merge market liberalism (efficiency and proofs of outcomes) with an equity agenda. Nevertheless, given an understanding that Western capitalism is the reference point against which nations construct their policies (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998:80), it is hard to see how South African national education policy can maintain "distinctiveness and integrity" (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998:79) by respecting or prioritising the local within a neo-liberal global framework. It is on condition of no inherent power differentials within the economic, political and cultural dimensions of globalisation that Lingard and Rizvi's (1998) autonomous and distinctive national policy-making model may survive. Outside of this, it becomes inconceivable how to obtain a (sufficient and sustained) functional balance between satisfying global imperatives without compromising local needs as illustrated by how the Howard administration contrasts the Hawke–Keating administration in Australia (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998:66), where the former favoured a managerialist bureaucracy (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998:66). The direct link between national policy formulation and critical student agency arises on account of the highly contested nature of public policy that appears to favour particular interests (usually well-resourced, highly technologically literate, globally competitive, skilled students) that benefit a few and which continue to reproduce social inequality (Rizvi, 2008). Rizvi (2008) helps clarify the link between critical student agency, teacher preparation programmes and national educational policy frameworks by asking how teachers and students respond to global and local policy imperatives in their everyday educational encounters. With that in mind, I now turn toward the pedagogic practice of beginner teachers in classrooms to evaluate the resonance or dissonance between policy and practice.

Teachers in their classrooms

4.10   Foreshadowing expectations from beginner teachers in school classrooms

In 2009, a large-scale study on the practices of beginner teachers in South African schools was conducted in 340 schools in five provinces to evaluate the state of school readiness, knowledge and skills new teachers brought to the profession (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:11). The study echoed the findings of Taylor (2014) and the OECD (2008) that universities fail to prepare teachers adequately, with theoretical and pedagogic orientations that do not equip beginner teachers to manage diverse classrooms adequately (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:5). Furthermore, the demands of the contemporary classroom entail the ability to teach technological and analytical skills, as students are expected to display complicated writing ability, think critically and apply knowledge in solving real-life problems (Livingston & Borko, 1989). In reality, however, many newly qualified teachers or beginner teachers find it difficult to transition from being a university student or teacher trainee to being a practitioner, and the teaching profession generally relies on on-the-job training as a means to induct new teachers into the profession (Arends & Phurutse, 2009). This fact is unsurprising, since no amount of theory can specify the complex professional demands on students in advance, as each pedagogic episode is largely contextual (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:6; Morrow, 2001:90). For instance, theoretical knowledge does not specify how to blend knowledge with a decision for a specific learning context, or how to deal with, for example, disruptive or unruly student behaviour (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:6). Arends and Phurutse (2009:6) rely on the interpretation of Segal (1998) that teaching is an uncertain practice, as each pedagogic encounter is unique, and teacher individuality is revealed through teacher personality and values, making the task of simultaneously managing the multiple and contradictory goals (and roles) of teaching cumbersome and tricky.

Arends and Phurutse (2009) confirm what was previously alluded to in the OECD report, namely that teacher support and induction programmes are virtually non-existent, with no mentoring or peer support provided for beginner teachers, resulting in teachers making their way via trial and error in order to develop a repertoire of teaching strategies (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:7; OECD, 2008:309). In response to the extent that the teacher training curriculum supports classroom pedagogic practice, beginner teachers indicated overwhelmingly [63%] (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:17)that "student teaching" was most beneficial, followed by "methods and materials" [48%] (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:18). Most alarming was that "theory, assessment theory and practices" was regarded as one of the least (20%) beneficial (Arends &

Phurutse, 2009:17–21) This admission by beginner teachers is problematic in that there seems to be consensus between the two studies cited (see 4.9) that university curricula emphasise theory over the practice of teaching (Arends & Phurutse, 2009; OECD, 2008), which means that teacher trainees do not value these skills, or that the teacher trainers teach theory badly, or alternatively that theory is removed from practice (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:21). In spite of the fact that trainee teachers receive minimal practical training, 90% of the respondents in Arends and Phurutse's study indicated extreme confidence in their lesson preparation, content knowledge and their ability to make key concepts explicit to learners (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:20). Nevertheless, studies on pedagogical competencies confirm the low levels of conceptual knowledge (Taylor, 2014; Taylor & Vinjevold, 1999) and that high school teachers in particular are under-prepared to teach accurately and clearly (Jansen, 2004:6–15). Arends and Phurutse (2009:21) interpret the beginner teachers' self-reported assuredness as questionable in the light of the above-mentioned research, which indicated that new teachers taking part in the study were unprepared to practise in schools. Furthermore, Arends and Phurutse suggest that the participating beginner teachers may have felt pressurised (bureaucratic pressure) to report favourably on their capabilities and showed resistance to being self-critical or showed low levels of self-reflection (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:21). Arends and Phurutse argue that this is cause for concern, because effective pedagogic practice involves theory and the practice of assessment in order to undertake reflective practice (praxis) (Arends & Phurutse, 2009:21). It is in praxis that the practitioner becomes a reflexive professional by reflecting on personal teaching practice to improve or transform pedagogic encounters. However, in the light of beginner teachers' dismissive views of theory and praxis and their lack of adequate preparation, it can be assumed that their university programmes have left them unprepared for the complexities of modern pedagogic engagements in the classroom –or has it? At the outset of this chapter, I introduced a pedagogic encounter that resonated harmoniously with a myriad of themes within critical pedagogy (see 4.2), after which I looked at curriculum and policy misalignment as seen through classroom university practice (institutionally, teachers, students) [see 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6]. In the upcoming section, 4.11, I attempt once more to restore the combination of policy and practice in search of the type of critical pedagogy that empowers aspirant teachers to deal with the complexities of modern pedagogic engagements, and that, more importantly, facilitates critical pedagogy through active student agency.

4.11   Pedagogic encounters: Respect and university classroom encounters

4.11.1   Preamble to the case

This particular case was selected on the basis that it provides insight into how critical pedagogy might be conceived of in relation to teacher preparation programmes in a previously advantaged institution. Secondly, the case is relevant because it simultaneously provides perspectives on the prospects of critical pedagogy emerging from both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Thirdly, the case presents us with views of how the 'other' (marginal and disadvantaged students) might be empowered to negotiate dominant ideology successfully through dialogical action (critical agency) and cultural tolerance, and how the dominant groups are called on to confront diversity and cultural bias in order to promote democratic citizenship. Lastly, this case provides a clear example of the methodological approach of problem posing and problem solving as a counter-hegemonic strategy, which characterises critical pedagogy and critical agency. What follows below are the teacher and student actions: words, thoughts, observations, attitudes and dispositions as reflected by a university teacher during postgraduate and undergraduate BEd degree pedagogical encounters.

4.11.2   *Case 5*

This subsection is a precis of the study Waghid (2010) conducted that highlights the fact that certain university programs provide platforms to develop criticality in teachers.

The author reporting on this study, Waghid (2010:67), describes the institution (where the study occurred) as a predominantly White, Afrikaner university where minority students potentially could feel alienated. He firstly establishes an imperative that classroom encounters should be navigated with respect for one another. In order for this to occur, classroom dialogue should embrace the cultural diversity of the cohort, to the point where members of the class make an effort to understand and appreciate the unique features that are cherished in particular cultures (Waghid, 2010:66). Given the diversity in terms of the ethnic, racial and cultural composition of the students, and the personal identity that emanates from such orientations, the author argues that students cannot remain uninformed of the value of others' cultures (Waghid, 2010:66). Furthermore, he considers respect to be blind if students were to see things only from the perspective of their primary culture (Waghid, 2010:66). Secondly, the author observes that, in respectful pedagogic encounters, participants are called to confront biases in an effort to curb "arrogant moral biases toward those whom we hardly understand" (Waghid, 2010:66). To this

end, he suggests that members of the class rely on openness and dialogue to facilitate critical, legitimate and democratic behaviours (Waghid, 2010:67). Thirdly, Waghid (2010) argues that respectful classroom encounters demand that participants listen appreciatively to victims (of apartheid). He calls on student experience of the deficiencies of South African society, and how these have adversely affected education in schools for some classroom participants, which demands an appreciative understanding so as not to further reinforce marginalisation and insecurity. However, he also acknowledges that, within that same conversation, other students who had been advantaged by apartheid education attempted to absolve themselves from inherited privilege. Still, he advocates that respect requires of participants to listen to many voices through active engagement, whether we endorse or deplore the views of others (Waghid, 2010:68). Fourthly, Waghid (2010) proposes that, in seeking to achieve respect in the face of disagreement, students and teachers attend to how others hold or express disagreement. This means that cohort members do not act in blind acceptance, as this negates dialogical interaction. Rather, respectful engagement invites dialogue and opens up a platform for students to question freely (Waghid, 2010:69–70).

To advance his argument for democratic citizenship education further, Waghid (2010) proffers that, in addition to respect – as discussed previously – students should enact forgiveness in pedagogic encounters. Following Kant (1993), Waghid proposes that "respect for persons" is equated with human dignity (Waghid, 2010:70); hence, with this understanding a demand for respect is simultaneously a "struggle against racial bigotry, gender oppression and cultural imperialism" (Hill, 2000 as cited in Waghid, 2010:70). Moreover, on the basis of human dignity, even the perpetrators of bigotry, oppression and imperialism deserve respect as persons, since this opens the door for reconciliation among contending parties.

Next, Waghid advances a notion of how students and teachers could cultivate reconciliation and forgiveness in university classrooms through the idea of respect for persons (Waghid, 2010:71). Firstly, he suggests that class cohorts become familiar with the cultural histories of others in a bid to understand differences (Waghid, 2010:70). It is an understanding of differences that underpins reconciliatory action, in that activities such as storytelling, African mythology and folktales could be facilitated through the curriculum in an effort to mitigate, for example, the distortions of and injustices facing Africans.

In the above classroom engagement, Waghid (2010:72) validates diversity in students, creates awareness of structured inequalities and prejudices, and engenders critical thinking in students

about controversial issues. Secondly, Waghid argues that, in order to engage deliberately with others, students and teachers should continue to engage in dialogue as it offers possibilities for reconciliation. To substantiate his argument, he recalls an incident when a deliberate attempt was made to anger other class members by blaming them for something over which they had no control, and how this incident closed off possibilities for alternative endings (Waghid, 2010:73). Thirdly, Waghid (2010:74) propose that, during pedagogic engagements and when seeking to foster respect and forgiveness, students and teachers should express themselves freely but responsibly, as unconstrained expression ends in injustice to others and is characterised by uncritical utterances.

Thus far, I have provided a summary of Waghid's (2010) pedagogic encounters focused on respect and forgiveness in a democratic citizenship education framework. The attention now turns to determine whether there is any resonance between the themes illustrated in Waghid's pedagogic engagements and the official curriculum, the NCS (DoE, 2011).

4.11.3   CDA of the case

The NCS favours the following principles in prospective teachers:
- students who are engaged in social transformation;
- students who engage in active and critical thinking;
- students with high knowledge and high skills;
- students who respect the human rights of others; and
- students who value indigenous knowledge systems (DoE, 2011).

In Waghid's classroom engagements, he modelled certain behaviours and attitudes that make it possible to believe that we can expect his students to be socially responsible as democratic citizens (Waghid, 2010). To substantiate, students were allowed to interact critically through deliberation to solve problems. Furthermore, throughout the narrative, Waghid (2010) presented real-life, contextually rich contemporary examples in order to locate the subject as active and intentional agents, increasing the probability that the students would continue to seek relevant knowledge and enhance their already existing skills. The classroom engagements further required of students to validate each other's human dignity through respect and forgiveness as a sign of acknowledging the other's rights. In addition, Waghid (2010) illustrated how to cultivate reconciliation through the curricular application of folktales and African

myths, which suggests that his students could possibly value indigenous knowledge systems in their teaching and learning episodes. Having established resonance between the NCS principles and Waghid's pedagogic engagements, I now attempt to align the classroom activities with the themes of critical pedagogy, viz. ideology, equality, agency and democracy. What was on display during the above pedagogic encounter was –

- active but responsible deliberation;
- the valuing of human dignity through respect and forgiveness;
- the practice of critical thinking to arrest assumptions and prejudice;
- respect for multiculturalism;
- the skill to listen appreciatively; and,
- the ability to engage in reconciliatory action.

Thus, the pedagogic encounter aligns admirably with a progressive, constructivist ideology that strives for equality between teachers and students, and which ultimately empowers student and teacher agency to defend emancipatory and democratic ideals.

4.12   Synthesising what was learned from the cases

The cases presented in this chapter (see 4.2.3; 4.3.2; 4.4.2; 4.5.2 and 4.11.2) did not point to the direct enactment of critical student agency, but they provided the infrastructure that looks at policy, institutions, and agents that help to fuel a new theory on critical student agency. Each case proved to be instructive on its own merit and added knowledge in theory formulation in the following ways:

Case 1 (see 4.2.3, [Waghid, 2001]), provided insights into the enactment of critical pedagogy in a university lecture hall. The principles of criticality that this case engages with is reflexivity, defending democratic ideals, engaging in praxis, and being a reflective educational practitioner. In this way, I was given a perception of how some in-service teachers negotiated the practice of critical pedagogy. Further, the in-service teachers in the case demonstrated what it means to be self-directed and self-organising; and raise critical issues for educational and social transformation. Thus, the value that this case makes in leading an argument for critical student agency is: policy directives that promote critical pedagogy have been incorporated into lecture hall pedagogy. Secondly, the lecturer and the in-service teachers themselves provided evidence of critical agency within democratic educational frameworks. Thirdly, the case provided an understanding of what moral and ethical pedagogy might look like where self, educational and

social transformation is given space to develop. Ultimately, this case created an expectation and hope that if we were to look at classroom social practice involving these in-service teachers (4.2.3) and their students, we might be able to inform a theory of critical student agency. This would be on account that progressive curriculum ideology supports criticality and accommodates critical agency to the point that teachers and students question, reflect and transform social injustice.

Case 2 (see 4.3.2, [Lombard and Grosser, 2004]), called for the training of teachers to be reinforced with critical thinking skills so that the quality of teachers might be raised; and also to allow teachers to develop to their full potentialities. The basis for studying the critical thinking skills of prospective teachers was aligned directly to SAQA standards that evaluates graduating teachers according to their ability to solve problems and make decisions. The case provided insight into the immediate reality of lecture hall pedagogy by highlighting the complex problem of teaching critical thinking, and the lack of skill on the part of lecturers to teach this difficult skill. In the light that critical thinking does not develop automatically over time, indicates that critical thinking skills are best acquired through explicit, effective instruction. This case raised the question of how critical thinking skills are meant to be funnelled down into the daily learning episodes of school students when university lecturers are not adept at teaching it; and by deduction meant that classroom teachers do not have the aptitude to teach it. The value of this insight in fuelling a theory on critical student agency was how school students might lay hold of critical thinking skills in the absence of direct instruction, and how they might use critical thinking skills for self- and social transformation.

Case 3 (see 4.4.2, [Samuel, 2002]), looked at university curriculum reformulation. This case provided an understanding of how the progressive OBE/C2005 helped form new pedagogic identities in university lecturers and teachers-in-training. Using the NQF and SAQA standards for the BEd degree, an institution replaced the rigid, rote and authoritarian style of CNE and FE with the learner-centred, transparent, and egalitarian ideology of OBE/C2005. This model of teacher training provided me as researcher with an understanding of social change; and where university lecturers represent the archetype of how graduating teachers should teach in school classrooms. Thus, a clear picture developed of the type of teacher we might meet in school classrooms and the type of interaction that might be visible between teacher and student in school classrooms. Therefore, the model of the classroom teacher represented here is an ethical pedagogue who values student diversity, one who remediates student subject-based deficiencies, and one who is interested in qualitatively improving student achievement. So, the

lesson that may be learned from this case when related to the phenomenon of critical student agency is, how school students might respond to learner-centred, transparent, and egalitarian pedagogy; and how this might be seen in student acting, thinking and valuing.

In case 4 (see 4.5.2) Grosser and Nel (2013) problematized the critical thinking skills and academic language proficiency among prospective teachers. Grosser and Nel (2013) highlighted the need to enhance the teacher training curriculum because prospective teachers cannot critically argue topics through good language proficiency. Thus the inability of prospective teachers to communicate effectively, results in the teachers' reliance on rote learning and the reproduction of facts to make their learning easier. The value of this insight in a theory on critical student agency is to look at the opposite of rote learning by accentuating how marginal school students might produce and communicate their own thinking, feeling and valuing. It also places emphasis on the issue of classroom teachers focusing on knowledge production (questioning, critique, scepticism to create new knowledge) rather than rote reproduction of abstract facts.

In case 5 (see 4.11.2, [Waghid, 2010]) the focus fell on university pedagogic encounters that emphasise respect and forgiveness in a democratic citizenship education framework. In this teacher development programme, the university lecturer created opportunities for prospective teachers to engage in thinking and behaviour that: validates diversity in students; creates awareness of structured inequalities and prejudices; and engenders critical thinking in students about controversial issues. Further, the emphasis on dialogue and the ability to deliberate freely but responsibly was highlighted. Thus, this case revealed the engagement that prospective teachers had within a democratic education framework, giving hope that they too might practice and instil the principles of a democratic, equal and ethical pedagogy in their school classrooms. The impact of this insight in a theory on critical student agency is to expect that if prospective teachers have been taught how to organise their teaching on critical and democratic practice, a possibility exists that school students will be able to show criticality in issues of inequality and anti-democratic practices. Taken together, the five cases (4.2.3; 4.3.2; 4.4.2; 4.5.2 and 4.11.2) provided a combined picture of the architecture of the local education policy discourse, and teacher training discourse by allowing me to metaphorically peer into lecture halls, and to pre-empt what student behaviours could be anticipated in school classrooms. Thus, the movement from the general practice of critical pedagogy (as contained in curriculum discourse) was meant to help create a more synthetic argument that particularises a theory on critical student agency in schools.

4.13   Summary

In this chapter, I set out to study the manifestations of critical pedagogy by way of how it is conceptualised within legislation, statutory bodies, frameworks and standards, as well as in university programmes. It was imagined that a general (albeit faint) portrait would begin to emerge to assist in answering the research question of how student agency in critical pedagogy might spawn great democratic potential (see 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 4.8, and 4.11 that looks at the infrastructure of how policy is assimilated in teacher training and how teachers might engage with critical pedagogy in school classrooms). While certain features of critical pedagogy did make an appearance in the operating curriculum policy documents (both OBE C2005 and NCS CAPS) and its attendant legislation in regulatory agencies, it began to wane in relation to teacher education programmes and higher education classroom pedagogy. Suffice it to say that there is not an overabundance of literature on critical pedagogy in classroom practice in South Africa. However, data from three out of the five case studies (4.2.3; 4.3.2 and 4.5.2) seems to suggest that critical thinking is the most prominent aspect of critical pedagogy as it is imagined and manifested in South African policy and pedagogic practice. Yet, the cases also fuelled the imaginings of other features of criticality such as educators concerned with a moral and ethical pedagogy; embracing diversity; challenging dogmatism; students empowered to serve their own interests; and the engagement with emancipatory educative practices. So, whilst this chapter revealed an anaemic potential toward critical pedagogy and student agency, it may be too pre-emptive, as student agency will be revealed in the most surprising and fascinating ways in Chapter 5. With that said, Chapter 5 commences by grappling with a general conceptualisation of agency, which progresses with the researcher asking what it is that distinguishes critical student agency as a branch within human agency. Next, the cognitive and affective features of critical student agency are explored with a view to disaggregate the difference between agency and critical student agency. Thereafter, empirical evidence is presented in the form of classroom observances of what critical student agency might look like in diverse instructional settings. By studying students in their classrooms and in the community, as depicted in Chapter 5, I hoped to move closer to an understanding of the potential and shortcomings of critical student agency in a socially responsive way.

Chapter 5

Critical student agency and pedagogical encounters

5.1   Introduction

Chapter 4 presented an exploration of whether critical pedagogy had any manifestation in teacher education policy, BEd degree programmes and university classroom pedagogy and, if so, how that might ultimately translate into an indication of student agency. This chapter delves into the pedagogical encounters in (school) classrooms of working-class learners to try to discover the meaning of critical student (learner) agency. Furthermore, the specific focus on critical student agency is to help clarify whether any measure of critical pedagogy is made manifest in student behaviour that might help them to transform particular realties of their lives. To begin with, the chapter addresses the theme of agency and then proceeds to outline the distinguishing features of critical student agency. In section 5.4 ideas on student intelligence and will are discussed to understand the possible effects thereof on critical student agency. Further to this, a historical account of critical student agency through a people's education movement is provided. Finally, contemporary pedagogic encounters reveal how critical student agency is recognised, misrecognised or developed.

The cases selected for investigation were part of a wider pool of research studies, but because some studies were not able to provide the data categories isolated for inspection, they were not included. One such study was "Reinventing South African management students as stewards of democratisation: A critical pedagogy perspective" (Naidoo, 2013). While this study explicitly held some categories that were synonymous with those in my investigation, it was contextually irrelevant, and therefore excluded for analysis. The same argument is true for research conducted by Allias (2003), Cooper (2005), Bozalek (2011), Carrim (2011), Roodt and Stuurman (2011), Sonn *et al*. (2011), Bray and Moses (2011), Newfield (2011), Linington *et al*. (2011), Bozalek *et al*. (2013). Other studies were excluded based of historical irrelevance (for example studies done in post-conflict societies), which even while they argued and presented research on particular data categories, still remained inadequate as data sources. Among these studies were "The pedagogical transaction in post-conflict societies" (Jansen, 2009; Jansen &Weldon, 2009), and "The role of radical pedagogy in the South African Students Organisation and the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa, 1968–1973" (Naidoo, 2015). The four cases that were selected for investigation were better suited in helping me find meaning behind how and why language and power are enacted, reproduced and resisted in

social interaction. For this reason, the facts used to elaborate a theory of critical student agency were selected from four studies conducted by Jansen (1999), Molteno (1987), Fataar and Du Plooy (2012), and Evans and Cleghorn (2012). These studies were selected according to their relevance to my research question based on a combination of factors such as: working-class contexts, how critical pedagogy featured therein, historical contextuality, and curriculum alliance.

Generating a synthetic position of critical student agency

5.2 How can we tell whether it is agency?

Humans are distinct from other beings because they possess consciousness, and it is by virtue of being conscious of the situations that limit them ("limit situations") that they respond with "limit acts" as a means to overcome and emancipate themselves from constraint (Freire, 2000:97). Yet, it was in a constraining situation of strict observance of rituals at a Catholic school that McLaren (1986) discovered that non-dominant learners view school as a vehicle for both resistance and conformity (Pozo, 2003b). His empirical study confirms the theorising of Arendt (1958) that humans have the capacity to start something new by way of perspectives and action (McLaren, 1997:49–50). However, Arendt's (1958) controversial way of challenging truisms and her questioning of unqualified beliefs in progress lead us to an appreciation that action is unpredictable and that the capacity to act is sometimes presented in the most unlikely circumstances (Arendt, 1958:42, 252). Furthermore, with the promise of new people continually coming into the world, we are graced with the optimism that their unique capabilities might spawn new initiatives that would interrupt or divert the sequence of events set off by previous human actions (Arendt, 1958). What follows immediately below, is the practical action alluded to above, in the form of self-directed, unmediated, potent student agency.

> We left the boxes in the village. Closed. Taped shut. No instruction, no human being. I thought the kids will play with the boxes! Within four minutes, one kid not only opened the box, but found the on/off switch. He'd never seen an on/off switch. He powered it up. Within five days, they were using 47 apps per child per day. Within two weeks, they were singing ABC songs [in English] in the village. And within five months, they had hacked Android. Some idiot in our organization or in the Media Lab had disabled the camera! And they figured out it had a camera, and they hacked Android (One Laptop per Child, 2013).

The above scenario relates to the actions of One Laptop per Child, which embarked on a mission to empower the world's poorest children through education. In this particular scenario, the organisation delivered Motorola Zoom tablets to children in an Ethiopian village. The children did not speak English, which was the language loaded on the tablet, and they had never seen a computer before. Yet, within weeks, these children had mastered all the functions and enabled all the features to make the laptop fully functional to their needs (Wolters, 2013).

What this demonstrable act of learner agency confirms is Rancière's notion of "equality of intelligence", which is propelled by the "willingness" of the agents to learn (Rancière, 1991). It further confirms that, through this action, the children "had already come to acknowledge the profound fecundity of their own individual and social agency" (McLaren, 1993). While I could not enumerate the infinite ingenious tactics and strategies that the disenfranchised employ in the terrain of the powerful as the practice of everyday life (Apter, 2007; De Certeau, 1984: xvii; Scott, 1985), I shall attempt to refine my argument by making a distinction between what Morrow (2001) terms 'intentional human agency', also known as 'critical agency' (Bussey, 2008) and critical student agency.

Morrow (2001:98) defines "intentional human agency as the conception we have as human beings, being not merely victims of blind forces but as being at least potentially, one of originating sources of what happens in the world". Bussey (2008:2) furthermore clarifies critical agency as particular understandings of agency that move along a continuum, which includes Marxist critical theory, post-structural deconstruction and normative accounts of critical agency drawing on the Christian, Vedantic and Tantric traditions.

Elaborating further on this understanding, we now consider a conception of critical student agency characterised by the actions of struggle and contestation for educational change and social and political transformation embedded in critical pedagogy (McLaren, 1993).

5.3   What distinguishes critical student agency from agency

In this section, I begin to conceptualise what critical student agency within critical pedagogy might look like from the perspective of McLaren (2003), who assumes the position of revolutionary critical pedagogue, one interested in the goal of demystifying capitalist reality and restoring critical agency back to the people (Bussey, 2008:177). To begin with, McLaren (2003) argues that the "seeds of critique and transformation have been planted as soon as students are afforded the opportunity to become and treated as agents of their own history rather

than as passive recipients of a history written for them" (McLaren, 2003). Here, McLaren proffers the agentive capacities in students to refuse the abstraction that, as individuals, they cannot transform and shape their realities. Next, McLaren advises that empowered and engaged critical student agents work through the contradictions that capitalist hegemony produces by:

- naming the contradictions for what they are (rather than making them seem common-sensical);
- raising critical issues, such as ideology, inequality, racism, classism and sexism;
- posing difficult questions that are dangerous to the system (of capitalist production); and
- developing strategies necessary for transformative praxis.

This way, students are agentive in "thinking critically about what a socialist reconstruction and alternatives to capitalism might look like" (McLaren, 2003). Furthermore, McLaren (2003) problematises the role of schooling in inhibiting critical student agency when he declares, on the one hand, that "schooling is premised upon generating and reproducing labour-power (students schooled for capitalist industry) upon which capital depends", yet on the other hand, seizes upon the possibility that the school can become a foundation for human resistance. In addition, McLaren (1999:157) reiterates Freire's (2005a: 174) position that critical agency and traditional teaching are disharmonious in the sense of

> [h]oping that the teaching of content in and of itself will generate tomorrow a radical intelligence of reality is to take on a controlled position rather than a critical one. It means to fall for a magical comprehension of content which attributes to it a criticizing power of its own. The more we deposit content in the learner's heads and the more diversified the content is, the more possible it will be for them to, sooner or later experience a critical awakening, decide and break away.

From the above quote, it is clear that, just as critical intelligence works to reveal capitalist hegemony, critical subjectivity operates within social formations that enable rather than constrain human capacities (McLaren, 1986). According to McLaren (2003), it is in these agentive-empowering spaces that critical pedagogy "reflects the changing of the world by changing students' nature, which in turn leads to changing the social relations wherein individual and collective subjectivity is formed". Thus far, I have provided an account of the analytical and reflexive demands made on critical agents as effective practitioners of critique, armed with the buoyant energy of seizing and creating possibilities that break out and threaten the boundaries of the status quo as a sign of their empowered, emancipatory democratic practice

(Bussey, 2008:41). What follows is an extension of a discussion started earlier aimed at illustrating unmediated, autonomous, emancipatory student agency.

5.4   Intelligence and will in critical student agency

Rancière (1991) advocates for equality of intelligence under the condition that agentic students exercise will to will and intelligence to intelligence in pedagogic situations to refuse the tutelage of master explicators (Biesta *et al*., 2010:2). Rancière's (1991) argument is premised on the basis that pedagogues merely instigate student capacity that is already possessed, as is undeniably demonstrable by the capacity people have in succeeding at mother tongue language acquisition independently (Biesta *et al*., 2010:2). Mother tongue language acquisition is considered by Rancière (1991) as one of the most difficult apprenticeships humans have to navigate, and mastery of it confirms an irresolvable tension with the pedagogical logic that supposes that students need a master explicator. It is by means of explanation from a master explicator that explanation reifies the very distance of unequal intelligence it proposes to reduce (Biesta *et al*., 2010:2). In marked contrast to enfeebling and devaluing student agency, the universal teaching method of equality of intelligence defended by Rancière (1991:43) is illustrated in this pedagogic encounter involving Joseph Jacotot, the originator of the method:

> One day, Jacotot addressed the students: "Young ladies, you know that in every human work there is art; in a steam engine as in a dress; in a work of literature as in a shoe. Well, you will now write me a composition on art in general, connecting your words, your expressions, your thoughts, to such and such passages from the assigned authors in a way that lets you justify or verify everything".

Using the above illustration, Rancière (1991:29) advises that good masters (pedagogues: meaning to lead students to use questions to discreetly guide student intelligence, allowing student agency to improvise and their intelligence to overcome itself (not to give up or cave in to limitations) (Rancière,1991). Furthermore, in the universal teaching method seen above, students do not simply rely on memory to verify intelligence; their intelligence is verified by their particular taste, imagination and lived experience (Rancière, 1991:24), so that student agency is fortified to the point that:

> [a]fter a half hour, a new astonishment came over him [Jacotot] when he heard the quality of the compositions just written beneath his nose, and the improvised commentaries that justified them (Rancière, 1991:29).

Following on this reaffirmation of the latent potentialities of critical student agency in a situation of becoming, as Rancière (1991) considers it an 'intelligence being introduced to itself', the discussion moves to seek a better understanding of how students and teachers may respond to educational policy and activity within a morally just social framework.

5.5   Ways in which critical student agency fit into a discourse on social inequality

Luxemburg (2003) criticised the accumulation of capital on the basis of its dominance in the area of material production, and the way it is able to subjugate all aspects of social life to profit (Bond *et al*., 2007:xi). Guided by Marx's (1967) theories on primitive accumulation and the origins of capital in property form (De Angelis, 2006:3; Veriava, 2006:50), economists and other social theorists rely on the formulation that society is constructed of two distinct and unequal social groups: the owners of property (capitalists) and the workers. Moreover, as an economist, Luxemburg (2003) argued that capitalism is concretely and socially destructive for the following reasons:

- it gains immediate possession of productive sources (land, minerals, flora and fauna, and destroys the natural environment);
- it coerces labour power into service (leaving the proletariat with no other means of survival);
- it introduces a commodity economy (workers become buyers); and
- it separates trade and agriculture (kills off the natives, deprives them of pastures, destroys their social organisations).

While other theorists like the Young Russians (Luxemburg, 2003: 304-5) claimed that there are no internal limits to the accumulation of capital, Luxemburg refused this sense of economic determinism and sought to understand how socialism might become a possibility through the inherent contradictions in capitalism (Luxemburg, 2003:304). Since capitalism structures a series of relationships (among others, exploitation of land, labour, means of production) it creates class divisions with divergent interests, and strives to reproduce these social relations for its continuing longevity, resulting in social inequality. Furthermore, from an education theoretical perspective, Giroux (1983:257) claims that, according to economic reproductive theories of education (education being a social function affected by capital), schools legitimate capitalist rationality and dominant social practices. Thus, the economic and cultural reproductive functions of schooling under capital are understood to:

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- provide different classes and social groups with knowledge and skills that fit their respective places in a labour force organised by class, race and gender (Giroux, 1983:257);

- distribute and legitimate forms of knowledge, value, language and modes of style that constitute the dominant culture and its interests (Giroux, 1983:257); and

- function as part of the state apparatus, where economic and ideological imperatives that underlie the state's political power are channelled (Giroux, 1983:257).

This understanding thus informs an account of critical student agency as opposing the terms set out by economic reproductive theories of education. In this way critical actors do not simply 'fit into an already existing, pre-determined labour force'; they resist the interests of the dominant culture; and they do not simply succumb to state ideological power. Thus, the conditions discussed above concur with Willis' (1983:110) conclusion that education is about inequality and not equality, when it helps to secure an unequal future and personal underdevelopment (for learners from a working-class background) since capitalist production requires certain educational outcomes for different classes for its continued existence. Yet, to return to Luxemburg's (2003) insistence that capitalism has limitations (as did other productive and social forms it replaced), points to the need for convincing alternatives to capitalism (Bond *et al.*, 2007:23). Similarly, Giroux (1983:261) refuses essentialist theories of absolute economic and social reproduction in schooling on the basis that it leaves no room for notions of contradictions, struggle, change and resistance on the part of social agents. Nevertheless, Veriava (2006:48) reminds us that capitalist ideology as seen in a neo-liberal economic framework (limited state interference in commodity markets) is at times so abstract it remains ideological (for example the growing power of finance); yet, at other times it is lived in the materiality of privatisation. A practical example of Veriava's (2006) statement on neo-liberalism relates specifically to apartheid South Africa. Marais (1998:38) proposes that capital accumulation worked favourably toward White minority (class) interests at the expense of cheap African labour. These interests were sustained in the context of post-war (World War II) industrialisation, though the 1970s saw the turn toward falling (economic) investment, stalled (economic) growth, capital flight and labour militancy (Veriava, 2006:55). This way the apartheid state had to use (abstract) government policies to limit the workings of the free market and manage the threat of (concrete) economic sanctions (Veriava, 2006). Further to this, in the face of civil protests against neo-liberalism, the state responded by instituting cost-recovery measures, which had to be a precursor to full privatisation (Veriava, 2006:56). Civil society

protests constituted local, community struggles, which acted as protection against the market, and simultaneously delegitimised the economic and racial inequality perpetuated by the apartheid state (Veriava, 2006:56). Consequently, any static, durable and homogenising (ideological) notion of capital was met (materially) with resistance and struggle, which carried with it the notion that capitalism under neo-liberalism "is a double movement of 1) the market and 2) struggle" (Veriava, 2006:50). This is not to mean, however, that resistance and struggle are ends in themselves, or else racial and economic privilege become ideological and abstract once again and no real transformation occurs. However, it adequately highlights the capacity for activism at the local community level; and also raises hope at the personal level for struggle and resistance (through critical student agency) against the advancement of capital that works unfavourably against poor communitites.

Vally (2006) takes seriously the daily struggles of economically alienated and disadvantaged students when he avoids casual use of abstract terms such as **inequality** and **poverty**, but rather strives to understand student experiences fully. To this end, he relates the commodification of education directly to the concrete obstacles economically marginal families and students face (Vally, 2006). Two examples serve as illustrations. Marcel King (19) was shot when he stepped in to protect his mother when the electricity in her home was being disconnected by the local city council (Vally, 2006:168). Nthlanthla Masuku (15) and Dennis Mathipi (21) were killed as their families resisted being evicted from their homes (Vally, 2006:168). In the midst of the harsh consequences of economic inequality, poverty in the context of schooling implies the daily encounter with lack and deprivation, such as a lack of electricity, desks, adequate water and toilet facilities (Vally, 2006:168). Furthermore, school success (or the lack thereof) is correlated with the financial ability (i.e. family wealth) to pay school fees, uniforms, shoes, books, stationery, lunch and transportation (Vally, 2006:169). Under these conditions, learning cannot be separated from poverty and its consequences (hunger, eviction, lack of electricity and water, physical and sexual violence and abuse) (Vally, 2006:169). Engagement with liberal ideology in the light of democratic rights hides from plain view the unethical and morally unjustifiable dimensions of unequal social relations based on access to capital (Vally, 2006). Under these conditions, the social misery and daily suffering of the poor are obscured by the meritocratic myth (see 1.2; 1.8; 2.2; 2.12 and 2.13) and instrumental logic that equality is attainable through personal effort alone. Yet these conditions also set up the terms by which critical student agency becomes activated when students see themselves as transformative agents who attempt to subvert an unequal and undemocratic social order.

As indicated by the theorising of Luxemburg (2003), Giroux (1983), Veriava (2006) and Vally (2006) above, overdetermined notions of being and reality deactivate practical human agency if simply accepted as such. Yet, a deep notion of agency allows social actors the space to challenge social categories that organise our lives by understanding the limitations of social formations and by exploiting the possibilities for critical action (Lather, 2004:764, 768). This does not mean the unrealistic glorification of critical agency, but at least points to the contemplation of a more socially just way of engaging within capitalist social relations, where class position is merely descriptive and where consciousness is turned toward social transformation (Spivak, 1983:72). After considering the forms of agency and resources available even within unequal capitalist societies, the next section reports on a retrospective analysis of how student agency was conceived of in the liberation movement towards democracy in South Africa.

Contextual underpinning of critical student agency in South Africa

5.6   Popular education and the People's Education for People's Power movement

At a point of heightened political tension in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto student riots, the literature began to serve as a galvanising feature in the popular consciousness of the possibilities for education as a domain of resistance (Jackson, 1997). According to Jackson (1997:38):

> Critical theorists like Freire and Gramsci already occupied the lexicon of resistance among South African academics; making critical pedagogy a strategy actively focused on applying and implementing their contributions to enabling the political dimension of knowledge and learning.

Coincidentally, within the repressive apartheid state, the circulation of Freire's (1973) work became an act of resistance, as indicated by Walters (1989:136) below:

> Freire's ideas excited the students who felt they had suffered from the 'banking' type of education which Freire described and the material offered concrete alternatives. Freire's work was banned in South Africa but before University Christian Movement (UCM) itself was banned in 1972, over 500 copies of Freire's work were made and circulated.

However, it was precisely in a situation of extreme state oppression, by imposing an unfair language policy, that the government became trapped in the consequences of its policies (Gardiner, 1987:8), necessitating and culminating in popular education movements such as People's Education for People's Power. The People's Education movement was invested in the real interests and struggles of ordinary people, as seen in the fact that they were overtly political

and critical of the status quo, as well as being committed to progressive social and political change (Crowther, Martin & Shaw, 1999:4). Consequently, Gardiner (1987) outlined the mission of the movement in relation to the reconstituting and reconceptualising of South African education in his article, which was published in a radical journal (containing the disclaimer, "Articles printed in *Reality* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Board"). The article was entitled "Transforming itself: People's Education for People's Power and society in South Africa", and its manifesto was stated as aligning education to the broader social experience by redefining teacher roles, revising content, embracing participatory methods of learning, incorporating student lived experience, reforming school governance and forming greater solidarity between political movements and trade unions, all in a bid to make education more democratic and humane (Gardiner, 1987:8–10). A retrospective analysis of this manifesto highlighted that many of the proposals of the People's Education movement were consonant with the spirit and letter of the post-democracy, progressive curriculum plan: OBE and Curriculum 2005 (OBE and C2005). In the 1980s, severe state repression was however being met with ingenious, counter-hegemonic tactics and strategies (as already alluded to above), which were strikingly more strident in the high school student boycotts in the Cape Peninsula. Section 5.7 below reports on an analysis that corroborates McLaren's (1993) notion that schools can be sites of oppressive misery, yet the can also be battlegrounds of struggle and contestation by critical, agentive students (McLaren, 1993).The displays of civil disobedience point to concrete alternatives to social oppression. These displays also provide concrete examples of how education might be seen as a territory where the political dimensions of knowledge and learning are used to challenge injustice. The studies below (5.7; 5.8; 5.9 and 5.10) help concentrate how students navigate injustice through criticality by using knowledge and learning as a form of critical agency.

5.7   Students take control

This case study was selected to provide a retrospective view of critical student agency. The events took place in the decade before the dismantling of apartheid, and the actors were located in a working-class community of the Cape Peninsula. The direct link between the dispositions of the participants in the study and my investigation of critical student agency indicates the types of behaviours and attitudes students displayed, which affected other students, teachers and the community. Further to this, student subjectivities borne out through structural hierarchies, such race and class, provided the fuel for social struggle. Yet, with all of the above

characteristics, this case also highlights the limitations that critically agentive students confronted when the economic and macro-structural realities were formidable.

Molteno (1987:3) questions the extent to which the struggle around schooling can be transformative in its effect on socio-politico and socio-economic structures, since in some instances, research concurs on how relatively little schooling affects the levelling off of inequality in society. Molteno furthermore builds on the theoretical assumptions of Bowles and Gintis's (1976:246) "correspondence principle" that schooling coincides with the capitalist economic structure, thereby entrenching inequality while creating the popular fiction of social mobility through meritocracy (Molteno, 1987:4). Consequently, capitalist structures reproduce social relations and structures that favour the dominant elite while accommodating a mechanistic model (as seen through education) of supplying cheap labour for capital (Molteno, 1987:10). Molteno (1987:6) argues that, even within a mechanistic model, agentic students may not inevitably reproduce capitalist social relations, and that they may in fact contradict, struggle and fight for self-determination through conscious agency. Following this conceptual analysis of the context within which the above study is located, the next section carries a discussion of the self-organising, proactive, self-reflecting and self-regulating actions and behaviours made evident by working-class high school students during a boycott.

The student boycotts of 1980 in the Cape Peninsula was class struggle against racialised, poorly resourced, authoritarian education (Molteno, 1987:3). To begin with, localised student mobilisation meant that students took control of schools by deposing adult, authoritarian management and installing student representative councils (Molteno, 1987:9). This way, students were able to balance asymmetrical power relations and demand more respect and autonomy from the adults in the school (Molteno, 1987). As a counter-hegemonic measure, student councils then organised 'awareness programmes' and led talks and guided discussions on socially relevant topics, as noted by this student below:

> We tried to get them to read their newspaper effectively, to criticize it, and not to be misled (Molteno, 1987:10).

In addition, in their awareness of the broader social struggles, students showed solidarity with the injustices suffered by their community members in general by actively supporting a local meat workers' strike and a bus boycott, as they regarded their issues for social justice to be aligned (Molteno, 1987:11). Finally, the effect made by the boycott was materially marginal in the sense that the students' short-term goals were met in the provisioning of books and building

repairs; yet the larger, systemic, structural concerns were not addressed by the state (Molteno, 1987:13). However, the symbolical significance of the boycott was summed up by this student:

> It was not anything that was granted by the authorities which was felt to be important but rather the spirit and what had happened amongst the people (Molteno, 1987:14).

However, as Molteno avers, students' social resistance contributed to the mobilisation and conscientisation of adults not only then, but it was antecedent to the 1984 student movements in South Africa (Molteno, 1987:16). Following this account of critical student agency during a boycott, an attempt is made to seek coherence between McLaren's (2003) understanding of critical agentic student behaviour and Molteno's (1987) version of critical student agency.

According to McLaren (2003), transformative critical agency is verified when students are constructive and create their own social reality from lived experience. In Molteno's (1987) study of student agency, the students made active decisions, were self-organised, were proactive about the wretchedness and inequality of their schooling and, to verify their agency, they sought to transform their reality. Secondly, McLaren (2003) proposes that agentic students raise critical issues and pose difficult questions that are dangerous to the system. The boycotting students began to question state and school authority and were critical of their sources of information and the damaging (racist) ideology propagated therein. They also challenged the material degradation of their schools, as they knew White schools were far better resourced. Thirdly, McLaren (2003) implicates schools in inhibiting critical agency; yet, he also offers that they create fissures for resistance. The working-class students who directed the resistance were somewhat constrained by the structure and content during pedagogic encounters until they staged a boycott and subsequently appropriated adult authoritarian power and instituted further anti-hegemonic practices. Finally, McLaren (2003) cautions that content alone will not generate a radical intelligence. In a bid to subvert hegemonic texts and narratives, the students conducted awareness programmes, facilitated talks and guided discussions related to broader socially relevant topics, while they were sceptical of media interpretations of reality. In conclusion, it might be applicable to say that McLaren's (2003) theorising of critical student agency is coincident and compatible in every dimension with the agentic students in Molteno's (1987) case. Following this broadly theoretical (and occasionally) practical analysis of critical student agency as it is imagined within critical pedagogy and as it was revealed in the liberation movement of South Africa, the attention turns to an examination of how critical student agency might appear in current pedagogic encounters.

5.8 Pedagogical encounters that might reveal critical student agency: Grade 1 OBE/C2005 classroom

This particular case was selected for scrutiny based on its historical significance – to observe post-apartheid educational reform and its effect in a working-class classroom. Given the transformation in the curriculum, it was originally anticipated by me that critical student agency might have greater manifestations as teachers and students imagine the progressive curriculum (OBE and C2005) as an expression of democracy, self-creation and self-mastery. However, the reform agenda of the state, based on equal opportunity and adequacy (minimum educational standards) ran counter to the daily experience of the students in this encounter, and the opportunities for student self-formation were severely circumscribed in this study.

Almost two decades after the Cape Peninsula student boycott brings us to a researcher's observations during data collection in a Grade 1 class in 1998. In an effort to preserve anonymity, no school details or teacher details were provided; yet, the example proves to be compelling enough from the researcher's verbatim account. What follows emanated from research field notes that were captured while collecting raw data in preparation of a report on the implementation (i.e. whether it was to be implemented) of OBE in 32 classes in two provinces in South Africa. The relevance to my particular study is that this observation was made in a black working-class school, and the significance is the teacher–student interaction that ensued.

> She spent most of the time punishing the kids. She hits them on the forehead, on their buttocks, on their hands and bodies, for [a] not being able to read, write or do numeracy; and [b] for not erasing what they have already written. … When the teacher asks a question, the learners start shivering. Even if they are making words from cards, they are scared to show the teacher because they are scared of the punishment they will get (Jansen, 1999:15).

The researcher's observations reveal some shocking pedagogical practices that literally petrify and freeze young children in a Grade 1 class. In this instance, the teacher has internalised the moralistic ideology of Fundamental Pedagogics, and acts in an ultra-authoritarian way, much like the way the apartheid state repressed citizens through the state apparatuses of the military and the police force (South African History Online [SAHO], 2014). The teacher is guilty of physical abuse by hitting these young children on their bodies and mid- to upper extremities for actions as trivial as not erasing work. Further to this, she dehumanises the students by penalising them for not being able to read, write and compute, when it could be understood that in Grade

1, being an inception year, not all students would have had sufficient exposure to formal schooling to be competent in mathematics and reading. OBE (which, it can be argued loosely, embraces and is premised upon elements of critical pedagogy (see DoE, 2000; Fiske & Ladd, 2004), however, calls for group work, self-learning, learner-centred instruction, activity-based learning, learning by discovery, less direct teaching and more teacher facilitation, less of a focus on content coverage and learning by doing (Jansen, 1999:8). The teacher in the above example defied all conditions for any fruitful pedagogic engagement. She stultified the young students to the point where it seemed implausible that any activity-based learning, discovery learning or learner-centred instruction could survive. In this situation, the teacher's violence and ability to instil paralysing fear in the children prevented any attempt at meaningful, direct teaching and teacher facilitation to the point that one is inclined even to welcome more content coverage in place of "spending most of the time punishing the kids" (Jansen, 1999:10). The teacher's actions are objectionable and reprehensible, as she used her physical and chronological age advantage, as well as her professional (authoritarian) position, to inhibit and immobilise student agency to the point where students did not dare not take risks, discover, create or be active in their own learning. The example presented exhibits extreme inequality without providing an optimally safe and compassionate pedagogic encounter; instead, the teacher transgresses the most basic premises of democracy: freedom and justice. Ultimately, the teacher in this scenario can be described as an oppressor, according to Freire (2005a:44), as she seeks to dehumanise by reserving humanity for herself and, in a parallel manoeuvre, to reserve teaching and learning for herself, as she 'imprisons' students in violence and fear (Freire, 2005a:20–44). Not only does she transgress the conditions of basic democracy and the guidelines of OBE and C2005 but, more importantly, she contravenes the right to human dignity as enshrined in the constitution (Constitution of SA, 1997: 10). While the aforementioned harsh criticism may seem embellished, its validity and authenticity will be highlighted below in the field researcher's report on the classroom observation schedule for this particular teacher. The instrument used in the study was designed according to how well OBE was being implemented against these criteria:

- learning is activity-based;
- teacher integrates themes from different learning areas;
- teacher-led questions;
- learner-led questions;
- teacher provides learners with individual feedback;

- learners given opportunity to demonstrate what they learn;

- learners comment actively on the lesson;

- learners taken outside their classroom;

- learners play freely within or outside the class; and

- teacher makes maximum use of instructional/teaching time.(Jansen, 1999:250).

In relation to the above criteria, the teacher managed to fulfil only one category, namely 'Teacher-led questions', and student agency was on display when 'Learners play free outside the class'. The only other time the learners were free was when the teacher was not in class, as often happened because "[m]ost of the time she came to school late and left very early, to go to a meeting or to the doctor" (Jansen, 1999:251).

In conducting a transcript analysis, the single transcript the teacher offered the field researcher was the assessment book that contained only one page of assessment for all the learners in the classroom. In addition, the teacher was unable to provide the researcher with the assessment book for the numeracy and life skills learning areas. This form of assessment (according to the teacher) determined the groups each learner belonged to, yet, she did not use this information beneficially, as the researcher remarked, "Her class lags behind all the other classes. Teacher does not try any group work" (Jansen, 1999:252).

In an informal interview, the teacher confessed to not doing any preparations because she had been doing the work she does for a number of years. Thus, unsurprisingly, the researcher remarked of the teacher's questioning technique that she –

> Basically asked content-based questions, which did not force the learner to think critically. The learner only had to recall and reproduce what he or she had learnt. Worth noting about the questions this teacher asked were mostly about things pupils had done incorrectly (management-type questions) viz., Did I say that is how we write that? Who said we must erase this? (Jansen, 1999:251).

Further to this, an analysis of the research instrument reveals at least five areas of similitude with critical pedagogy for learner behaviours, viz. learner-led questions, learners given opportunity to demonstrate what they learn, learners comment actively on the lesson, learners taken outside their classroom, learners play freely within or outside the class. And, as mentioned before, while two occasions provided evidence of student agency, it is debatable whether these may be confirmed as critical student agency in that they were indeterminable. To that end, I

make these propositional inferences: during outside playtime and in the teacher's absence, learners might have exercised critical agency in creating their own reality from lived experience, and they probably could have been fully emancipated from the teacher, resisting her intrusion in their free play. In addition, while the above pedagogic encounter reveals flimsy fragments of critical student agency, it also begs mention that the maturity of Grade 1 students could not legitimately be compared with the initiatives of the Cape Peninsula students. On the other hand, however, imagining the efforts of a pedagogue fully invested in transformational pedagogy, Grade 1 students could be amongst the most fertile in cultivating a critical constitution. With that in mind, the focus now shifts to more mature students to glimpse how lived experience and classroom engagement develop particular learning identities.

5.9 Pedagogical encounters that might reveal critical student agency: Learning 'positioning practices' of Grade 6 learners

This case was included in the investigation because it clarifies the intersections between race, class and language explicitly. It also exposes the theme of subjectivities within subjectivities as the participants comprised a racial minority within a working-class school belonging to a different race group. Other considerations, such as the age of the learners and the stage of their development (not Grade 1 or high school) as well as the internal workings of the school both inside and outside the classroom are sufficiently highlighted in this case for further study. Thus, the behaviours and attributes of learners in this case might reveal agents of social change, as we observe and learn that "ruptures, failures, breaks and refusals" (Lather, 1998:495) in critical student agency might be signs of self-determination, self-creation and self-mastery.

In the study that follows, the researchers investigated the complex ways four learners engaged with their learning, literacy and broader practices in the context of a deprived township space. The theoretical considerations of this particular study were based on "how learning and mobility come into being out of a nexus of relations connected to the classroom" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:91). Firstly, the researchers looked at the four learners' domestic environments to establish their spatialised learning positions. Secondly, they established the multiple learning practices of the learners; and thirdly, they investigated the classroom engagements of the learners (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:89). For the purpose of this study, I firstly established each learner's spatialised learning position and later considered their classroom navigations in order to establish a sense of how critical student agency manifested. Firstly, the researchers clarified the concept of township space as: township spaces like the ones where these learners live cannot

be viewed as empty or devoid of any creative and aspirant human activity (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012). It is clearly an impoverished and fractured environment where informality, human flux, informalised flows and survival practices are emblematic (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012). They nonetheless live productive and viable lives, based on their particular personally productive trajectories. (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:93).

Next, we are introduced to the particularities of the lived dimensions for each learner (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012). In the first place:

> Lebo lives with her grandmother in a small one-bedroomed house in the township with ten other children. Her periodic immersion over weekends and holidays in an upper-middle-class White home, her exposure to the readerly culture and semiotics of this environment, and her new friends there led to her developing an apparent detachment from and disaffection with her 'place' of living in the township (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:93).

Secondly:

Shafiek appears to be physically embedded in the township, since his movement is fairly restricted, i.e. he routinely moves between home and school, and home and madrassah (semi-formal afternoon Muslim school). From observations it is clear that his restricted mobility belies what we would describe as his conceptual mobility, which could be attributed to his active engagement with information technology (e.g. cell phone, computer and video games, and educational software). Such conceptual mobility is facilitated by his interaction with ICT-related popular culture, which provides him a range of rich and adaptive literacy assets (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:94).

Thirdly:

> Bongiwe can be described as a 'displaced' student, with reference to the disposition she assumes in this township. Having moved with her family early on from rural to urban living, and then from one urban location to the family's current quarters in this township, the impact of her dislocation appears to have a profound influence on how her learning practices are shaped in her township environment and family. Difficulty in establishing spatial routines, making friends and failure to address her feelings of isolation in this township characterize her displacement. As a mainly isiXhosa speaker, Bongiwe experiences the township as a disabling environment, especially since she seems unable to interact productively with the township's linguistic and cultural make up, dominated as it is by Afrikaans in the neighbourhood and school playground, and English in the classroom (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:94).

And finally:

> Tasneem's strategic readings of her social context catapult her towards upward mobility. She is aware of what constitutes acceptable behaviour and acts accordingly. She did not show any real attachment to her current place of living. She uses her 'inner resources' to enhance her functioning in this space, with her domestic disaffection a strong motivator. This showed in her tenacious commitment to education. She displayed resiliency in her mobilization of what Yosso (2005:77) calls 'aspirational capital' in reference to children's ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. She is forward-looking and purpose-driven, despite suffering from physical and mental abuse amid familial constraints (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:94).

The introductions above illustrate how differently learners inhabit their social spaces and how this affects the ways they bring together their learning practices. The analysis below will continue with how the teachers experience the school classroom as a homogenising site, almost negating the heterogeneity of the learners' social, cultural, domestic and pedagogic identities (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:94). To begin with, Fataar and Du Plooy (2012:100) describe the classrooms the four students find themselves in as "unproductive learning platforms" based on teacher behaviour. They argue that schools in impoverished neighbourhoods often sacrifice educational processes for institutional identity, as is evident in the teachers' distractedness from pedagogical tasks in favour of their entanglement in the pastoral care or social welfare requirements of learners (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99). Consequently, teachers at these schools often display one-dimensional professional personas, they are didactic, embrace 'chalk-and-talk' pedagogical styles, and are heavily reliant on the textbook as a teaching and learning resource (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99). Furthermore, such teachers do not incorporate varied teaching strategies or diversify their routines with experimental teaching methodologies. In contrast, they resort to severe discipline, drastically restrict explicit teaching time, and exhibit little or no differentiated teaching. As a caveat, differentiation does occur, usually in derogatory ways, such as publicly labelling students "dumb", "struggling" or "lazy" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100). Thus far, I have tried to account for the lived dimensions of learners' experiences as seen from their environmental literacy practices, as well as to characterise the pedagogic landscape they have to navigate at school and in classrooms. What follows is a closer investigation of the particular identities learners take up in their school and classroom navigations, and how this might provide deeper insight into the potential learner agency that could emanate from there.

Firstly, the researchers (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012) suggest that Lebo used her association with a middle-class family to access a literate culture and develop the language capital that holds currency in the school, thereby solidifying a strong literate identity. However, within the classroom encounter she was considered a "ghost student" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99) and occupied a position of relatively low status. While she was unacknowledged and unappreciated during pedagogic engagements with teachers, she used her language acquisition to navigate the playground successfully, and acted as peer-tutor by translating instructions and content to other students. Furthermore, her conceptually mobile persona provided the working tools that propelled her to navigate her own way through the school environment unaided, as well as to be independently in schoolwork, with no encouragement or support from teachers (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100–103).

Secondly, the researchers argue that Shafiek adopted an ICT-adaptive literacy in the midst of a hostile institutional space, in which he was labelled disruptive, unruly and "uncivilized" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100) by his teachers. However, he remained unaffected by these disabling pedagogic encounters, refusing to internalise the negative disciplining comments from the teacher. In contrast, he retorted with disdainful comments under his breath, and used his ICT (information and communications technology) proficiency in the computer room and on the playground with peers (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:97–103).

Thirdly, the researchers (Fataar & du Plooy, 2012:97) characterise Bongiwe as:

> 'struggling', stymied by the lack of multilingual facility, marked as a struggling learner, who is supported by a caring mother who tries to augment her learning deficits.

Because she was an isiXhosa speaker in an Afrikaans school, Bongiwe assumed the identity of a "ghost student" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99) and occupied a low status in class. As a result, she lacked confidence, and the teacher's treatment of her further characterised her as a marginal, powerless learner because of her lack of language proficiency. Furthermore, she had no interaction with and was ignored by the teacher, while she received pedagogic support from Lebo by way of translations. Bongiwe's classroom encounters seemingly were congruent with her environmental learning practices (lack of spatial routines, no friends and feelings of displacement) (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:97–103).

Fourthly, the researchers portray Tasneem as possessing the "aspirational capital" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:102) necessary to align her behaviour and learning practice at home to correspond

to the expectations in the school and the classroom. Through her environmental literacy and learning practices, she was able to attain a high-status position in class. She did this through her self-presentation skills evidenced during speaking and presenting to a group, which were in turn validated by teachers and peers via guidance and praise. Furthermore, Tasneem acted in ways that cohered with the school culture by being co-operative, 'civilized' and 'schooled' so much so that her diligence in work and her commitment to discipline were rewarded in her being allowed to run teacher errands (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:94–101).

According to Fataar and Du Plooy (2012:102), the above-mentioned pedagogic encounters designate the extent to which teachers "suppress student learning capacities as they cannot connect and leverage the environmentally generated student 'funds of knowledge". In addition, the "teacher dominated, routine processes of schooling over-determine student navigations, create reductive environments, and misrecognize the luxuriant ways that children may flourish in compromised environments" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:104). While I have tried to account for the authors' interpretation of the literate identities developed by learners by looking at their personal environmental and pedagogic encounters, the focus now shifts to an analysis of how critical learning agency was revealed, particularly during school and classroom engagements.

Firstly, Lebo's critical agency was misrecognised by the teacher as she worked to create her own social reality from lived experience. Since she was considered a low-status learner, the teacher overlooked her self-directed, self-organising, self-regulating and proactive engagement during pedagogic episodes. What particularly escaped the teacher was Lebo's ability to resist the 'invisible' status she was given when she made herself very visible on the playground and when she was assisting Bongiwe. Secondly, Shafiek's ICT-informed literacy practices went undetected by the teacher during pedagogic encounters, but he showed strong critical agency in his refusal to allow school to shape his social experience. He resisted the reductive classroom atmosphere by refusing the negative labels ascribed to him and responded with disdain. Furthermore, he refused to accept school content as the only way to learn, since his self-directed (environmental) learning was displayed in the computer room and amongst his peers on the playground. Thirdly, Bongiwe's lack of multilingual facility at home and at school hampered her exercise of critical agency. She showed no attempt to create her own reality from lived experience; she did not resist her marginal status and depended on Lebo to translate for her in the classroom. Moreover, there was only slight indication from the observation that she was self-directed, self-organising or proactive in her literary practices. Lastly, Tasneem's literary practices at home were consonant with her success in school. She possessed some of the best

qualities of an agentive student: she was self-directed and self-organising; yet, regrettably, her behaviour was not convincing enough to believe that she displayed critical agency. Instead of creating her own social reality, she assimilated the normative reality of the school. Furthermore, she conformed to the school culture and internalised its content, which implies that it would be hard for her to raise critical issues and ask difficult questions because her ideology flowed in tandem with that of the dominant groups in the school. While it must be noted that Tasneem used her agency for emancipatory and transformative purposes, it still corresponds with capitalist misinformation that advances the notion that the marginal may gain the rewards of the elite through meritocracy (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Under such conditions, there would be very little need to struggle in order to transform a capitalist order or to institute any counter-hegemonic initiatives. After interpreting critical student agency through pedagogic encounters that mostly suppress and misrecognise lived experience, the focus is on how pedagogy unfolds in multilingual classrooms where neither the learners nor the teachers are mother-tongue English speakers.

5.10   Pedagogical encounters that might reveal critical student agency: Complex classroom encounters

This study was selected by the researcher on the basis that it provides insight into a culturally biased curriculum, and the ways working-class learners have to navigate authoritarian educational philosophies. The complex interactions between learners, teachers, and official policy in the Foundation Phase are seen in two English-medium schools, where students have to overcome English-language hegemony, and Western cultural hegemony in a rural setting. With the above social complexities identified in the original study, it was imagined that there might be possibilities to see how learners challenge, resist or accommodate hegemonic forces. The focus on challenging and resisting hegemony would be considered a feature of critical learner agency since it relates to the theme of equality and points to unique ways of transforming education in the interests of social justice.

The rationale for this study, as described by Evans and Cleghorn (2012: xvi), was to understand the nature and complexity of language encounters in diverse instructional settings. Set within a conceptual framework of language in education, the multi-literacies study focused on Foundation Phase pedagogic encounters in two English-medium schools in Gauteng between January 2008 and October 2011 (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:xvi). Methodologically, the study was conceived from a reflective ethnographic and sociolinguistic perspective, while being

interpretive and critical in approach (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012: xvi). Data collection was carried out via classroom-based observation in order to juxtapose the 'language issue' in South Africa, as representative of abstractions such as official policy, apartheid legacy and the inequality between rural and urban achievement (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012: xvi) against authentic classroom pedagogy. The study sought to demystify language encounters by highlighting the social and pedagogical implications of how learners are being taught with a view to develop appropriate curricula for teacher training (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012: xvi). Evans and Cleghorn (2012) interpret the philosophy of official education policy as "guiding learners towards democratic citizenship" (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012: xvi). Such transformative pedagogy places the rights of the learner at centre and demands a reflective, critical approach from the teacher, an approach that is highly dependent on extensive training, usually to the master's level or beyond (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:29).

However, pedagogic engagements revealed that teachers relied on the 'banking method' of education (see 2.7, 2.9 and 2.13), while they set behavioural prescriptions that were linguistically difficult to understand, and conceptually and culturally unfamiliar and strange to learners (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:30).

According to Evans and Cleghorn (2012: 31), three themes emerged from the interview and observational data, namely:

- educational philosophies with a focus on control in the guise of discipline and obedience;
- the emphasis on Western education and the concomitant cultural tensions it wrought in the classroom; and
- the apartheid-era and post-apartheid realities as seen in trying to overcome the teacher-centred pedagogical approach.

In relation to the theme of control, Evans and Cleghorn (2012) propose that teachers were not prepared for the diversity of learners and were preoccupied with control through discipline, as is evident in this excerpt from an interview with a teacher:

> The pride that I am talking about is, you know, having children that are disciplined, that you can control … and now things are a bit problematic and then I don't think that we are going to get the discipline part of it back to where it was because our Government has introduced 'children's rights'. Now it seems like the children and the parents, they are more on the rights

side of the children and not the responsibilities that go hand and hand with that (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:31).

In the above instance, the Evans and Cleghorn (2012) believe that the teacher annihilates any attempt to create a "community of inquiry" (Fisher, 1996; Giddy, 2012), as student collaboration and deliberation are suffocated (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:32). As Evans and Cleghorn (2012) have already provided an analysis of the above-mentioned interview, in the rest of the analysis I continue my attempt to conceptualise how critical learner agency manifests in pedagogic episodes. What follows, is the testimony of a student intern who herself was educated in a township school:

> When I was in Grade 1 there was still corporal punishment so they either shouted at you or hit you. … all these years I thought the only way that children would listen to you is if you shout at them or hit them, but then when I went to [school's name] I noticed that … that's not even necessary. Now I can't even imagine myself hitting a child. … Be calm, speak to them like a little adult, I think they respect you more when you speak to them like a person who thinks, a person who has an opinion, and not be in control all the time (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:32).

Based on the response above, it is plausible that this aspirant teacher had embraced progressive pedagogic principles, as seen in her attempt to envision communicative engagement rather than violent engagement in her future pedagogic episodes with students. However, it would be speculative to say that what she projected can translate into any indication of learner agency, except to suggest tentatively through a strained argument that her learners might be empowered to create their own social reality, raise critical issues and look for ways to resist ideological hegemony.

In addition to the overt attempts of teachers to control students, the authors (Evans & Cleghorn 2012) attempted to highlight the discord between Western and African interpretations of the nature of educational philosophy in the South African context. This is illustrated by this excerpt showing the teacher's impressions:

> In black cultures, discipline is a huge thing, you have to speak in a certain way to an adult and we only speak when we're spoken to. … We're not used to [teaching with] affection. … When the kids really frustrate me, I have that natural urge to just want to scream and tell them to just shut up. And I know that's not going to work because after a while, it becomes redundant. It doesn't work, but that's how we were raised. … When it comes to the discipline part I like the Western way, definitely. I don't see the point of shouting to get somebody's attention, especially in a class of 40 kids, you can't always be shouting. And you notice that when you shout more,

the level of noise rises. So they need you to do the opposite and think, 'Oh why is she quiet? She must be really angry'. Yeah, I love that way, for me, it is much more effective (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:32).

While the above remarks are an over-generalisation of cultural behaviour, as well as an excuse (initially) for poor classroom management, they do beg mention for the fact that the teacher has reflected on unproductive behaviour and has transformed her practice. Her new approach demands of the students to become self-reflective and self-regulating, making it conceivable that, with her coaxing, ruptures may exist for critical 'teachable moments'. These 'teachable moments' may not necessarily be written into her lesson plans, but they could be spontaneous openings for students to voice their opinions on critical and difficult questions, as well as for them to create their own social reality from lived experience.

Over and above the contradictions identified by Evans and Cleghorn (2012) between Western and African interpretations of the nature of educational philosophy, they further problematise the cultural content of the curriculum and how it is expressed through unknown and unfamiliar vocabulary. What follows are the verbatim accounts of teachers' and student teachers' remarks:

> I ask my children what is peas and they say beans. They don't even know the difference between peas and beans. And cherries and those kinds of things. … You must show them what a cherry is. They don't know what a cherry is. And why should they when they come from a culture that doesn't have cherries and so on? Why should they? (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:33).

Another teacher joins the conversation:

> Exactly. You now have a lesson on pets. It is meaningless for them. They know a chicken and they know a dog and that is that. Now I have to teach them about a goldfish and a budgie … or the circus or the sea. They have never been there. They never go there (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:32).

In the above-mentioned scenarios, the teachers display open cultural bias, suggesting an universalisation of cultural experience (which could be read as arrogance, "Why should they?'). It would be reasonable to conclude from the interviews that the teachers represented the dominant culture and probably supported the ruling elite ideology that sees working-class students in deficit modes (Willis, 1981, 1983; Bartolomè, 2007). Under such conditions, critical agents usually suffer the suppression of their lived experience as having no meaning, and may be constrained to raise critical issues and conform to the repressive pedagogy of a technocratic

teacher (Kellner, 2001). Therefore, it would be reasonable to suppose that students in such cases could not display much emancipatory pedagogic practice as critical agents.

Now that we have glimpsed teacher attitudes towards cultural (in)tolerance, I illustrate this with an instance where student teachers expressed surprise at the cultural differences they encountered during their teaching practice. One student teacher explained:

> The child doesn't even know what ink is … So I feel like they needed more of the real object, the tangible object, something that they can see, something that they can relate to, to make sense of learning. So that comes back to English, that you are teaching them this in English, they haven't seen ink but you expect them to know the word. How are they going to know it? Firstly this is their second language, not their mother tongue, secondly they haven't seen that ink you are telling them about but you are expecting them to know the word 'ink' and they can't even make a clear mind about it … (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:33).

The above student teacher hinted at a proactive and progressive approach to overcoming cultural misunderstanding. Contrary to the judgmental and hegemonic response of the in-service teachers, this prospective teacher suggested a way of concretising the abstractions of the curriculum and language in order to make learning meaningful for learners. Her attitude further makes it conceivable that she might have facilitated the enabling and empowering of learners to the point where they were sufficiently self-directed to be able to confront critical issues in class (or beyond), and where their lived life became the bridge connecting abstraction and reality. Finally, below is an excerpt showing how one student teacher was impressed by young learners' behaviour, which reflected compassionate caring and respect for humanity. She also noted some cultural contradictions within the school setting generally.

> I also found what is great with black children in their culture is that they all share. When they went out for lunch and someone had three sandwiches, they would eat one and share the rest with their friends. [During a lesson] the White teacher would say ''we don't share 'share' referring to a learner who wanted to share an eraser (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:34).

In her attentiveness to the superiority of the students' display of generosity and neighbourly concern for others, this prospective teacher provided promise that an open-minded teacher sensitive to context might enable critical student agency. In contrast to the homogenising comments and individualistic capitalist ideology of the teacher ("We don't share"), such a prospective teacher may create opportunities to validate lived experience, entertain the discussion of difficult and critical issues and embolden students to resist stifling conformity

with capitalist ideology. Further to studying the cultural alienation of the curriculum and its effect on language practices, the authors asked student teachers to comment on the nature of teaching strategies they observed in their pre-service teaching practice. These responses are probed below in the hope of encountering more intimate student engagement so as to predict the possibility of critical student agency. With that in mind, Miss M had this to say (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:35):

> I didn't observe any effective [strategies] … I don't want to discredit [the teacher], she does her best, using the whole bilingual approach. But the teacher was very teacher-centred, it wasn't learner-centred. There wasn't much discussion happening between the learners … she never really asked the learners thought-provoking questions; It's 'Do this! Do that!' 'Copy that from the board!' … It's what the school wants, they're very strict on that, maintain discipline, the minute the children talk in groups or in pairs they think that's out of line. So it's almost like they're trying to shape children's behaviour….

This view was endorsed by Miss T, another student teacher (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:35):

> They aren't given the chance to do group work and I did it with them for the first time and they really enjoyed it. I did a little activity where they could talk to their friends and help each other. They were sitting in groups of four, which is perfect. And yeah, they were really good! They were quiet and spoke softly, it was really effective. But she (the regular teacher) never tried it. I think she's really scared that they'll get out of hand.

In the above teaching episodes, the student teachers lamented the lack of deliberative communication amongst learners, until the last student teacher became proactive enough to tear through the autocratic teaching style and allowed students to negotiate meaning in groups. Furthermore, her opening to allow for collaborative pedagogic groups gives the impression that critical student agency may be fostered amongst the students. The example of Cape Peninsula students (admittedly advantaged by seniority) reveals that, when students are self-directed and proactive, their agency becomes more trenchant. Such openings as mentioned above liberate spaces for negotiated meaning and create sharper focus on the lived dimensions of student life, connecting it to a greater social reality in which the contradictions of capitalist hegemony perhaps may be challenged. Furthermore, collaborative pedagogic circles could be considered counter-hegemonic in that they undercut the individualistic, competition-driven internal logic of social relations under capital. The student teachers were particularly vocal about the use of worksheets, as Miss T heatedly explained (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:35):

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Well, the teacher gives the worksheet out and then she just tells them what to do, she doesn't allow them to actually try to read the instructions … she tells them what to do and they do it … Nothing is concrete. It's all 2D. It's all flat and all picture-based. She never once brought anything real to actually see and feel. It was just pictures on paper on the worksheets! … They don't think out of the box. They're so stuck in their routine. She's been teaching for twelve years. Teachers who have been teaching for a long time are still stuck in old methods. And also like … content-based. They don't think times have changed and just teach the same content that they taught twenty years ago.

Miss M was also exasperated by the unimaginative use of worksheets, seemingly used to fill time (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:35):

The problem was that she was doing it every day. Every day they had to do worksheets. … I have never seen her playing a role to try to incorporate her lesson or try to bring up something that the learners can see but I have seen her reading, writing on the board … 'Now it's time to write, No! No! There is no talking to anyone; we are going to do this right now, right here'. The child will go 'Ma'am I have finished', ''No, don't tell me you have finished! Just put your paper down I will come and collect it'. … I want them to enjoy and I think learners they need to learn but at the same time enjoy and smile. So when you find that they only smile at break time with their friends …

The two incidents above indicate that pedagogic encounters, which rely on the abstraction of content, limit openings for students' lived realities to be incorporated into their learning. In addition, the inability to allow students "to come to voice" (Waghid, 2014:3−6) seals off opportunities for students to go in search of and admit different sources of knowledge. This, in turn, curtails critical student agency by them not being able to raise critical or difficult questions and forcing students to conform to hegemonic ideology. A further constraint is imposed on students by teachers who enfeeble students by not allowing them to think for themselves or to act independently. This places severe limits on students' ability to struggle for the things that are meaningful to them.

Miss K noted the lack of opportunity for oral practice and interaction between the learners during language lessons (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:35):

No, it's not given, [the opportunity to talk with each other]. Immediately they start talking and the teachers say: 'You are making noise, Why are you not listening to me?' The teacher is not even waiting for the answer. 'Why are you doing this, why are you playing with your friends?

Focus sister, listen to me. I asked you a question, answer me.' At the end of the day they didn't learn anything or they didn't understand the content of what she was trying to teach them.

Further observations came from Miss T (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:36):

There was always those kids who were really eager to answer, and it's amazing because you think they know up to a level and then they actually know more than you think they do but because you're not giving them chance to talk. … It's amazing the stuff that they come up with. And I noticed the whole time that I was there, the teacher never once said to them 'Think!' It was never there, so the kids just were being fed information.

From the above interviews, it is evident that learners are silenced and not able to say what they think in their own way. Yet, critical learner agency may lay dormant in these learners because, when allowed to answer, an eagerness to participate comes forth. This implies that learner intelligence is stifled; burying the ingenuity and creativity that potentially lie within them to be self-directed and critical of the status quo.

Several teachers were aware of the limitations of both the teacher-centred approach and the learner-centred approach. Mrs D remarked as follows (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:36):

I feel I must sit down by them at the table with two or three with me because I must practically show. I must sit with them. I must interact with them one to one. That is so difficult because I don't have the time to do that. But those, the good children, the intelligent children in the class you sometimes keep them there limiting their progress. And the rest, forty-two are neglected while you are busy with one.

The pedagogic encounter above indicates the difficulty for the teacher to plan differentiated activities in centres and to allow students to rotate through these centres in mixed ability groups. The above alluded incident might debunk her concept of inequality of intelligence, as learners generally reveal their intelligence (refer to One Laptop per Child, 2013) on their own terms. However, the incident does have great promise in that her one-on-one instruction creates potential opportunities for critical learner agency, as learners get to share, negotiate and collaborate on meaning-making in a small group. Furthermore, it might be through unmediated instruction in learner-led groups that critical questions and the challenging of the status quo arise, which establish and develop critical learner agency. In conclusion, Evans and Cleghorn (2012) challenge the state's attempt at re-conceptualisation of education in the face of 'policy borrowing' by admitting culturally insensitive ideas in the curriculum and the hybridised philosophy of inculcating a national identity, while instilling Western epistemologies via

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English (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012) . It is the authors' (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012) view that the curriculum promotes the acculturation of Western worldviews and thereby disempowers non-Western learner language and culture in an equivalent move to negate learners' rights (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:36–39). In addition, the pedagogic encounters revealed teacher and learner behaviours, which provided insight into the potential of critical learner agency under very constraining conditions, viz. second- or third-language acquisition. Under these circumstances it could perhaps be understood that learners show a greater reluctance to 'come to voice', but this suppression should not legitimate the fact that learners are deprived of opportunities to be self-directed, self-organising, self-regulating, proactive or agentic, as seen in the majority of the encounters above. In fact, agentic learners navigating a foreign language successfully could be read as a sign of equality of intelligence and may blossom into untold counter-hegemonic ways of meaning-making.

Finally, to advocate for critical student agency in self-organised learning, I turn to what is termed 'hole-in-the-wall' experiments led by education technologist Mitra (2010), who gave (English) molecular biology textbooks to a group of Tamil-speaking children in South India. What follows immediately below is Stamp's (2013) analysis of how the experiment went:

> Left on their own for two months, without external help or instruction, the researchers felt that surely this task would demonstrate that 'yes, we need teachers for certain things' (Mitra, 2010). Indeed, after two months, when Mitra asked them what they understood of molecular biology, the children confirmed that they understood nothing. What gets the biggest laugh at Mitra's numerous talks, however, is the response of one girl from the group, who explained: 'Apart from the fact that improper replication of the DNA molecule causes genetic disease, we understood nothing else'.

While the previously mentioned pedagogic encounters revealed rather stultifying practices (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012), self-organising, agentic behaviour as seen immediately above, creates optimism in the potentialities of critical student agency.

5.11   Synthesising what was learned from the cases

In the light that critical student agency has not yet been given serious theoretical consideration or a clear definition; I have relied on a critical theoretical framework to scope the nature, enactment, manifestation, and implicit and explicit dimensions of critical student agency. To differentiate critical student agency from agency (Morrow, 2001) and critical agency (Bussey, 2008), I drew on McLaren's (2003) view of critical emancipatory pedagogy to help structure

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an argument for critical student agency. Therefore, the cases presented in 5.7; 5.8; 5.9 and 5.10 were used to more clearly understand what a theory of critical student agency might look like in the everyday lives of students. And while One Laptop per Child (2013) and Mitra (2010) were used as deliberate representations to illustrate and clarify how critical student agency differs from agency and student agency; the cases of authentic South African classroom experience in 5.7; 5.8; 5.9 and 5.10 provide deeper knowledge to synthesise a theory of critical student agency. Each case presents the explicit and implicit experiences of working-class students in schools, and in two cases in their communities (see 5.7 and 5.9). By looking specifically at student thinking, feeling, acting and valuing, I was given insight into how education might be seen as a domain of resistance against injustice; and how the political dimensions of knowledge and learning could provide the basis for a theory on critical student agency.

Firstly, an analysis of Molteno's (1987) study fuels a theory of critical student agency by providing me with a transparent view of how high school students raise critical social issues and (metaphorically) pose difficult questions to the structural hierarchies of race and class. The student behaviours and attitudes also provide evidence of counter-hegemonic measures which help inform a theory on critical student agency that takes transformative praxis seriously.

Secondly, Jansen's (1999) study helps highlight the progressive curriculum ideology of OBE/C2005. Yet, post-apartheid education reform which is rooted in democracy; and that promotes student self-creation, self-mastery and self-determination, is not made evident in this Grade 1 classroom. Instead, teacher behaviours in this study seem to dramatically constrain critical student agency. My impression was that learners in a Grade 1 classroom might best enact critical student agency on account of them being receptive and impressionable; and that Grade 1 could have been their first educational encounter with a critical attitude of how to think, feel and act in their own best interests. But the value of studying this case was instructive because it provided me with knowledge of what critical student agency appears not to be.

Thirdly Fataar and Du Plooy's (2012), study provided practical insight of how critical student agency is conceptualised as breaks and refusals of hegemonic discourses embedded in race and language; and what becomes legitimised in normative education. In this study, certain students who are mislabelled and seen in deficit terms, draw on equality of intelligence (through self-definition, self-mastery and self-determination) as a sign of critical student agency to access and express their own social experiences in education.

Lastly, Evans and Cleghorn's (2012) study revealed how Western cultural and language hegemony are negotiated in classrooms of working-class learners. The display of teacher-centred pedagogies based on control in this case, forced me (as a teacher) to imagine alternative ways for students to think for themselves; act independently and struggle for the things that are meaningful to them. However, one of the most meaningful aspects of this case was how aspirant teachers, as well as self-reflective teachers in this case helped to consolidate a picture of the educational space that motivates critical student agency. Ultimately, by having named a theory critical student agency and looking at the four cases in 5.7; 5.8; 5.9 and 5.10, I was able to speculate on the theoretical and practical definitions that might clarify how marginal students negotiate power and authority through knowledge and learning.

5.12   Summary

This chapter sought to uncover the manifestations of critical student agency in pedagogical encounters. Building on the previous chapter, it was an attempt to relate teacher training and the abstraction of the curriculum to the material realities of teaching episodes in classrooms. While this chapter looked for the presence of critical pedagogy through student agency, it also specified the type of agency that was to be identified in learning encounters, viz. agentic, self-regulating, self-directed, self-organising, proactive (critical) student agency. Furthermore, delimiting the search for critical student agency was seen to be necessary in creating the link between critical student agency and critical pedagogy, which seeks to reveal the incidents of unequal power relations in society in order to transform undemocratic practices into practices of individual freedom and justice. This way, critical student agency could be identified in instances where students are able to see the contradictions in the capitalist order and name them in order to transform them (Freire, 2005a:19). Secondly, critical student agency would be seen to empower students to create their own realities by understanding that social reality is borne out of individual lived experiences and not codified in abstract school content (Freire, 2005a:19). Thirdly, critical student agency would be visible if it enabled students to raise critical and difficult questions in order to challenge and transform inequality. Finally, critical student agency would be on display if it encouraged behaviour that allowed students to see schools as sites of contestation where they may be expected to conform, but where critical agency may become most effective.

While student agency did appear more powerfully at the midpoint of this chapter, it was also obscured by teacher agency (see 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9), and this may not be surprising given the

understanding that classrooms are more autocratic, teacher-focused arenas. This would then suggest further that greater teacher awareness and participation in creating opportunities for critical student agency perhaps might be necessary for a truer and more persuasive revelation of the agentic power of students in pedagogic encounters. In the furtherance of my argument, Chapter 6 starts by addressing the perversion of democracy when the elite highjack democracy in pursuance of economic, political and social supremacy. While this may seem like abstract argumentation, it keeps reiterating the debate that society, the state, the curriculum and schooling are founded on a belief in democracy. Chapter 6 also continues to clarify the features of critical student agency in classroom encounters. Firstly, I look at the learning practices of Grade 6 students in a township school. Secondly, I examine critical student agency by studying high school students during a socio-political and socio-economic boycott. Thirdly, literacy and numeracy practices as seen in actual classrooms are scrutinised to understand the potential for promoting or inhibiting freedom. Subsequently, curriculum evolution, teacher agency and critical literacy skills are problematised in order to enable me to organise a consolidated conceptualisation of critical student agency that ultimately leads me closer to answering the essential question of this dissertation.

Chapter 6

Imagining that critical student agency could mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education

6.1   Introduction

Chapter 5 helped to develop an understanding of critical student agency, distinct from mere human agency. The propositions in Chapter 5   went so far as to reify the theoretical assumptions of student agency and strove to extract a particular perspective of how trenchant student agency might be conceived of as critical agency. Guided by Rancière's (1991) concept of equality of intelligence and McLaren's (2003) formulation of what vigorous student agency may be defined as, I investigated what critical student agency might look like in pedagogical encounters. While the overwhelming evidence points to an impoverished impression of student agency, characterised by constrained agency hemmed in by the 'banking method' (see 2.7, 2.9 and 2.13) of pedagogical practice, there also were refreshing displays of students taking control of their lived realities and transforming manifestations of inequality to empowering and overcoming realities. This chapter aims to create a coherent theory of critical student agency as it is aligned epistemologically with a body of knowledge grounded in the framework of critical pedagogy, as already introduced in Chapter 2 (see 2.3; 2.5; 2.7; 2.12 and 2.14), combined with the theoretical debates on agency as found in Rancière (1991), Apter (2007) and Scott (1985). By providing these particular theoretical insights, it is envisioned that the generation of theory may point to specific implications that should be considered within the context of educating students in capitalist realities, yet, still create openings for 'strong democracy' to thrive. Firstly, the chapter reports on the problematic of 'thin' democracy as an impediment to fortified critical student agency. Secondly, I describe the instance of oppositional agency as a form of critical student agency that begins to imagine how agentive students might be able to mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education. I specifically refer to classroom encounters to provide the context and means to predict how ideology and power are opposed and resisted as a sign of critical student agency, as well as how curriculum evolution helps to shape pedagogic encounters. In addition, classroom pedagogic engagements also provided the sites where I was able to make observations of the cognitive and affective functioning and intellectual ability of students, particularly critical, agentive students, gauging academic performance, predicting the level of civic participation and, lastly, highlighting the gaps agentive students exposed, which the dominant ideology had not succeeded in saturating.

Critical student agency: a tool against oppression

6.2   The hatred of perverted democracy

Whereas Barber (2003) previously (see 2.4; 2.12; 3.8 and 4.3.2) pointed to the threat of progressive, 'strong democracy' being subsumed by neo-liberal 'thin democracy', and the hazards the latter poses to any defensible notion of the 'public good', Rancière (2006) expounded further on the crisis of democracy in 2006 through an observation of the socio-political realities in France. A young (White) woman gripped the nation with her make-believe attack (by a black man). Adolescents refused to remove their headscarves at school. Social security was running at a deficit, wage earners demonstrated, reality television was preoccupied with homosexual marriages, and the public imagination was fixated on artificial insemination (Rancière, 2006:1). These social realities serve to illustrate poignantly the disparate nature of reality in capitalist societies: there are few significant issues that group people together, implying a severe fragmentation of society and a disintegration of concepts such as citizens having a 'common will' and 'common tasks' (Barber, 2003; Rancière, 2006:1). Rancière (2006) proposes that democracy under capital could appropriately be conceived of as the "reign of limitless desire of individuals in modern mass society" (Rancière, 2006:3). Further to this, in his analysis of democracy, Rancière (2006:1) sheds light on the similitude of Greek democracy to present-day democracy insofar as it is the practice of "aristocratic legislators and experts who strive to compromise with democracy", seeing as democracy cannot simply be ignored. Consequently, democracy is reduced to the exercise of balancing institutional mechanisms to get the best out of democracy, all the while containing it to protect the elites and to preserve the order of property (Rancière, 2006:1). Furthermore, having laid the foundation for laws and institutions symbolic of formal democracy, 'real' democracy is reduced to the appearance of democracy through the instruments of power wielded by the ruling elite (Rancière, 2006:1). The only way to overcome this misrepresentation is to struggle for real democracy in concrete forms of life and sensible experience, rather than in law and institutions (Rancière, 2006:1). To reify this abstraction means to admit to the inconsistencies and false promises of 'aristocratic' democracy, that, while it says it respects differences, it discriminates (subtly or overtly) and condones racism, and, while democratic law says it protects minority rights, it marginalises (gays and lesbians, for example), which transgresses the promise of liberty and equality (Rancière, 2006:1). Yet, freedom itself can become problematic in democracy, as it can be interpreted as the freedom of some groups in society to do wrong, which further hamstrings the concept of 'common good' (Barber, 1984). Thus, Rancière (2006:3) invokes Aristotle and

advises that, under these circumstances, the evils of democracy need to find an outlet, and the best way to do this is to "redirect the feverish energy of any restless social group, and to send it in search of material prosperity" (Rancière (2006:3), which is translated into private happiness and the construction of cohesive social bonds, dictated to by capital relations. As a result, a double problematic becomes evident in society. Firstly, this arrangement renders citizens unconcerned about the public good, and, secondly, it severely undermines the authority of the government. Furthermore, democracy cannot reconcile the double discourse of collectivism and individualism, since the good as proposed in the principle of equality is in contention with the bad as seen in the law under individual rights (Rancière, 2006:3). To elaborate further on his harsh criticism of democracy, Rancière (2007) transcends the micro-theorising of democratic rights at individual level and appeals to Arendt's (1958) macro-theorising of humanity, which simply conceives of "human rights as an illusion because they are the rights of them that bare humanity without rights" (Rancière, 2006:6). More generally stated, human rights are defined here as the egotistical rights of the ruling class that entice the rest of society toward crass, greedy consumerism, eviscerating a consciousness in search of the common good, but in its stead are beguiled and preoccupied with commercial exchange (Rancière, 2006:7). Under these conditions, freedom is recast as free trade, inviting an understanding of equality, yet obscuring the shameless exploitation of wage labour protocols (Rancière, 2006:7). Through successful obfuscation of actual political, social and economic inequality, citizens are mindlessly distracted to consume more, no longer wed to a struggle for the true equality guaranteed under democracy (Rancière, 2006). In this section, I have attempted to provide a perspective on how democracy can be subverted through law and organisation as an instrument to nourish the hedonistic appetites of citizens and turn them away from public life, and the pursuit of real democracy turned toward equality and liberty. In 6.3, I present a consideration of how students may help us discover the meaning of critical agency, compared to its theory, in an effort to deflate the obsession with mass consumption.

6.3   Discovering the features of critical student agency in classroom encounters

The discussion starts by revisiting the general conception of critical agency to clarify the potential of agency that irritates and refuses the perversion of democracy as evident in capitalist social relations. Scott (1985) helps provide a theoretical prism through which we may imagine the intellectual sophistication om which critical student agents will have to rely in their fight to stage everyday forms of resistance and through which they exploit the opportunities to confuse the homogeneity of reality as advertised by the ruling elite. The advanced cognitive skills

necessary to institute quiet and anonymous acts of resistance are on display when they require little or no planning, and are a form of self-help when they avoid direct confrontation with authority (Scott, 1985). Furthermore, critical agents –

- need the mental acuity to be able to develop their own understandings and interpretations of society;
- they need to be ready to exploit the very hegemony of the elite classes, which provides the ideas, means and symbolic tools of criticism; and
- they need to be prepared to seize upon the contradictions within hegemony to challenge the established order (meritocracy, inequality, democracy and capitalism).

Scott (1985) therefore believes that heightened consciousness and superior intelligence provide the material to resist hegemony and reclaim human agency that is not preoccupied with elite amusements and desires.

Secondly, Apter (2007) defines critical agency as the capacity for effective social action that is transformative, context-dependent, and which results in intended and unintended consequences. Further to this, he describes the kind of agency that Scott (1985) refers to above as oppositional agency, the kind of agency that is powerful enough to explode socially constructed definitions and which demands a redefinition according to the critical agent's interpretation of reality. While Scott (1985) and Apter (2007) define critical agency broadly, I will refine the scope of this argument to critical student agency (see 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7) and relate it to the actual pedagogical encounters seen in Chapter 5 to determine whether these cases resonate with critical student agency as imagined in critical pedagogy, or whether they are closer to the unfocused, 'unconscious' and comatose agency barely visible under capitalist distraction.

6.4   Learning practices of Grade 6 learners in a township school

We were previously introduced to Lebo (see 5.9) (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012) and it was noted that she displayed elements of critical student agency. In this section, I disaggregate her environmental and school behaviours to provide an analysis of her cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability and academic performance, to predict the level of her civic involvement, and to probe for instances where she might expose the failure of dominant ideology to penetrate her lived experiences.

While Lebo was considered a low-status learner in her class, it is evident that her intellectual sophistication and consciousness exceeded the limits the teacher had placed on her. The fact

that she was able to act as a self-assigned peer tutor to a struggling learner (Bongiwe) revealed her advanced cognitive capacity, as well as her higher affective development. Since the teacher had misrecognised Lebo's talents and skill, it is more than likely that she would never obtain full mastery of the academic content due to the pedagogic neglect of the teacher. However, as a self-motivated, self-organising and proactive student, she independently developed a strong literate identity, despite the unproductive learning platforms that both her domestic and academic environments presented. Lebo seemingly drew on her agency of intentions and purposes to propel her literate reality and affirmed her right to learn, despite deficient home and school environments. She exploited the opportunity to be active in her own learning when she was immersed in a context where this was possible (middle-class, print-rich environment) and where she could develop her literacy skills. In doing all of this, she ruptured the deficit notions held by those imposing boundaries on her reality based on her socio-economic status and language orientation (race and gender, among others). Furthermore, based on her school and classroom interactions, she seemed to embrace a strain of Nyerere's African socialism (see 2.5), as her actions were non-exploitative and not pursuant of individual desires, and she exhibited mutual respect for her classmates and peers. This conduct is in contradistinction to the success-only, competitive and individualistic actions that characterise behaviour under capital. While it may correctly be observed that Lebo drew on the very capitalist culture I am problematising, she altered the intended use by turning the benefit she derived from immersion in an 'elite' high-status culture to socially justified ends. However, not neglecting to observe the pervasiveness and obstinate nature of capitalist social relations, Lebo is also determined by Fataar and Du Plooy (2012) to display a level of detachment from and disaffection with her place of living in the township, and this portends ominously in relation to civic involvement in her domestic environment. It indicates her lack of interest in and dissociation from the lived realities of many of the under-resourced and economically marginal citizens in the township, when in fact it would be ideal if she were also to disseminate her knowledge and skill among her peers in this environment in order to empower them and expose them to a more literate culture. In sum, Lebo exemplified a host of characteristics that identified her as a critical and agentive student and, while she mitigated some of the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform her educational experiences and reality, at the same time she also identified with a higher-status culture, leading one to believe that the concept of the 'common good' may be compromised somehow because of her disassociation with her township reality.

In the same study as Lebo, we encountered Shafiek in the Grade 6 literacy class. I would like to consider Shafiek's critical agency as an oppositional, as well as a critical agency of desire to prove his mastery of ICT. Whereas the classroom teacher labelled Shafiek unruly, disruptive and 'uncivilised', he appeared to be stifled in his attempt to showcase his cognitive adequacy. Given his under-resourced and educationally non-stimulating domestic environment, his 'conceptual mobility' (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012) in accessing the skill and expertise to understand and manipulate ICT asserts and demands his right to claim equality of intelligence. Borne out by the fact that he independently developed mastery of and proficiency in ICT-related literacy, his critical agency was given full expression. However, in an unproductive learning environment, the teacher attached derogatory labels and misrecognised the richness of his lived reality, as well as the development it produced in his desire and curiosity to become technologically literate. To this end, Shafiek displayed oppositional agency by refusing her diagnosis, and delivered a rejoinder to her insults under his breath. Yet, unbeknown to the teacher is that her allegiance to being a mere functionary had curtailed productive classroom literacy development in Shafiek, when it could be imagined that his inclusion in pedagogic interaction would expose an agency of desire to share his ICT literacy proficiency. This last fact seems plausible because Shafiek inevitably gave expression to, interpreted and transformed his ICT knowledge when he was in the computer room or on the playground. In the behaviours on display, Shafiek proved his intellectual adequacy and carved out an ICT-literate identity. Furthermore, his affective and cognitive functioning allowed him the enlightenment, even when he was being oppositional, not to make a public display of it in order to be exposed and further reprimanded. Since there was no material indication of his civic involvement, I provisionally suggest that his keenness to disseminate and transmit his ICT adeptness at school may translate into him sharing this skill in the township and further empowering and inspiring other students and adults with literacy development. By virtue of the fact that Shafiek transcended the negative labels given to him by the teacher, he refused the dominant ideology of (racism and) classism and forced the validation of his lived experiences to be relevant, even though the teacher chose to minimise him and his reality. Lastly, Shafiek used the very ideas and instruments of capitalist production for his own, positive personal development, quite unlike the destructive behaviours that greed and consumerism invoke under capitalist social relations (see Scott, 1985; Apter, 2007; De Certeau, 1985).

In 6.4 I considered the incidences of critical student agency emanating from two individual students' domestic environments that were further projected onto school and classroom

interactions. In 6.5 a view of critical student agency within the context of a heated socio-political context is given.

6.5   Critical student agency during a socio-political and socio-economic boycott

While it must be disclosed that the context for the following student encounters was not set in democracy, the behaviours are significant, if not foundational, in relation to the social and educational transformation that helped usher in a democratic order. In addition, the inclusion of these behaviours as a case to observe critical student agency is very instructive, given that critical pedagogy is a marginal educational theory and practice (McLaren, 2006:23) and very little educational research in South Africa has so far addressed student agency, and specifically critical student agency, as is theorised further in this study.

The collective behaviours of the students during the student boycotts in South Africa in the 1980s (Molteno, 1987) showed how agentive students contradicted the existing hegemony and struggled and fought for self-determination in the face of an oppressive and threatening state apparatus. The boycotting high school students mounted a broader class struggle against racial, economic and social injustice (against the undemocratic apartheid state), as well an internal struggle for more balanced power at their local school sites (against autocratic, authoritarian school administration and teachers) (Freire, 2005a). The complexity and density of their oppositional agency was to resist two axes of power simultaneously by challenging hegemonic forces, and in doing so, their behaviour validated the authority of their collective intelligence against these formidable adversaries. Through consciousness raising and self-directed, self-organising, proactive events, these students embraced critical literacy to give expression to their realities, interpret social currents and attempt to interrupt and transform practices of un-freedom and inequality. Their critical agency of purpose to disrupt the 'banking model' of education (see 2.7, 2.9 and 2.13) as well as social and economic inequality, challenged established power through social activism, which provided evidence of the exercise of power from the base (students) over the power of the state and school rulers. While their macro-structural demands were not met by the state, these student activists galvanised communities, if not society, into a spirit of solidarity, social cohesion and activism to struggle for a more equitable social arrangement, giving credence to their cognitive and affective functioning. Since it may well be assumed that school routines and activities were disrupted during this turbulent time, it is difficult to predict what the consequences might have been for the students' academic performance (either enhanced because of critical social practice and conscientisation, or

weakened because of disruption). Yet, it is undeniable that their counter-hegemonic social activism had civic involvement as the capstone of their intentions, as they demonstrated solidarity with a local meat workers' strike and a bus boycott. Whereas it may be considered that these students could not fully mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education under apartheid, the potency of their complex and ambiguous agency spawned a slew of intended and unintended consequences that had reverberations in further student movements four years later. And lastly, it is precisely this type of strident oppositional agency that sets precedents for what I conceive of as critical student agency and that was given expression in the spontaneous popular student uprisings in Paris in 1968 (Rancière, 1991) the United States of America in the 1960's (Scranto, 1970) Soweto in 1976 (Alexander, 2012) and Egypt in 2012 (Beissinger et al., 2014). As indicated in the three cases presented thus far (see 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10), critical student agency is context-specific, it produces social action, it requires intellectual cleverness, it is self-empowering, and it can be defined as oppositional (counter-hegemonic). It also has agency of intentions, purposes and desires, and finally, it can be complex and ambiguous. While the literature so far has made room to conceptualise critical agency, this has not been so distinct as to distinguish critical student agency, and what this might look like outside of its (incomplete) theoretical formulations. Thus, it is unsurprising that the cases reveal very few traces of critical student agency, and it is even more unfortunate that there is an almost complete overshadowing of student behaviours in pedagogical encounters, leaving researchers forced to extrapolate data from teacher agency. Having said that, I turn to four specific classroom encounters (see 5.10), (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012) and rely on teacher narratives as a window through which to glimpse and understand how critical student agency is seen in a language class.

6.6   Literacies and numeracies as a practice of freedom or un-freedom

Firstly, the comments by a prospective teacher provide another opportunity to identify and engage what critical student agency might look like:

> I also found what is great with black children in their culture is that they all share. When they went out for lunch and someone had three sandwiches, they would eat one and share the rest with their friends. [During a lesson] the White teacher would say 'We don't share' referring to a learner who wanted to share an eraser (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:34).

The above observation is an indirect way of analysing student behaviour, yet the conclusion could largely be made that the student subscribed to a particular form of cultural knowledge

and lived reality that contradicted that of the teacher. The cognitive and affective functioning of students referred to above attaches to a socially responsive rather than a neo-liberal ideology that valorises individualism and competition, privatisation and ownership rights, success-only orientations, and the profit motive (seemingly supported by the teacher). This cultural enlightenment on the part of the student presents the observer with new ways of understanding reality and helps to conceptualise different alternatives to address social problems. In addition, this level of consciousness proves the adherence of the critical student to counter-hegemonic beliefs and practices, and provides the observer with a view to the alternate dispositions accommodated by critical agency. It furthermore highlights the agentive space that the critical student occupies, as he/she is in control of his/her own behaviour and actions, which are not dictated to by the structured and rigid power experienced in the classroom under the authority of the teacher, who does not commit to a counter-hegemonic and democratic learning environment. Thus, the above scenario exhibits critical student agency in the students' capacity for effective social action by incorporating the agency of intention and purpose to make sure other students' needs are met. Since there is no trace of force or coercion, it can safely be assumed that students are enlightened enough to exercise discretion as a form of critical agency to overcome capitalist orientations and inequality.

Secondly, another teacher in training helps to sharpen our perspectives of the presence of or absence of critical student agency in actual learning episodes:

> No, it's not given, [the opportunity to talk with each other]. Immediately they start talking and the teachers say: 'You are making noise, Why are you not listening to me?' The teacher is not even waiting for the answer. 'Why are you doing this, why are you playing with your friends? Focus sister, listen to me. I asked you a question, answer me.' At the end of the day they didn't learn anything or they didn't understand the content of what she was trying to teach them (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:35).

The pronounced inclination of the teacher to silence and shut students up cancels out or severely minimises any fruitful manifestation of critical student agency. Since critical student agency could be identified in student behaviour where there is shared decision-making, collaboration and participation, student problem-posing, self-discipline and self-governing actions, dialogical interaction and the ability to disagree, silence serves as the most inappropriate and erroneous technique to facilitate criticality (Freire, 2005a). It is of considerable importance to point out in this section what critical student agency is not in order to help refine the development of a theory of what critical student agency most likely is. The sterile and technocratic view presented

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above in the classroom vignette advances an understanding of the routines and repetition of teacher-focused learning in which students' lived experiences make no appearance, thereby shutting out opportunities for critical students to make sense of their realities, and even less to analyse the world, understand it and transform it. Furthermore, the unrelentingly bleak image persists that, if critical students are silenced, their much-needed advanced comprehension skills cannot be developed adequately. And since comprehension is a prerequisite for criticism (Freire & Macedo, 1987), it is a means by which critical students use their agency (consciousness and trained intellect) to appropriate understandings of ideologies and hegemonic texts so that they may be equipped to challenge them, contextualise them and rewrite them to reflect a clearer (truer) understanding. As a consequence, the pedagogic encounter described above presents a one-dimensional approach to teaching and learning that smothers the ability for critical discrimination and reason, and limits opportunities for critical students to connect hope to possibility and to imagine a qualitatively better world (McLaren & Tadeu da Silva, 1993). Ultimately, the above learning episode provides no indication of critical student agency and it would be a fading hope to believe that, under these conditions, students could develop cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability and civic involvement formidable enough to mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education.

Thirdly, the student teacher below challenged the autocratic, 'banking method' of education (see 2.7, 2.9 and 2.13) and renders an account of how critical student agency manifested in an effective problem-posing encounter:

> There was always those kids who were really eager to answer, and it's amazing because you think they know up to a level and then they actually know more than you think they do but because you're not giving them chance to talk. … It's amazing the stuff that they come up with. And I noticed the whole time that I was there, the teacher never once said to them 'Think!' It was never there, so the kids just were being fed information (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:36).

If students are challenged to think critically, and if themes are problematised with the expectation that students will help solve the problems, critical students are likely to respond as enthusiastically as above. Since critical dialogue forces students to transcend the passive roles of merely answering questions, students develop the intellectual ability through critical consciousness not only to answer questions, but more importantly to question the answers (Shor, 1993:32). Furthermore, this counter-hegemonic attitude to problem posing and problem solving seen above connects thought to action and positions students to imagine a better world,

as opposed to the reified world in which capital is assumed to provide a world unsurpassed (Freire, 2005a:71). This way, students are empowered to investigate the contradictions within capitalist social relations, and can use discerning critical agency to counter-identify with the elitist capitalist discourse, rather than become consumed by it (Pêcheux, 1983; 1988:633−650). This process of dis-identifying with a particular discourse means going beyond the terms of elitist capitalist discourse to discover where it opposes itself, and to exploit the negations that the discourse supplies (Pêcheux, 1983; 1988:633−650). So far, it has become abundantly clear that an extreme level of mental development has to be fostered in order to engage students to the point where the complexity of their answers and questions begin to amaze us. Yet, this level of development cannot be achieved simply through functional literacy, which sets as its main aim the mechanical performance of literacy instruction that domesticates and subordinates students (Freire, 2005a:83). The demands of critical literacy call for critical students to invent new traditions and reinvent old traditions, as well as for them to abandon a sense of security by becoming metaphorically homeless (Giroux, 1992; JanMohamed, 1983). The state of 'homelessness' referred to here forces critical students to whittle out spaces that hegemony cannot pierce and where alternative acts and intentions can survive (Giroux, 1992; JanMohamed, 1983). However, all the aforementioned realities cannot be imagined in the absence of critical and agentive students being challenged to think, or when they are prevented from coming to and exercising their voice (De Certeau, 1984:6; Freire, 2005:50).

Fourthly, the classroom teacher below justifies her choice of pedagogic approach by revealing her ineptness at effective classroom and content management:

> I feel I must sit down by them at the table with two or three with me because I must practically show. I must sit with them. I must interact with them one to one. That is so difficult because I don't have the time to do that. But those, the good children, the intelligent children in the class you sometimes keep them there limiting their progress. And the rest, forty-two are neglected while you are busy with one (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:36).

The teacher in the above scenario displayed an enfeebling approach to classroom practice in which individualised instruction serves to infantilise students and at the same time sacrifice the progress of more able students (Biesta *et al*., 2010; Giroux, 1992a; McLaren, 1993). This informs an account of poor classroom management and a weak pedagogic technique that are unable to accommodate the diverse and complex learning needs of the students. In such a case, the pleasure and excitement that accompany student discovery learning in cooperative learning formations is being forestalled, as well as the possibility of self-guided learning through play

(hooks, 1994). Furthermore, both cognitive and affective functioning are curtailed, since self-organised discovery learning through play perhaps presents the closest state that students will come (during education) to being their true selves (Freire, 2005a:161; McLaren, 1993:167). It could also be imagined that an effort to seize the moment in smaller, differentiated learning groups (rather than whole class groups) provides one of the best ways for students to test their intelligence through negotiation and meaning-making, as well as to shape and reshape their thoughts, given the context and new content information. These cooperative learning positions create depth of knowledge and have an increased potential to improve academic performance, while at the same time inducting students into a more socially acceptable practice of collective responsibility for learning in which each participant is expected to make a valuable contribution. What is more, intimate work in small groups allows students to appreciate their own intelligence (as being equal to that of the teacher and their peers), as they are engaged in self-motivated learning (for themselves) and not necessarily for the teacher or for a test (Rancière, 1991:5). This act asserts their power as thinking beings, the kind of thinking that is self-reflective and action following (Rancière, 1991:62). Furthermore, the consciousness of intelligence seen as critical agency, demonstrated as being imaginatively active, provides openings to imagine that students may become discontent with the established order of knowledge production and dissemination and students begin to question knowledge, or a particular view of education, or society as a whole (hooks, 1994:13). This way, students might be empowered to incorporate knowledge from lived experience to negate the dominant ideology and suggest more viable or alternate ways of living (Freire, 2005:18). Lastly, this constructivist approach to education exposes the hegemony of traditional teacher roles, which stand in opposition to critical teachers who are themselves cognitive and not narrative, who foster the emergence of consciousness rather than submerging it, and who stimulate students' creative powers in problem-posing situations in order to excite the critical potential of students to lead them closer to democratic, liberatory aims (Freire, 1970:99−111). Thus far, this section has looked at specific classroom encounters and contexts with a view to witnessing the emergence, observing the actual occurrence and predicting the prospect of critical student agency. What appeared to be general for the first three classroom encounters was that critical student agency appeared powerfully (more of a second-person narrative) for all the categories I delimited in the search. In the last four classroom encounters, the appearance of critical student agency began to wane to the point that I had to resort to greater probability over making an analysis based on more direct student thought, behaviour and action (more of a third-person narrative). In the final case, critical student agency was pitifully obscured by teacher agency, which is not altogether surprising,

since the overwhelming majority of cases in Chapter 5 had already alluded to the complex power dynamics in pedagogic encounters, illustrating that traditional, autocratic teacher roles predominate learning episodes (see 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9). This fact then becomes a very important point of interrogation in trying to assess how critical students might mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education, seeing that school teachers and the school itself play such a vital socialising role (Gramsci, 1971). If classroom interactions are based on teacher as well as student agency, and if the former has thus far overshadowed the latter, its implications for critical student agency and the possibility for greater democratic transformation will have to be probed.

Critical student agency and teacher intentionalities

6.7   Curriculum evolution: Before and after democracy

To begin with, I shall contrast teacher roles as they have evolved in South African education from Christian National Education (CNE) and Fundamental Pedagogics (FP) to OBE and C2005 and NCS CAPS with what teacher roles look like in critical pedagogy.

Firstly, we were introduced to a discussion of the tenets of CNE and FP during apartheid over its more progressive replacements post-apartheid (OBE/C2005 and NCS/CAPS) in Chapter 4 (see 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9), so the reader might immediately recognise the teacher behaviours without much difficulty and be able to guarantee its origins. CNE and FP were the legislative devices (Eshak, 1987) used by the apartheid government to exercise power and authority in education (Eshak, 1987). On the one hand, CNE was premised on Calvinist, racist policies that united church and state and which placed God (thereafter the church, state, family and school) at the top of a hierarchy to instil moral and legal supremacy (Eshak, 1987). On the other hand, FP was to be recognised as a value-free, 'scientific' approach to the only true education under apartheid and the only means by which education could be understood (Eshak, 1987). Thus, unsurprisingly, the notion of authority was borne out in the power to enforce obedience, moral supremacy, the power to influence conduct, the fact that titles and designations give the holder the authority to be believed, and that the title holder is an expert in any question asked (Eshak, 1987). Consequently, it could easily be argued that FP subscribes to a functionalist paradigm, as its avowed allegiance to discipline, control and an authoritarian approach to education is visible in its belief in objectivity and the understanding of social reality through observation, without direct participation in the process (Naicker, 2000:6). Furthermore, the functionalist claim to neutrality gives the impression that the researcher's assessments are a-political and that

it is possible to align human affairs to the natural world, where relationships can be identified, studied and measured (Burrel & Morgan, 1979:26). Since the majority of HEIs in South Africa subscribed to FP as the only way to study education, a further derivative of FP, Pedagogics, influenced a great number of educators, as university and college curricula embraced the tenets of this 'science' (Naicker, 2000:8). Whereas FP interpretations of learning as being the process of enculturing children to the adult world in a moralistic enactment of principles of CNE, the goals of the former apartheid state (Samuel, 2002:402), OBE/C2005 was seen as the educational approach and curriculum policy that foregrounded education in post-apartheid South Africa, characterised as a planned process and strategy of curriculum change underpinned by elements of redress, access, equity and development (Chisholm, 2002:9). To achieve these targets, C2005 employed methodologies used in progressive pedagogy, such as learner-centredness, teachers as facilitators, relevance, contextualised knowledge and cooperative learning (Chisholm, 2002:9–10). This way, C2005 broke with the racist, authoritarian, rote learning of FP and Pedagogics and promoted egalitarianism and critical thinking (DoE, 2000). What is more, C2005 was participatory and inclusive, as it saw teachers as curriculum planners, while it endorsed community participation (DoE, 2000).

Thirdly, the further curriculum review and reform of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS, 2004) due to the challenges inherent in OBE and C2005 were done with the following results in mind:

- that the curriculum be more accessible to teachers;
- the mapping of assessment standards;
- bringing about changes in curriculum terminology;
- facilitating the reduction of learning areas; and
- the development and distribution of textbooks (Motshekga, 2011).

In other words, the revision of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) resulted in CAPS, which demarcates what each teacher in every subject should teach, when to teach it, and how to do the accompanying assessments (Motshekga, 2011). The reader is invited to chart the evolution of curriculum change from CNE, FP and Pedagogics the principles favoured in the National Curriculum Statement (NCS):

- social transformation;
- active and critical thinking;
- high knowledge and high skills;
- progression;

- human rights, valuing indigenous knowledge systems;
- credibility;
- quality and efficiency; and
- providing an education that is comparable in quality, breadth and depth to those of other countries (DoE, 2011:8).

Thus a picture begins to emerge that coincides with Leibowitz's (2001) view that policy reform is driven by discourse and language (ideology, values and attitudes), and this generates a particular response in how we think and participate in education (Leibowitz, 2001). Through the curriculum, for example, non-dominant language speakers are given access to the language of power, which in this case is English (Leibowitz, 2001). Consequently, schools and teachers have a strong influence on literacy acquisition and channel the ideology, values and attitudes of particular curricula (Leibowitz, 2001). However, literacy development is also dependent on the conditions and facilities at schools to transfer literacy skills, such as the teaching methods, values, attitudes and practices (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100; Leibowitz, 2001). It has also been demonstrated (see 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9) (and will be dealt with further later [see 6.9 and 6.10]) that authoritarian teaching styles are characterised by misrecognising or not rewarding work well done, by punishment, rote learning and an overemphasis on rules rather than process in literacy development (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012; Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100; Leibowitz, 2001). Taken as such, even a progressive and critical orientation in the curriculum process may be severely compromised if teacher practice and interaction are inadequate to articulate and materialise critical (as in critical theory) literacy development.

With the above understanding, as a whole, curriculum approaches before and after democracy have swung from being functionalist, moralistic and teacher-centred to interpretivist, humane and learner-centred, and now it may arguably be considered progressive (embracing critical theory such as social transformation and critical thinking, as well as epistemological diversity), yet, it also has some frightening neo-liberal overtures (competition, quality, efficiency). However, curriculum plans should be defined less by their legal frameworks and more by how they bear meaning in classroom pedagogic encounters. Consequently, having considered how curriculum strategies have been reformed, we turn yet again to the actual behaviours of classroom teachers to observe the effects of teacher agency on the empowerment or limiting of critical student agency.

6.8   Teacher agency and classroom practice

Firstly, the pedagogic encounter below occurred in a Grade 1 class in 1998, during the implementation of OBE and C2005 (see 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6 for the policy description). What follows is the teacher's account of her experiences:

> You find it very noisy, and when you're trying to teach you're trying to do different things with different groups. The noise level … it can be too high. Because then you can't work with others on a quieter level. So you've got to control that some way. I find that quite difficult. It is a very noisy OBE. And it is quite stressful not only for the teacher, but also for the children (Jansen, 1999:1).

In one of the milder pedagogic encounters, the teacher needs to be credited with her efforts to implement effective differentiated instruction. She made an attempt to address the learner-centred cooperative learning and teacher as facilitator requirements of the OBE C2005 policy. In addition, she pointed to the challenge of minimising the noise level, but then created the central focus of the learning encounter as being about the disruptive noise, rather than helping students to learn. This could be interpreted as her loyalty to the control and strict discipline of FP and Pedagogics (Eshak, 1987; Samuel 2002:402). As such, the desire to maintain power and control over students might mean that having them work independently in groups took away the right to demand obedience, since distance limited the control the teacher might have had. The teacher also assumed that her title (as a sign of hierarchy) and position (as an expert) allowed her to speak directly on behalf of the children. Conversely, it is anticipated that, in a critical classroom encounter, students would necessarily be noisy, as this suggests a constructive and imaginative environment in which dialogue, debate and negotiation are the hallmarks of pedagogic and intellectual activity (Freire, 2005a:18–19). Furthermore, in such an instance, hierarchies become fuzzier as a greater democratic culture is fostered in the classroom, where students are self-regulating, self-directed and self-organising (McLaren in Pozo, 2003). Since language and communication (noisy talk) are the methods used to create a community of learners, students may be given the room to develop deep learning relationships that may serve as the blueprint for wider community and social engagement on real-world issues. While it may rightly be argued that a deafening noise is counterproductive, the noisy conditions seemingly could be overcome easily in a democratic manner through effective teacher facilitation and shared responsibility (group consensus) on the basis that the right of all students to learn needs to be respected more than anything else. Thus this classroom situation provided some hope that students' cognitive and affective functioning and decent academic performance might flourish

in this environment. However, I mention cautiously that, barring the fostering of a more democratic culture, as I have suggested above, there will still be severe limitations on critical student agency and its ability to expose the spaces the dominant ideology has not succeeded in inundating.

Secondly, within the same timeframe as the learning episode above, and as part of the same study to investigate the implementation of OBE in Grade 1, Jansen (1999:15) compiled these field notes:

> She spent most of the time punishing the kids. She hits them on the forehead, on their buttocks, on their hands and bodies, for [a] not being able to read, write or do numeracy; and [b] for not erasing what they have already written. When the teacher asks a question, the learners start shivering. Even if they are making words from cards, they are scared to show the teacher because they are scared of the punishment they will get.

The above pedagogic encounter is characterised by extreme and paralysing violence, emblematic especially of the repressive state apparatus of the apartheid police and military personnel (Naicker, 2000:1). The teacher personifies the brutality of the state and its education policy, FP and Pedagogics. Her actions are consonant with the theory that authority and hierarchy give her the ability to instil moral supremacy, enforce obedience, use her power to influence conduct and a right to an unquestioned belief in unbridled authority (Eshak, 1987). In resorting to physical violence, she inflicts not only corporal punishment but emotional and psychological abuse on very young and vulnerable learners. As a consequence, her inability for self-reflection and self-criticism prevents the promotion of a democratic teaching and learning culture, since she cannot imagine herself as she really is: functioning as a technicist who simply implements policies and procedures (even if they are of a repressive and bygone era) without questioning them. While the discourse of a caring, critical and democratic classroom centres on the alleviation of human suffering and the defence of the weak, the above-mentioned teacher seems to be the antithesis of these ideals (Kincheloe, 2007:11). This is seen in the fact that, while critical teachers work to undermine and destabilise dominant power and elite ideology, this teacher entrenched it and secured the infantilising and downfall of the very students she was supposed to enlighten. As it relates to knowledge and the development of critical thinking, the teacher petrified the students to the degree that no conceivable element of criticality (questioning, challenging, taking risks) could visibly be on display. This is so because student identity and learning were so smothered and submerged that there was no room for their expression and interpretation, and even far less for possible transformation. And, while this

illustration serves as a valuable representation of undemocratic classroom practice, it would be helpful to reflect on how such an unproductive platform may be transformed to encourage criticality and critical agency. It could be imagined that, if the teacher resorted to personal storytelling, or if she incorporated play-immersed literature, or if she drew on student art to help her and critical students interpret different perspectives of what is and what could be, the classroom might be transformed significantly (Quintero, 2007:207). However, being steeped in *de docta ignorantia*, or learned ignorance, the teacher proved in the excerpt that we practise what we know, not what we do not know, which further highlights the need for the cultivation of a critical consciousness (De Certeau, 1984:50). This is borne out by the fact that, in the presence of an independent observer (a stranger), the teacher saw no need to harness or mask her abusive, undemocratic and inhuman behaviour. Ultimately, she did not embrace any of the methodologies of OBE or C2005, such as learner-centeredness, positive teacher facilitation, contextualised knowledge (from lived experience), cooperative learning, egalitarianism and critical thinking (Chisholm, 2002:9−10). This then makes it close to useless to believe that critical intellectual ability, heightened cognitive and affective functioning and superior academic performance could survive in her class. However, if the students were liberated from her oppressive and restrictive control, they might vigorously seek out alternatives to being and knowing that activate critical agency and which may lead to greater civic participation and the neutering of dominant ideology.

Thirdly, in describing the context of Lebo and Shafiek's classroom literacy practices, Fataar and Du Plooy (2012) help us understand and appreciate the veracity of their critical student agency. The school and class of which these students are part are portrayed as "unproductive learning platforms" based on teacher behaviour (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100). The researchers argue that schools in impoverished neighbourhoods often sacrifice educational processes for institutional identity, as is evident in teachers' "distractedness from pedagogical tasks in favour of their entanglement in the pastoral care or social welfare requirements of students" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99). Further contextual evidence to feed my analysis is provided through this example "teachers at these schools often display one-dimensional professional personas, are didactic, embrace 'chalk-and-talk' pedagogical styles, and are heavily reliant on the textbook as a teaching and learning resource" (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99). Furthermore, Fataar & Du Plooy (2012) theorise that such teachers do not incorporate varied teaching strategies or diversify their routines with experimental teaching methodologies (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99). In contrast, they resort to severe discipline, drastically restrict

explicit teaching time, and exhibit little or no differentiated teaching (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:99). As a caveat, differentiation does occur, but usually in derogatory ways such as publicly labelling students 'dumb', 'struggling' or 'lazy' (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012:100).

While the learning platform above adheres closer to the moralistic, functionalist and teacher-centred approach of FP and Pedagogics, it has some redeeming features in that at least a paternalistic/maternalistic attitude is fostered (over the previous case where the teacher did not seem to care at all). However, it might also be noted that the maternalistic feature of classroom pedagogy has more to do with external credibility than with a genuine concern and love for children. As interpreted by Fataar & Du Plooy (2012) that the teachers are unfocused and abstracted from their pedagogical duties, very few progressive, humane and learner-centred theories of educational practice might surface and thrive in such an environment (as evident in the instance of the four students investigated in Fataar & Du Plooy's (2012) case study). This is revealed in the researchers' (Fataar & Du Plooy's, 2012) reporting that teachers apply a generally positivist approach to pedagogic engagement, with the authoritarian teacher producing instruction via the lecture or transmission mode, aligning with the 'banking' pedagogy of FP and Pedagogics. Furthermore, reliance on undifferentiated and ineffective (or outdated) teaching methodologies proves that more progressive and critical theories have either not been studied, or they are not experimented with, assessed or incorporated into the curriculum or teaching procedures. Thus, in order to make up for their lack of pedagogic proficiency, teachers resort to severe discipline, the constraint of teaching (time) on task, and the negative labelling of students through insults as a way to exercise authority and to ensure control and obedience. Giroux (2012) considers such uncreative and idle educational platforms to be anti-intellectual, since teachers promote conformity in students to the point where creative, independent thought and inquiry are stifled (Giroux, 2012). As a consequence, students are not given the opportunity to challenge hegemonic beliefs or explore new and alternate horizons, which would lead to individual and collective empowerment through an exercise of critical agency (Giroux, 2012). Ultimately, undemocratic teachers are seen as a liability to critical pedagogy because they simply assume an instrumental role and forestall on a commitment to be creative or imaginative, or to work collectively with others in the community or society to defend socially justified causes.

Fourthly, what follows below is a primary account that informs a view of how critical student agency may be conceived of in relation to teacher agency in a literacy class.

> The pride that I am talking about is, you know, having children that are disciplined, that you can control … and now things are a bit problematic and then I don't think that we are going to get the discipline part of it back to where it was because our Government has introduced 'children's rights'. Now it seems like the children and the parents, they are more on the rights side of the children and not the responsibilities that go hand and hand with that (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:31).

On first impression, the teacher above seems to be wholly undemocratic in the view that community rights, especially children's and parent rights, need to be problematised. But the proper contextualisation of her comment expands the reality that rights without responsibilities are equally undemocratic. As mentioned before, democracy presents the double difficulty of adjudicating on both individualism as well as collectivism, and whereas we can assume only to understand the teacher's disgruntlement in relation to her rights being somehow compromised while the rights of learners and parents are respected, democracy is being cast as problematic, so perhaps she would prefer pre-democracy control (Rancière, 2006:3). Given an understanding of critical democracy in which there is critical civil engagement, participation, thoughtful deliberation, and dialogical and socially transformative action, it is supposed that all human rights are being observed in the interests of the common good. In this instance, it is difficult to determine what the common good is, since the aggrieved teacher presented a one-sided view of democracy predicated on her self-interest (particularly in the areas of social/community and educational control). Nevertheless, it is not hard to recognise the ideology and educational orientation of FP and Pedagogics (Samuel, 2002; Eshak 1987), which attach to a moralistic, functionalist understanding of education predicated on national pride (of a particular elite), conformity, authoritarian discipline and control. In this case, the teacher internalised the theoretical positions so well that they are normalised in her everyday vocabulary. She used the words **discipline** and **control**, where both words coincide with the apartheid state apparatus and its discourse on social control and administrative hierarchy. Moreover, she endorsed this state repression, even lamenting its unlikely return in a new democratic order. What has been omitted here is that the racial policies and an overt and oppressive notion of authority give only a select few individuals or group of individuals the power to enforce obedience and influence conduct, exercise moral supremacy, obtain a title to be believed and the right to be called an expert in any question (Eshak, 1987). This is an affront to democracy just as much as it is an insult to have the high-status elites highjack economic and political power and pretend that the dominated classes have social power. A more full-bodied interpretation of democracy, as seen in critical pedagogy, views teachers as cultural workers who provide the theory, language and

skills to dissect the dominant culture in an effort to construct a more democratic culture (not to support and entrench authoritarianism) (Freire, 2005a:94). Furthermore, agentive teachers concerned with democracy pay attention to 'recognition's pedagogy' (Nixon *et al.*, 1997) that validates student intelligence, social form and social experience in order to develop a critical consciousness upon which critical democracy rests (Biesta *et al.*, 2010:86). Thus, in a struggle for recognition and an effort to reclaim their identities from authoritarian control, critical agentive students rely on dialogue, deliberation and critical engagement to challenge authority. Finally, critical student agency is a threat to the self-righteous, supposed ideological purity of the religious training seen in FP and Pedagogics (Samuel, 2002) since it reveals the uncritical nature of education, which does not expose authority to self-criticism or holds power accountable, and which abhors complexity and alternate possibilities (Giroux, 2012). The student teacher below presents a view that determinism exists as long as critical agents do not exercise critical consciousness and voluntarism:

> When I was in grade 1 there was still corporal punishment so they either shouted at you or hit you. … all these years I thought the only way that children would listen to you is if you shout at them or hit them, but then when I went to [school's name] I noticed that … that's not even necessary. Now I can't even imagine myself hitting a child. … Be calm, speak to them like a little adult, I think they respect you more when you speak to them like a person who thinks, a person who has an opinion, and not be in control all the time (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012:32).

Having been a victim of corporal punishment under the logic of FP and Pedagogics, this aspirant teacher exposed herself to alternate possibilities of being and knowing that transformed her thinking. She did not fall prey to being what Freire (2005a:45) calls a "sub-oppressor", meaning that a victim of oppression identifies so greatly with her oppressor that he/she assimilates the oppressor's thoughts and actions and further continues to subjugate others he/she deems lowlier than him/herself. The teacher's thoughtful strategies and self-reflective disposition appear to cohere with Freire's conscientisation or consciousness raising based on action, reflection and further action for transformational change (Freire, 2005a:35, 109; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007:252). Thus, a critical consciousness empowers teachers to recognise student intelligence and to respect the students' humanity as thinking beings with opinions worthy to be listened to. In so doing, the teacher relinquishes the need for control through violence, and the old-fashioned FP and Pedagogics logic becomes inappropriate, while more democratic classroom practices are contemplated, such as those endorsed by NCS CAPS, viz. social transformation, active and critical thinking, and respect for human rights (DoE, 2011). Ultimately, the teacher

above provided sufficient promise that critical student agency might be promoted in her pedagogic interactions, since she herself was cognitive not narrative, she fostered the emergence of consciousness rather than submerging it, and she was likely to stimulate students' creative powers in problem-posing situations in order to excite their critical potential, which would leads them closer to democratic, liberatory and socially transformative aims (Freire, 1970:99–111).

Thus far I have investigated the actual behaviours and practices of classroom teachers to observe how a concept of critical student agency might be understood, developed and nurtured. I found that the large majority of classroom practices (four out of five, or 80%) were closely coherent with the oppressive ideology of power and authority typical of FP and Pedagogics, and bore only the slightest resemblance to the democratic, liberatory and socially transformative tenets of critical pedagogy. This fact is worrisome, since critical pedagogy relies on the power of critical thinking to challenge beliefs and to engage in creative and independent inquiry that is free from external constraint, control and contamination. In FP and Pedagogics, on the other hand, the authoritarianism observed and practised in classrooms directly violates meaningful pedagogy that is critically transformative (Giroux, 2012). With critical thinking in mind, I now turn to two conceptions of literacy development, and draw on the two critical thinking studies performed at universities (previously mentioned) to help sharpen the terms of this inquiry as it relates to student cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability, academic performance and civic participation, all in an effort to predict the power of critical student agency.

6.9   Traditional literacy vs critical literacy development

Dillon (2010) questions the concept of **excellence** in teaching, which suggests that there is a universally acceptable criterion with which to measure good teaching. It also suggests that 'good' teaching produces socially acceptable results, while 'bad' teaching renders the opposite (Dillon, 2010:33), without really committing to a defensible definition of teaching, i.e. how it is rightfully practised, what constitutes excellence, and how we can tell whether teaching is excellent (Dillon, 2010:103). Dillon (2010) argues that the notion of 'good' teaching is socially endorsed because it coincides with conformity to society, where challenging questions are not raised and complexity is not entertained. Furthermore, Dimitriadis and Kamberelis (2006:33) take the view that schooling reproduces the elite class, as is evident in the way that schools use the same curriculum in radically different ways for different social classes. More generally stated, this means that schools that serve working-class students emphasise mechanical

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approaches to problem solving, fragmented work and rote fashion learning, while elite schools emphasise reason through problem solving, display organic connections between subject areas, encourage students to figure the rules out themselves, and regard the correct answer as less important than the thought process behind it (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006:34). This debate helps introduce the concept of **critical** versus **traditional literacy practices** and how these affect teaching and learning and, more importantly, the consequences this presents for the development of critical student agency. What follows immediately below are two practical classroom illustrations of critical literacy development, as well as two theoretical interpretations of the difference between critical literacy and traditional literacy.

To begin with, Quintero (2007:207) demonstrates a pedagogic practice that defines critical literacy as a process of constructing and critically using language as a way to express, interpret and transform reality. Through practical classroom activities, such as inventing stories, painting, writing a text, drawing, extending information from a film, video or game, arguing and asking questions about the information supplied, students in Quintero's study were engaged as critical agents in their own meaning-making by relating subject content to lived reality (Quintero, 2007:207).

Secondly, within critical pedagogy, the significance of literacy is imperative in helping students overcome the indoctrination and coercion of the technocratic view of literacy development. To critical pedagogues, the latter practice emphasises routines, repetition, syllabification and fragmentation of symbols, sounds and words, whereas critical literacy begins with reading the everyday experiences of students (their world), and making sense of it in their literature (their word) (Freire, 2005a: 174). As such, Freire (2005a:87) sees reading and writing as integral to an exploration of human potentialities and warns that literacy development should occur even before material transformations necessitate it, since it brings capacity to analyse the world critically in order to understand and transform it. He further elucidates that reading must be a dialogical experience in which the discussion of the text by different readers clarifies, enlightens and creates group comprehension (Freire, 2005a: 106). This process is understood to facilitate the ability to respect different points of view and enriches the production of text comprehension (Freire, 2005a: 104). The value to be gained through this process is that it allows critical agents the imaginative capacity to relive the story or gradually appropriate the significance of the text (Freire, 2005a: 12–16) on their own terms, rather than having an already predetermined meaning that lies beyond the experience and lived dimensions of the reader.

Thirdly, a practical pedagogic encounter that vividly demonstrates critical literacy is illustrated by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2007:186), who used the opportunity in an English class to prove to critical students that a critical analysis of hegemonic texts such as local, state and national legislation, professional contracts and school reports serve to limit meanings, as well as to constrain and control their actions and thoughts. The conclusion students themselves arrived at after the exercise was that these hegemonic texts needed to be analysed and evaluated, contextualised and rewritten critically (by them) for relevant and personal meaning-making (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell 2007:186).

And finally, if we relate a notion of literacy development and literacy practices (reading, writing, listening, speaking, thinking) to the classroom engagements (in South African schools) in the various cases presented thus far in this chapter, it seems that they predominantly favour cultural reproduction over the critical practice of cultural production (critical agents inventing their own traditions), critical reflection and social action (Giroux, 1992b). Thus an oversubscription to "alienating and mechanical techniques ignore the rich diversity of culture, language, skills and issues that inform and dignify the lived experiences of especially non-dominant students in traditional literacy encounters" (Giroux, 1992b:9). Consequently, such literacy encounters have the enormous potential of making students feel inferior and responsible for their socio-economic positions in the class structure, resulting in a sense of powerlessness by denying them the tools to think and act reflectively (Giroux, 1992b). And ultimately, critical student agency is severely compromised when teachers who favour traditional literacy bypass the luxuriant cultural currency non-dominant students possess, thereby invalidating their voice, histories and lives (Giroux, 1992b). In this preceding section (of 6.9) I have considered how literacy development approaches and techniques might influence the critical potential in students, and how this ultimately may inform an account of the cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability, academic performance, civic participation and counter-hegemonic brilliance critically agentive students may reveal. However, the above-mentioned attributes will remain a mere function of agency, distinct from critical student agency, if a crucial cognitive skill, viz. critical thinking, cannot be made visible and used in the defence of equality, freedom and democracy. With that in mind, I now return to research that provided an important window (on a continuum from South African school classrooms to university lecture halls) of how critical thinking is conceptualised, how it is taught and whether it is retained as a critical skill in cognitive development.

6.10   Critical student agency in the absence of critical thinking skills

Lombard and Grosser (2004) provide the most comprehensive account of how critical thinking is conceptualised in the general literature, its appearance in official education policy (SAQA and NCS CAPS) and its conspicuous absence in the pedagogic engagements of students and teachers. This last fact is of profound significance to a study of critical pedagogy and critical student agency, because conscientisation is the mental ability to raise consciousness, but this is potent and compelling only in so far as its coupling with and attachment to critical thinking skills culminate in reflection, higher-order (critical) questioning, and the ability to judge information. As such, Lombard and Grosser (2004) problematise the incapacity of even university lecturers to teach criticality and critical thinking because they themselves are deficient in the skill (Lombard & Grosser, 2004). Notwithstanding that critical thinking is "notoriously difficult to teach" (Lombard & Grosser, 2004: 212), it is an ideal apparent in SAQA and NCS CAPS and its nonappearance in classrooms has damaging implications for education (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:212). So what makes critical thinking so complex to teach? Drawing on Lipman (1988), Lombard and Grosser (2004:212) suggest that:

> [c]ritical thinking is more complex than ordinary thinking. It involves inter alia the following: careful argumentation which avoids guessing; making logical conclusions based on criteria; providing opinions substantiated by proof; moving away from believing to assuming; and moving away from assumptions to hypotheses.

Based on the above definition of critical thinking, it is understood that critical and agentive students need to display keen cognitive ability and insight, possess a strong knowledge base and exercise advanced literacy skills. In addition, as we shall see below, critical students must also embrace doubt and uncertainty (anti-positivist) in order to question and pose problems adequately.

Furthermore, Lombard and Grosser (2004:212) provide McPeck's (1990) expanded view on critical thinking. According to this expanded view, there is firstly a critical component, which refers to the ability to reflect, question and judge information effectively. Secondly, in order to facilitate critical thinking, a strong knowledge base in the specific subject area where the critical thinking skills are to be utilised is a prerequisite. Thirdly, the capacity to use language is essential to execute critical thinking. Lastly, according to McPeck (1990:42), critical thinking also requires willingness on the part of the learner to become involved in problem situations where reflective scepticism is required.

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Critical thinking as characterised above develops a powerful synchronicity with critical pedagogy, as critical thinking requires active agency turned toward transformation, democracy and the pursuit of living to full human potentiality in order to reflect, question, judge and develop a strong knowledge base, and construct language (to be able to deliberate and articulate) and a robust spirit of scepticism. Further, it is within the spaces where doubt, uncertainty and cynicism are accommodated that fault lines emerge to rupture and shatter ideological hegemony, which strives to incarcerate, dehumanise and deprive critical agents of their rights to access the fruits of democracy.

However, while admitting to the necessity of critical thinking, Lombard and Grosser (2004:213) continue to problematise the nonexistence of critical thinking in South African education as evidenced in the student's low concrete levels of thinking during information processing. This implies that learners cannot construct their own knowledge and formulate an own viewpoint (Ennis, 1985a), they are deficient in evaluating, classifying, analysing, identifying relationships and making conclusions (Lipman, 1988), they are lacking in the ability to solve problems through logical inquiry and evaluative decision-making (National Council of Teachers of English, 1989), and they are under-prepared in skills to think creatively and critically (Moore *et al*., 1985:5).

What is more, Lombard and Grosser (2004) provide a plausible reason for the critical thinking skills deficit when observing impoverished pedagogical encounters in which teachers disrupt the emergence of criticality. It might also be interesting to note that their analysis has a significant resemblance to the observations made of teacher conduct during classroom encounters previously, in which:

- teachers were implicated in dominating classroom interaction as too much time was devoted to instruction;
- the views of educators on the nature of knowledge acquisition were limited to the memorising and recalling of facts;]
- minimal focus was placed on the construction of knowledge and thinking skills;
- teachers were not sure how to teach thinking skills or how to evaluate them; and
- the majority curricula did not focus on cognitive development at all.

Moreover, teachers were primarily concerned that they would not complete the curriculum if they also had to address the development of thinking skills (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213).

In addition, classroom teachers were considered to teach students what to think, subscribe to rote learning, were dogmatic and did not create opportunities for openness and individuality, and measured student thinking as producing facts (Lombard & Grosser, 2004:213). Thus, the scenarios described immediately above resonate closely with the apartheid era ideology of FP and Pedagogics (Samuel, 2002:402) and less with a curriculum and pedagogic practices that promote the democratic ideals of equality and the corresponding vigorous student and teacher agency that is bound up in the tenets of critical pedagogy, which are essential in a strong democracy (Barber, 2003). Moreover, assessment practices turned toward accountability and learning hierarchies, as seen in standardised testing, are wholly unhelpful in promoting critical thinking skills (Ramrathan, 2012:126). This is so because summative assessment is constructed on the basis of recall, suggesting that the student is in a state of being (at the moment of assessment) and not a state of becoming and developing (Ramrathan, 2012:128). In summary, critical student agency seems to be severely circumscribed by teacher behaviours and teacher academic inadequacies to provide effective direct instruction of critical thinking skills. This does not bode well for the prospects of heightened cognitive and affective functioning, sharp intellectual ability, superior academic performance, and counter-hegemonic acuity in students. In 6.11, a consideration of radical intellectual student independence, understood in terms of students not needing a master explicator (teacher) to guide them to criticality, is presented.

6.11   Critical student agency conceived of as equality of intelligence

Rancière is identified by some (Berrebi, 2008; Chambers, 2011) as the theorist who "gave voice to the daydreams of anonymous thinkers" and who inspires optimism that his theory of equality of intelligence may link student hope for an alternative to enfeebling and infantilising pedagogy (hegemonic pedagogy) to a pedagogy of possibility (Ross, 1991 in Rancière, 1991:viii). Rancière subscribes to a notion that, once students demonstrate that they are equal thinkers, or peers, they occupy a position from which they can question the teacher's knowledge (Rancière, 1991: xvi). This position disrupts the unnatural hierarchical division between teacher and student, as well as between thinking and doing, since Rancière (1991) feels we must all claim the right to think (Rancière, 1991:17). Advancing the tenets of Jacotot's universal teaching method which, simply stated, is an illustration and belief that people are equally intelligent, Rancière (1991) cites the instance that children learn to speak unaided through their own intelligence (Rancière, 1991:17). In this way, learning through personal experience is compared to the way a student participates in storytelling by recounting concrete acts and actual moments and situations from his/her lived dimensions, rather than expecting an external agent

to tell a story he/she knows best (Rancière, 1991:xxii). Furthermore, Rancière (1991) shatters the myth that intelligence is divided into two when he argues that:

> It [the myth of a divided intelligence] says that there is an inferior intelligence and a superior one. The former registers perceptions by chance, retains them, interprets and repeats them empirically, within the closed circle of habit and need. This is the intelligence of the young child and the common man. The superior intelligence knows things by reason, proceeds by method, from the simple to the complex, from the part to the whole (Rancière, 1991:7).

As indicated above, class hierarchies are observed in relation to intellectual ability, where elites are said to have superior intelligence while non-dominants in society have inferior intelligence. Yet, according to the universal method of teaching, teachers are responsible to announce to students, "I've learned many things without explanations; I think that you can too" (Rancière, 1991:16). This way, the universal technique of teaching refuses the traditional transmission mode of learning because such a method presupposes that teaching (explication) leads to learning. Yet, the important omission is that this type of learning is soon forgotten because the teacher loads the memory and does not form intelligence in the student, and this former act is pedagogically counterproductive because it causes intellectual slothfulness and prevents learners from exercising equality of intelligence (Rancière, 1991:16). In contrast, equality of intelligence is displayed when students learn something and are cognitively sophisticated to relate everything else to it (Rancière, 1991:28). Though even more insightful, Rancière proposes that explanatory logic is a social logic propagated in order to reproduce society, and that, by suppressing learners' intelligence, teachers are complicit in this ruse because they in fact personify the very ignorance they are supposed to do away with (Biesta *et al*., 2010:6–11). Inevitably, the suppression of learners' intelligence leads to a stultifying pedagogy because as learners and citizens we come to depend on experts to formulate explanations on our behalf, oblivious to the fact that expert explanations conceal the fact that they themselves are part of the problem (Biesta *et al*., 2010:21). Not intimidated by controversy, Rancière (in Biesta *et al*., 2010:111) problematises the three forms of education as he sees them, viz. traditional education, progressive education and critical education (Biesta *et al*., 2010:111). Rancière (in Biesta *et al*., 2010) proposes that **traditional** education is not concerned with students' private lives in the past, but is mostly attuned to developing common knowledge so that students are skilled enough to speak in the public sphere (in Biesta *et al*., 2010:111). **Progressive** education is adjusted to the experiential, social and cultural backgrounds of students in order to construct a bridge between private experience and public life (in Biesta *et al*., 2010:111). In addition, **critical**

education seeks to expose a reality that schooling fosters inequality and that these inequalities need to be corrected through emancipatory enlightenment and a struggle for a more democratic order (in Biesta *et al*., 2010:111). Taken together, all these understandings of education are problematic, since they advance a notion of schools performing an explanatory function in Rancière's (in Biesta *et al*., 2010) view. In spite of the scathing criticism, Rancière (in Biesta *et al*., 2010) also identifies an instance when teachers act counter-hegemonically, namely by demanding of students to verify their intelligence and refusing to accept any admission of students not being able to interrogate and verify their intelligence (in Biesta *et al*., 2010:135–153). Pen-ultimately, Rancière believes that, by virtue of explanation appearing as a positive, anything short of explanation is perceived a lack, whereas Jacotot's method demands that pedagogic content be turned into real experience to construct meaning and that certainty and truth are not guaranteed under these conditions (Rancière in Biesta *et al*., 2010:135–148). Lastly, in 5.4, Jacotot's research has helped to prove that, when skilful teachers expose learners' intelligence, such learners respond more than favourably in relation to cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability, academic performance and counter-hegemonic behaviours as a sign of their equality of intelligence and their agency.

Thus far, I have attempted to introduce a different perspective of critical student agency by entertaining ideas from universal pedagogy and equality of student intelligence. While Rancière's (in Biesta *et al*., 2010) pedagogical approach is consistent with critical pedagogy in so far as it rejects 'banking' pedagogy, it also diverges from critical pedagogy by implicating the latter in perpetrating the vice of the master explicator. In 6.12, I attempt to align the theories presented thus far with actual pedagogic encounters in order to formulate a more cohesive understanding of the emergence, nature, visibility and possibilities of critical student agency in South African classrooms.

6.12   Towards a consolidated conceptualisation of critical student agency

The epistemological break this study makes from the general body of literature on student agency is that, while critical pedagogy does provide a conceptually convincing picture of what agency might look like in classroom routines, it is given a generic conceptualisation without explicit reference to what would make student agency 'critical'. This study commenced by engaging in an argument of educational inequality and how this undemocratic social practice is maintained through ideological hegemony driven through the curriculum (see 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). The argument was put forward that alternative ways of negotiating the curriculum have to be

imagined (as seen in critical pedagogy generally, and more specifically in critical literacy) as a way to include marginal and non-elite students in schooling as a democratic practice based on the common good (see 1.7, 1.8 and 1.9).

Following the theoretical insights of Scott (1985) and Apter (2007) on the strident and counter-hegemonic characteristics of agency that spawns intended and unintended consequences, as well as Rancière's (1991) suggestion of equality of intelligence, I sought to investigate actual student classroom performances that might show opposition to inequality, hegemony, dominant power and a struggle for justice, freedom and democracy. In addition to the theorising on agency in the literature on critical pedagogy, Scott (1985) and Apter (2007) provide even keener revelations of the necessity to problematise democracy and the effects of capital in social relations such as culture, politics and education. Furthermore, Scott (1985) and Apter (2007) helped me to justify the position of critical pedagogy that acts as social criticism aimed at transforming education (foremost) and society at large by seeking alternatives to capitalist social relations and the promotion of radical democracy. One of the ways critical pedagogy proposes to install counter-hegemonic acts in classroom performances is through critical literacy, in which students as critical agents become enlightened through the practice of reading the 'world' (experiences of their life world) in order to read the 'word' (critical reading of hegemonic texts) better. However, the challenge inherent in such a practice is overcoming teachers who serve as functionaries rather than as cultural workers, where cultural workers are defined as teachers who rely on critical techniques to advance literacy, such as problem-posing pedagogy, which demands of critical students to act, reflect and transform practices of un-freedom. However, seen as a little-known, unpopular, radical educational theory fighting for its own legitimacy, clarity and coherence, critical pedagogy is considered by some as nothing more than a sympathetic yet impossible dream (Torres, 1993:50). Thus, I had to be very wary of romanticising critical pedagogy in order to provide clarity on and answers to my questions where other theories have failed. Following Leonard's (in Leonard & McLaren, 2002) caution that the oversimplification of critical pedagogy might lead to its vulgarisation and distortion and my ultimate theoretical formulation, I first sought the policy frameworks that provided some legitimacy for critical pedagogy in South African education (Leonard & McLaren, 2002:98). I also drew upon the strengths of postmodern theory (Ellsworth, 1989; Giroux, 1990; hooks, 1994; Kanpol, 1994; Kellner, 2001; McLaren, 2003; Lather, 2004; Steinberg, 2006) to help forestall the pre-determination of my own formulations without sufficient evidence. As opposed to the certainty of facts supposed in positivism (and quantitative analysis),

postmodernism provided an avenue for me to resist certainty, refuse the notion of a fixed reality, knowledge and method of coming to know 'truth', and embrace complexity and multiplicity (Atkinson, 2002:73). What is more, understanding human subjectivity (especially my own in this research, and that of others in their theorising) creates room for contradiction and irony. Postmodern ideas also allowed me to unsettle assumptions, refuse hierarchies in thinking and disrupt binaries (Atkinson, 2002:87). Taken together, the above-mentioned attributes of postmodernism helped me to structure and organise my thoughts around the irony of post-democratic South African education, which closely reflects pre-democratic education, which will aid me further in deliberating on a theory of student agency as seen in the latter instance.

Moreover, a complex philosophical question imagining whether critical student agency could mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education requires a flexible methodology that accommodates the observation of the verbal and non-verbal language of critical agents in order to prepare the researcher to adjudicate and interpret student actions properly. Given an understanding that critical discourse analysis (CDA) uses discourse to help reveal the undemocratic, asymmetrical relations of power, it was the most appropriate way for me to study teaching as an uncertain practice, yet it also created an optimal space for theory testing and theory generation. Since CDA strives to enact social change by raising consciousness in the struggle for more equal relations of power on three levels (see 3.2, 3.3 and 3.7), CDA can be interpreted as an appropriate way to reduce ambiguity and provide more clarity on obscure concepts. The three levels are that –

- CDA methodology serves as a historic barometer of social processes;
- CDA dialectically reveals discourse and its insertion in elite power, and
- CDA sees texts as vehicles for social change.

As such, while describing, interpreting and explaining pedagogic encounters using CDA, I was enabled to probe beneath the surface reality and understand, for example what users make of curriculum and classroom engagement as an exercise of agency, power and democracy. Furthermore, CDA is consonant with critical pedagogy in that, while critical pedagogy uses discourse to unearth unequal power relations, CDA uses conscientisation through problem-posing pedagogy and criticality to resist oppressive power.

6.13   Summary

This chapter started by the author reiterating an argument that problematises 'thin' democracy and how this presents constraints to meaningful manifestations of critical student agency. The

features of critical student agency were refined and expanded and compared to the learning practices of students in non-elite schools (see 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5). Furthermore, particular socio-political conditions provided some insight into the minimum conditions that may be necessary to excite an appreciably powerful strand of critical student agency. While current education policy prescriptions accommodate critical pedagogy (see 6.7), some classroom practices indicate that literacy can be viewed as a practice of un-freedom by subscribing to traditional literacy strategies and undemocratic teacher behaviours (see 6.3, 6.4 and 6.56.3, 6.4 and 6.5). Finally, I looked at the possibility of cultivating critical student agency in the absence of critical thinking skills and whether this may impinge on the notion of equality of intelligence (see 6.10).

In the next chapter, the conclusion follows, with a report on the final analyses of the significant chapters that provide direct access to an informed account of critical student agency by looking at curriculum discourse and the discourse on teacher preparation programmes, as well as the highlights of human agency as seen in actual classroom interaction between students, teachers and the curriculum in order to help answer the research question adequately.

Chapter 7

Critical student agency in educational practice

7.1   Introduction

This study set out to investigate an expanded notion of the idea of critical agency as contained in critical pedagogy by developing a plausible concept of critical student agency. The research identified the nature and form of critical student agency, the diverse degrees to which and the purposes for which agentive students engage in criticality, as well as the contexts and resources required for such action. Moreover, this investigation also sought to understand the role and effect of critical student agency in schools, classrooms and the wider community better to know whether critical student agency could mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education (see 1.13.1). The general theoretical literature on this subject, and specifically in the context of South Africa, is inconclusive on several vital questions within the discourse of critical pedagogy generally and critical student agency specifically. The current study therefore sought to answer this primary question:

> *How could students utilise critical agency to mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology in order to bring about a measure of equality in a South African classroom, community and society?*

Given the complexity of the question (firstly to establish the principle of critical student agency to attempt to observe the corrosion of hegemony in a globally hyper-capitalistic world, and to comment on liberal and democratic equality as seen in localised and general settings), subsidiary questions that emanated from the main question acted as secondary boundary points from which to help filter the focus of a rather broad conceptual area. The secondary arguments (see 1.13.1) that flowed from the primary research question helped to guide a more concise conception of critical student agency by providing the essential background against which to think about aspects such as how students can help us discover the meaning of critical agency (compared to its theory). The next aspect pertained to how critical agency might manifest in working-class students' cognitive and affective functioning and intellectual ability, academic performance and civic participation. Finally, the question was whether students could use critical agency to reveal the gaps within the current hegemony (in education, culture, media and capitalism, among others), which dominant ideology has not taken over. The secondary points illuminate the main research focus by avoiding any tinkering on the periphery of the disciplinary

spectrum, and by overcoming the academic and ideational view of critical student agency. This helped me as researcher to develop a greater material understanding of how the theoretical is experienced as practical. It therefore set the parameters of what, as the researcher, I was looking for and ignored all other variables in order to isolate the particular thinking and behaviour (in critically agentive students) that were strident enough to outwit the current hegemony. Ultimately, the diffusion of the main research question into more manageable focus areas (see 1.13.1) provided the navigational tools to establish a clear principle of critical student agency and the way this manifests as individual agency and collective agency for social and educational transformation.

Operational elaboration

7.2   What happened when I started using CDA methodology?

CDA creates the prospect that the researcher is better positioned to describe, interpret and explain social processes through discourse analysis (Wodak 1989, 1996a, 1996b, 2002; Fairclough 1992, 1993, 1995b; Van Dijk 1983, 1984, 1991, 1993, 1998). When I used CDA in trying to understand how teacher preparation occurs, I began to appreciate the benefit of being able to be steered by an analysis that empowered me to approach a text and experience how the producers of that text experienced the world through the way they express content, knowledge and their beliefs. To begin with, I turn the focus to education policy and curriculum reform from OBE and C2005 (DoE, 1997) to NCS CAPS (DoE, 2011) (both curriculum strategies allude to critical pedagogy). Whereas the official documents explicitly emphasise basic as well as higher education in progressive and critical theory, the reality is that the theory has a meagre manifestation in university and school classrooms. Of the numerous cases I surveyed, I included only the few that manifested traces of critical student agency (see 5.7, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10). The other cases were inconsistent and inattentive to the main focus of this investigation for numerous reasons, chief amongst which was that, whereas the research slant might have been on critical pedagogy, in not one of the conceptual or empirical studies did the emphasis fall directly upon critical student agency. Some of the research foci within the broader disciplinary focus on critical pedagogy in South Africa were issues such as critical hope (see 1.11 and 5.1), critical pedagogy as seen in a trade union movement (see 1.11 and 5.1), critical pedagogy in the context of purely liberation politics and struggles (see 1.11 and 5.1), critical pedagogy and its relevance in post-conflict societies (see 1.11 and 5.1), ethical predicaments embedded in democratic teaching (see 1.11 and 5.1), and, lastly, critical pedagogy with an emphasis on race,

anthropology, prison education and xenophobia (see 1.11 and 5.1). And, while the aforementioned cases proved unsuitable and not useful to help address the main question of this study (see 1.13), the particular cases selected for scrutiny and inclusion in this research proved to be foundational as a window on what critical pedagogy looks like in practice over its theoretical assumptions. Yet, the policy documents, as much as they convey a particular discourse, also conceal some basic facts that would make it almost futile to believe that progressive and critical theory could survive:

- university faculty are themselves not adept in the aforementioned theories and are not proficient in critical thinking skills; (Lombard & Grosser, 2004)

- the teaching profession does not attract the highest-quality students (OECD, 2008) and these students are not fully committed to the profession (Arends & Phurutse, 2009); they consider it a default profession because of government funding incentives and do not stay long in teaching (Fiske & Ladd, 2004) ;

- the frequency and rapidity of curriculum transition in the absence of adequate (in-service) teacher training impede the effective implementation of complex and foreign policy; and

- the content of curriculum policy is hegemonic and has had detrimental effects on non-English, non-Western students (Evans & Cleghorn, 2012).

Particularly in the three cases in Chapter 4 (Samuel, 2001; Waghid, 2001; Waghid, 2010), in which the practice of critical pedagogy is described, the university teachers themselves spoke of the challenges of implementing the new curriculum to include critical theory. One reason for this phenomenon is faculty resistance (Samuel, 2001), the others being levels of 'educatedness' or exposure to alternate education theories, and that knowledge is relational and should be properly contextualised (Waghid, 2001). Thus, the first-hand accounts of university lecturers provided the material basis on which I could dissect the 'surface utterances' of official policy and relate these to the true meaning experienced by members of the university faculty and students in the wider social context.

Furthermore, in relation to actual pedagogic encounters, I followed Fairclough's (1989:149; 2003) advice and positioned myself to ask questions for clarification:

– What is going on?

– Who is involved?

– What are the relations between the agents?

– Which role does language play in allowing me to make my inference?

This way, many assumptions were unsettled, such as my own assumption that especially marginal students would better exhibit critical agency because their material circumstances might warrant a counter-hegemonic response in order to transform their situation of un-freedom (see, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10). A more intimate and studied gaze on pedagogic encounters allowed me to test curriculum theory (especially as related to critical pedagogy) and allowed the space for me to ask how the disconnect appears between policy abstraction and generalisation, and actual school classroom practice (see 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9; 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10). Furthermore, probing beneath the surface reality provided an interpretation of what the various agents do with curriculum as an exercise of agency, power and democracy or anti-democracy (see, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10). This approach was crucial for an in-depth probe closely aligned to my research question, so even when I initially identified a student displaying critical agency, I had to disaggregate the analysis further to discover the cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability and academic performance of students, and predict their level of civic participation as well as highlight the gaps agentive students might expose where the dominant ideology had not succeeded in inundating.

7.3   What were my findings?

7.3.1   Finding 1

In surveying more than 20 cases of actual pedagogic classroom engagement, there were three strong cases of critical student agency (see 5.6 and 5.9). One particular case highlighted what critical student agency might look like as I have conceived of it in relation to the available literature on (student) agency (Apter, 2007; Bussey, 2010; De Certeau, 1984; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; Freire, 2005; Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1993; Rancière, 1991; Rancière, 2010 [in Biesta *et al.* (2010)]; Scott, 1985). While the important caveat here is that the high school student boycott took place during the political climate of pre-democratic South Africa, it is the most virulent display of critical student agency of all the cases investigated in this study. It accomplished this title by representing the fact that critically agentive students refuse to accept that they are passive recipients of information and knowledge, and that they do indeed possess the agency necessary to shape and transform their realities. What is more, critically agentive students, as seen in the above case, work through the contradictions in capitalist hegemony by identifying them, raising critical questions, challenging hegemony and engaging in transformative praxis (McLaren, 1993). Therefore, the case of critically agentive students as

illustrated above (see 5.6x) proves that intellectually innovative students have the capacity to moderate the effects of capitalist hegemony by disallowing capitalist individualism and consumerism (which some might argue has turned into hyper-capitalism, hyper-individualism and hyper-consumerism). In this particular case, critical student agency succeeded in filling in the gaps capitalist ideology had not infiltrated by relying on deep thinking (critical thinking) to strategise the downfall (which is not to mean ultimate success) of asymmetrical power relations and social inequality and injustice. Furthermore, this kind of critical action clarifies how naïve thinking birthed through unquestioned beliefs (a claim to racial superiority, material inequality and legal injustice) is opposed by critical student agency and how it is demonstrated both as individual and collective critical agency. While it could be argued that the students obtained a Pyrrhic victory in so far as their fight for equality was won at an excessive cost (loss of instructional time, educational apathy and poor educational success, among others), they forced the philosophical question of injustice to be confronted in their classrooms, in the community and in society.

7.3.2   Finding 2

While the above case relates to a context in which collective critical student agency was on display, two individual students (Lebo and Shafiek [see 5.9]) helped to highlight that critical student agency may flourish in a township school, which is considered an unproductive learning platform (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012). As evidence of their critical agency, the above students engaged in some form of self-regulating, self-directed, self-organising, proactive agency. Furthermore, in one way or another, they satisfied some of the criteria of critical student agency, viz. resistance in the form of the action not requiring much or no planning, resistance as a form of self-help, and the avoidance of direct confrontation with authority. Moreover, heightened consciousness and intelligence were evident to exploit the very hegemony of the elite classes that provide the ideas, means and symbolic tools of criticism, and the ability to be prepared to seize upon the contradictions within hegemony (Scott, 1985). As a result, Lebo and Shafiek tore through the distortions of capitalist hegemony and ideology by providing proof that economically marginal, culturally non-elite and dominant language-deficient students access education outside of formal schooling as a sign of their cognitive sophistication. In doing so, they establish a clear principle of critical student agency, albeit that it does not conform to the official (hegemonic) school practices, and they make a demand to insert themselves in a space in which they were made to feel 'invisible' and 'uncivilised' (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012). Thus it could be argued that these two students display counter-hegemonic responses through their

self-directed, self-organising behaviours to alleviate the weight of oppressive classroom hegemony and to correct a power imbalance. While Shafiek obviously mitigates the individualism inherent in capitalist hegemony by distributing his talent in the community, it is not clear whether Lebo has used her self-secured intellectual and affective skills to the benefit of the broader community. However, the point of reflection here is on their ability to think for themselves, their careful disregard for the ideology of unproductive pedagogic practice and the wily optimisation of their marginal and 'invisible' status that makes a vital contribution to the disruption of capitalist hegemony. In summary, they help clarify certain assumptions about non-elite students when they pervert elite hegemony and ideology as their thinking proves to be unmatched by their hegemonic teachers, they learn what they want to (not dictated to solely by the curriculum), and they use their lowly status to operate 'undetected'.

7.3.3   Finding 3

Critical thinking, which is a prominent feature in critical pedagogy, is seen to be deficient at university faculty level (Lombard & Grosser, 2004). This presents much cause for concern for various reasons, chief of which firstly relates to the quality of teaching at HEIs and the necessary skills consolidation for graduating teachers. Secondly, education students are generally considered unprepared for the university curriculum. Thirdly, beginner teachers do not appreciate the relevance of strong theoretical instruction at university level. Consequently, beginner teachers graduate with weak conceptual knowledge and are academically and professionally under-prepared to meet the demands of managing diverse classrooms. Remarkably though, beginner teachers overestimate their proficiency and perhaps fail to appreciate fully that, in the absence of strong critical thinking capacities and competencies, strong critical literacy practices are forestalled and, by implication, increase the likelihood that critical student agency is non-existent or circumscribed. Thus it would be logically impossible to expect a large measure of counter-hegemonic resistance and action from critical agents (both students and teachers) to subdue capitalist hegemony if university pedagogy is deprived of and underprovided in critical thinking. Critical thinking forms the helix upon which the deep, innovative thinking that eventually trickles down into critical agency is nested. It therefore becomes problematic when teachers are academically under-prepared for the teaching profession and when they do not possess a strong theoretical basis for their pedagogic practice. Consequently, there is little hope that ill- and under-prepared teachers can effectively mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology, because they ruin the prospect of meta-theorising in advance since they have not even mastered educational theory, let alone critical

educational theory. Even more damning is the consideration that ineffective university pedagogy delivers ineffectual teachers and, since critical thinking is a cognitive skill that needs to be taught, learners in school classrooms will of necessity have an uphill battle to detect capitalist hegemony and ideology. Yet, this exposes another prong in this line of reasoning, which is that, since marginal students in particular are cheated of being their true selves (non-dominant economic background, culture, language, tastes and attitudes, among others) in advanced capitalist societies, they may not naively accept the dominant ideology doled out at schools. But this also reduces the incidents of critical student agency exponentially because student agency is based on an assumption that all or most marginal students have autonomous critical thinking capacities powerful enough to mitigate capitalist hegemony, and that marginal students alone are interested in large-scale social transformation.

7.3.4   Finding 4

In most of the cases investigated, critical learner agency was eclipsed by a predominantly authoritarian teacher agency. This was borne out in the demonstration that teachers serve to promote and sustain the attitude and behaviours of CNE, FP and Pedagogics, which are characterised by the moral and legal supremacy of those in positions of power (classroom teachers in this case) to enforce obedience, the power to influence conduct, the teacher's unquestioned right to be believed, and the teacher's designation as an expert on any matter (see 6.7). Under such conditions it is hard to see how learners might fruitfully mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology, without open revolt (especially among older learners). And, since administrative control is a feature of advanced capitalist societies, it should be anticipated that a bitter and intractable power struggle between teachers and learners may define pedagogic encounters. It also is plausible that, when learners are younger, teachers might punish counter-hegemonic behaviour and attitudes with little or no explanation, but as learners mature, their cognitive and affective development may become dissatisfied with merely accepting oppressive teacher agency. All the same, given the entrenched history of authoritarian teacher agency, it might be hard, but not altogether impossible, to see how critical learners agency could minimise the effects of capitalist hegemony and how, in this particular instance, a greater measure of equality may be fought for in the classroom and the wider society. In addition, capitalist hegemony is reinforced if we were to contemplate how the school (and by association authoritarian teachers) might function as a repressive state apparatus, peddling the ideology and hegemony of the ruling elite. Likewise, the state employs the police and army for governmental control to maintain moral and legal supremacy, enforce obedience and influence conduct (CNE

and FP and Pedagogics), all the while smothering critical agency. However, as demonstrated in the case of Shafiek (Fataar & Du Plooy, 2012), critically agentive students expose the cracks and provide clarity on how hegemony can be unmade by 'talking back to power' through 'unseen and unheard' ways. The above demonstration might then lead one to deduce that a type of disguised or concealed critical student agency fights for and secures symbolic equality (as speaking beings). Furthermore, older, critically agentive students (as seen in the case of the boycotting high school students [Molteno, 1987]), with refined intellectual sophistication, organise collectively, challenge authority (state, school and teacher) openly and educate their peers with counter-hegemonic, alternate knowledge. In so doing, teacher authority is unmade and spaces are reserved to insert more student autonomy where students re-evaluate education, culture and media propaganda. While these can be seen as random acts of critical student agency (random because if it were sustained we could expect enhanced transformation in schools, communities and societies based on critical student agency), these acts nevertheless do represent the potential to allay the effects of capitalist hegemony.

7.3.5   Finding 5

Some classroom encounters were characterised by stultifying violence, extreme silencing of student voice and the limiting of student capacities by in-service teachers (see, 5.8, 5.9 and 5.10). Aspirant teachers, on the other hand, seemed more receptive and sympathetic to student-centred pedagogy and indicated the deficiencies as they saw them in the problematic pedagogic routines of some practicing teachers (see 5.10). Given their alternate pedagogic approaches and ideologies, it is probable that pre-service teachers might help promote critical student agency to the point that the effects of capitalist hegemony are interrupted so that non-elite students may experience a greater measure of equality in classrooms. Yet, a danger may be lurking in such a proposal, since pre-service teachers are not encumbered by the administrative overload that in-service teachers experience, so what initially appears as generosity and compassion in an ideal pedagogic situation (limited responsibility as a trainee teacher versus full and overwhelming responsibility as a full-time teacher) might in actuality manifest as hegemonic control.

7.3.6   Finding 6

Curriculum reform starting with OBE and C2005 and reiterated in NCS CAPS has introduced a complicated and sophisticated strategy of educational practice that alienates most teachers and students. Added to this is the fact that curriculum formulation and implementation occurred hastily, thus failed to take into account the historical, cultural and language contexts of both the

teachers and students, which are essential for promoting the exercise of full agency (representation and inclusivity) and positive social values through education. Since it could be argued that the current curriculum is teeming with the ideology of the dominant capitalist culture, and curriculum reconstruction in the near future seems improbable, critical agentive students and teachers might employ novel and ingenious ways of undercutting capitalist hegemony and ideology through counter-hegemonic practice. But counter-hegemonic practice seems only probable in this case where it is contingent on critical teacher agency, which seems improbable because criticality is theoretically present, yet inconspicuous in a great number of actual classroom routines. Ultimately, this means that critical student agency (when it is seen) is not so much constructionist, but rather an uncoordinated personal revolt and, although it might bear traces of criticality, it stops short of being transformational because it does not change classroom practice (of both teacher and student) or community organisation, and neither does it enact change. And, most striking, when critical student agency is seen as spontaneous bursts of opposition it runs the risk of not being rooted in a particular intellectual discipline (critical thinking) based on strategy and sustainability. The random acts of opposition therefore fall flat and appear almost as good fortune for an individual or very small group for a short period of time.

7.4   How does this inform a theory of critical student agency?

Critical student agency as I have conceptualised it is understood in large measure to be student will and intelligence that are self-regulating, self-directed, self-organising and proactive agency. It may be manifest in various degrees and categories, such as oppositional agency, agency of intentions, agency of projects, purposes, desires and complex and ambiguous agency. The dexterity of critical student agency is evident when students use resistance advantageously as a form of action requiring little or no planning, resistance as a form of self-help, or resistance as the avoidance of direct confrontation with authority. Moreover, critical student agency develops and promotes the capacity for effective social action, it is transformative, context dependent and historically situated, and it culminates in both intended and unintended consequences. Lastly, heightened consciousness and intelligence in critical student agency empower non-elite students to exploit the very hegemony of the elite classes, where the latter provide the ideas, means and symbolic tools of criticism, and critically agentive students are astute and prepared to seize upon the contradictions within hegemony and use it in defence of their democratic rights (Scott, 1985). Given the above understanding of critical student agency, I made an effort to understand the ways that agentive students are able to affect schools,

classrooms and the community meaningfully better. By investigating student behaviour and attitudes, I set out to highlight specific student experiences that may inform a coherent account of the potential of critical student agency and its evident strengths and limitations in educational encounters. To clarify further, by studying classroom encounters I sought to predict how ideology and power are opposed and resisted as a sign of critical student agency. In addition, the inquiry required making observations of the cognitive and affective functioning, intellectual ability and academic performance of learners. The above approaches where adopted with the intention of being able to predict the level of civic participation, as well as of highlighting the gaps agentive students might expose that the dominant ideology has not succeeded in saturating − all in an effort to imagine how education could be transformed to a more humane, inclusive and democratic practice.

7.5   What are the implications for education?

7.5.1   Theoretical implications

The theory of critical pedagogy suggests the achievement of an egalitarian and democratic social order through transforming education (Freire, 2005a). In particular, critical literacy is seen as a way to raise student and teacher consciousness to hegemonic practices in order to invite resistance, all in an effort to address social problems by making education more inclusive and democratic (Freire, 2005a). In addition, while critical agency is conceptualised as moving along a continuum including many theoretical traditions (Bussey, 2008), it does not clarify student positions adequately, necessitating a more transparent view of student agency characterised by the actions of struggle and contestation for educational change and social and political transformation (McLaren, 1993). Having attempted to theorise about what critical student agency is, it was noted during this study, however, that particular political climates give shape to pedagogical freedom in the form of critical student agency, otherwise students present a form of constrained critical agency (if at all). Furthermore, this study confirmed Torres's (1993) formulation that particular curricular, organisational, methodological and didactic conditions are necessary for critical pedagogy and critical student agency to flourish so that wide-ranging transformation becomes evident.

Lastly, the study suggested that there perhaps is not such a clear distinction as Rancière (1991) would like us to believe between critical literacy as seen in critical pedagogy and Jacotot's (in Rancière, 1991) universal teaching method (Rancière, 1991). The evidence of the problem-posing pedagogy of critical pedagogy pedagogy is strikingly similar to Jacotot's "revealing

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intelligence to itself" (Rancière, 1991:28) in that both methodologies stimulate cognitive and affective functioning, enhance the intellectual ability of students, and have the potential to encourage civic participation for social change.

7.5.2   Policy implications

While a wide range of policy frameworks, as well as standards and regulatory agencies such the NCS CAPS, SAQA, the NQF, CHET, the NSE (and OBE and C2005 previously), are invested in and underpinned by features of critical pedagogy, the majority of classroom practices, and to a lesser extent university pedagogy, reveal an impoverished or non-existent display of critical theory (critical pedagogy, critical thinking, critical literacy, critical agency). The current study used conceptual evidence by researching influential cases to show that the official education policy, NCS CAPS (and OBE and C2005 previously), does not have the anticipated (critical) influence to transform South African education. The theoretical arguments lamenting the haste and regularity of curriculum reform suggest that perhaps there is no additional need for policy review. This last point then allows me to suggest that policy implementation should become the next dedicated focus, with a special emphasis on critical methodology in teacher training. It should also be observed that SAQA still supports OBE in its outcomes for academic qualifications, while CAPS seems to have abandoned or reduced its reliance on OBE given the challenges of implementing C2005 and OBE. This implies a misalignment of educational objectives and a two-tier system for basic education and further education, and therefore points to a glaring inconsistency in education policy. Thus, taken together as a whole, educational inequality (as an affront to democracy) seems to be perpetuated through official policy as such policy is incapable of delivering on its flimsy promises in relation to critical theory, and this is especially evident as it relates to marginal students. In this instance, the policy does not go far enough, save in abstraction, to address the democratic rights of non-elite students adequately in terms of educational resources, the quality of education for such learners, as well as the elements of access to and inclusion in education for them in particular. Ultimately, by reducing the democratic rights of non-elite students, the policy encroaches upon, rather than enforces, the very tenets of the critical pedagogy it is supposed to uphold.

7.5.3   Implications concerning pedagogy

In the two separate cases in which critical student agency was most visible (see 5.7 and 5.9), the students helped to demystify what critical pedagogy, and critical student agency in

particular, look like in practice. This way, they helped form an impression of what the minimum conditions are to foster critical student agency (affective and cognitive intelligence, the desire for transformation and change, counter-hegemonic action such as the struggle for equality and democracy (Giroux, 1983). And, while the incidents of critical student agency were a numerical minority, they provided considerable promise that, under different conditions (teachers who embrace critical theory, for example), democratic classrooms might be able to encourage critical student agency in many more students through alternate teaching techniques, such as problem-posing pedagogy and the universal teaching method (Friere, 2005a; Rancière, 1991). Thirdly, aspirant teachers, such as those who appeared in this case study, are more inclined towards democratic, reflexive and transformative pedagogic practices and thereby inspire optimism in a socially responsible approach to pedagogy. Most importantly, greater initiative has to be shown in (student) teacher development programmes and ongoing in-service teacher programmes to instruct critical theory effectively so that it may reasonably be seen in pedagogic classroom practices where shared authority, critical thinking and critical literacy skills are prominent. Thus a pedagogic approach focused on knowledge content that highlights critical literacy (compared to traditional literacy) and shared meanings would give rise to knowledge that is related to authentic student experience and critical reflection fixed on solving complex and challenging problems (poverty, inequality, climate change, disease, war, racism, classism, sexism, able-ism, among others (Freire, 2005a) and hence holds the potential to transform society.

7.5.4   Curriculum implications

Official curriculum policy suggests a constructivist, progressive, even critical (as in critical theory) underpinning, yet, classroom realities in working-class classrooms indicate, through student and teacher agency, that the curriculum is instrumentalist, non-collaborative, not participatory and somewhat deterministic (Jansen, 1998). The official curriculum plan could be considered a vehicle through which ideology is entrenched and hegemonic subjectivities are achieved, as it is comfortably embedded in elite power and fortified with the language, cultural background and experiences of high-status cultural capital. Yet, agentive teachers and students dedicated to social justice break through the academic, cultural and economic determinism of the official curriculum and the hidden curriculum [see 1.7], and negotiate the curriculum as an ongoing social process comprised of the interactions of students, teachers, knowledge and the education context (Cornbleth, 1990). In so doing, teachers and students assume the fluid positions critical agency allows them by being self-directed, self-managing, self-modifying,

self-monitoring, autonomous beings who are able to interpret the curriculum collaboratively. This position opposes the fixed nature of the curriculum, in terms of which student and teacher roles are predefined and static. Consequently, alternative interpretations of the curriculum invite democratic pedagogic practice and counter-hegemonic knowledge that help contextualise and illuminate student experience and relate it directly to their learning. Accordingly, the curriculum no longer comes to be seen merely as an instrument (official policy) of the hierarchical nature of schooling directed at an end product; instead, it is seen to represent a process in need of constant transformation.

7.5.5   Implications concerning educator professionalism

Critical student agency is inconsistent with repressive, authoritarian teacher agency; yet, this latter behaviour pre-dominates pedagogic encounters in some South African classrooms and is a remnant of FP and Pedagogics. It is the insatiable appetite to control students that keeps teachers preoccupied during instructing students through rote learning, which prevents encounters for engaging, cognitive and constructivist pedagogy. However, since critical thinking skills are infamously difficult to teach, and some university teachers are themselves challenged by the unfamiliar curriculum and low levels of thinking skills, it hardly seems fair to expect high-ranking academic skills to filter into the teaching profession. While I would ideally like to make students the primary focus of pedagogic encounters, this can only be successful through the assistance and guidance of highly trained teachers who can inspire higher-order deep thinking and who promote critical student agency through the construction of learners' own knowledge and learners' own viewpoints. However, in exceptional cases, certain periods give way to socio-political conditions that support and necessitate heightened student consciousness and autonomous student action. Generally, in this current neo-liberal stage of history, students would however benefit from an infusion of counter-hegemonic pedagogy driven by critically agentive teachers. Consequently, it is essential that teacher training programmes recruit high-ranking members and staff and high-performing students into the teaching profession in order to transform the profession noticeably by emphasising the cognitive component necessary for critical pedagogy, critical literacy and critical agency, which is critical thinking. This way, we can expect that trainee teachers might graduate with the capacity to reflect, question and judge information effectively, possess a strong knowledge base, show mastery of language and maintain a strong reflective scepticism, so that training in critical theory and methodology may become more evident in classroom routines.

7.5.6   Philosophical implications for schooling related to liberal and consensus democracy

To give fair consideration to educational problems, such as equality in education and the true expression and social experience of marginal or subjugated working-class students, would mean far more than to observe the implications of critical student agency for theory, policy, pedagogics, the curriculum and teacher professionalism. It would require a distinct retracing of the democratic foundations that assume to give credence to the speech claims of non-dominant members of society, rather than alienating them through policy, the curriculum and classroom pedagogy. Student alienation allows us to think through how hegemony via the school experience causes estrangement and the cutting off of the non-dominant in society by making them 'a being for the other' (Freire, 2000) in work, school and the community; and how student alienation psychologically implies the crippling loss of connection with their deepest feelings and needs. This alienation rarefies educational inequality and effaces liberal democracy by turning it into its opposite: capitalist or bourgeois democracy. Furthermore, it reflects negatively on the purpose of education and social egalitarian ambitions toward educational equality in a liberal democracy by vulgarising it to mere commercial exchange rather than ideal equality, which is predicated on proportion and the common good (Rancière, 1999:5). Educational inequality reinforces the antagonism between the rich and the poor, with the latter not included in the social whole, or else we would expect at least an egalitarian logic to follow the purpose and outcomes of education and bring about a just and democratic order. Thus, critical student agency has the potential to take up space in the vacuum where an injustice is being meted out to non-elite students, and as the exercise of their rights in a democratic order where their speech allows them to argue for the rights denied by an unjust hegemonic and neo-liberal order. Furthermore, critical student consciousness is trailed by critical student action as a demonstration of the test and demand to access the rights promised under democracy. In this way critical consciousness creates the beginning of an argument and an opening of a discourse on inequality and injustice in a democratic social whole that advertises an egalitarian logic; and in so doing, the exercising of critical student agency attempts to address a philosophical problem.

7.6   Philosophical reflections – what as revealing about in my experience

To imagine that something (e.g. education as a liberating exercise) could be different helps to establish a basis from which to conceptualise alternatives and gradually transform the status

quo. This study has provided me with the knowledge that critical student agency could mitigate the effects of capitalist hegemony and ideology to transform education, although this was demonstrated only on a small scale. Because of the last-mentioned fact, an opening was created for me as a teacher to strive and struggle toward allowing more students to participate in emancipatory education.

In studying student behaviour, I was able to see that ideology and power are opposed and resisted as a sign of critical student agency; yet, the challenge still remains that I, as a teacher, should take care that I am not embedded in the discourse of dominant ideology and power, which inevitably invalidates critical student agency. In addition, curriculum discourse provides the mandate for me to enforce principles that I respect; yet, it also empowers both me and my students with a premise from which we can engage in radical pedagogy turned toward positive and democratic change. What I mean by radical pedagogy is that students' cognitive and affective functioning is used for liberating rather than domesticating purposes, and that the intellectual ability of students is turned toward developing thinkers who utilise their full human potentialities for the greater good rather than for mere mechanical ends. While education focused only on academic performance is stultifying, critical agentive students included in this research have provided insight that liberating education is connected to a wider social reality, so that students see themselves included in the democratic process and are sophisticated enough to make meaningful civic contributions. And this provides another window for me, as a teacher, to expand my own role and allow the thinking and behaviours of critically agentive students to have expression in the classroom so that they may effect a more expansive social experience. Lastly, following De Certeau's (1984) notion that there is more freedom and latitude for non-producers of culture to manoeuvre in the dominant culture because their actions are "unsigned, unreadable, unsymbolized" (De Certeau, 1984:xvii), critically agentive students have illuminated the gaps the dominant ideology has not succeeded in inundating, which allows me to consider how to incorporate the students' lived experiences fruitfully to enrich my pedagogic engagements turned toward an emancipatory practice.

7.7   On the challenges and limitations of the study

The current study was premised on pedagogic encounters in working-class students' classrooms; therefore, the cases that were available for investigation significantly reduced the pool of resources from which to extract data. This might also suggest that critical pedagogy, being a controversial and lesser-known alternative educational theory and practice, has even

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less legibility in the pedagogic episodes in such schools. Additional challenges in accessing literature on critical pedagogy in South African schools included the authenticity of what critical pedagogy is imagined to be in different historical periods and various educational contexts. And, while every attempt was made to maintain scholarly rigour, studies in the social sciences cannot justifiably lay claim to being fully neutral and thereby being 'unequivocally scientific', as such entitlements supposedly are 'guaranteed' in the natural sciences. This statement confirms Waghid's (2010) assertion that learning is contextual, which opens up a line of thinking based on the reader's interpretation of particular theories and the practical application of such theories in unique and dissimilar circumstances as those proposed by the initiators of such theory. Thus the theorising on and testing of a new theory of critical student agency, as derived from critical pedagogy, operate on assumptions of the researcher's interpretation of social and educational theory conjoined with the lived experiences of participants revealed in the inimitable cases contained in this study.

7.8   Conclusion

If Freire (2005a) is to be believed and our ontological and historical vocation is to be fully human, then schools should be preoccupied with helping students achieve this goal rather than engaging in what could be called "perverted democracy" turned toward the "reign of limitless desire of individuals in modern mass society" (Rancière, 2006:3). As I am a teacher, a particular responsibility begins to emerge, viz. if I attach value to a pedagogic and professional ethos of being a critical agent, my role has been sufficiently clarified by this study, namely to "reclaim critical democracy, individual freedom, social justice, social transformation and a revitalization of the public sphere" (Freire, 1994:45) on behalf of students. Specific cases in this study provided hope that critically agentive students are present and visible within South African education. In fact, given their alternative, non-dominant socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, they presented some of the most unique perspectives on how to navigate dominant ideology in unseen, "unsymbolized" and "unrecognizable" counter-hegemonic ways (De Certeau, 1984: xvii). The study of marginal students in their everyday school encounters provided valuable insights on how to address social problems at individual and organisational level. An attempt to address the social and educational interests of non-elite students also provided guidelines for the methodological and didactic considerations indispensable to effective education policy implementation anchored in critical and constructivist philosophy. In addition, it highlights the prerequisite of high teacher ranks throughout South African educational institutions to be able to interpret and apply curricular mandates effectively with

students in order to demolish remnants of the academic, cultural and economic determinism invested in a hegemonic curriculum. Thus, critical student agency introduces ways through the educational process where we may see and better understand the harmful, unethical and unjust demonstrations of social actors and policy being transformed to the benefit and interest of the greater majority of the social whole.

Epilogue

This dissertation aimed to present an optimistic, constructive and progressive account of human agency by grappling with the theoretical formulation of critical student agency, which is an extension of critical pedagogy. While an assessment of critical student agency may be seen as the essential unifying element of this research study, it is entangled in a much larger and complex understanding of schooling in an advanced technological society. This in itself proves to be problematic, because while technocratic societies are characterised by progress, the educational approaches today seem no different from schooling during the Industrial Revolution: fixated on training and mechanical and highly stratified (via aims, resources and outcomes) for students according to economic status.

My constant reflections in preparing each argument were based on the ever-present uncertainty and relentless nagging that perhaps I did not capture sufficiently well the propositions I think I know better in my head than I can express in words. This leads me down another path of reasoning: the limitations of words – what are the margins at which words can no longer depict a thought or action? As Scott (1985) asked, how would I know whether it was a wink or a blink? And, if I were not the originator of the thought or action, how could I confirm either way whether I was not immediately present or had a specific cultural understanding of each word? Besides, it might be argued that 'wink' and 'blink' are synonymous terms; yet, this might also be opposed depending on the context and the interpretation of the observer. Nonetheless, I take comfort in Freire's (2005a) and Mastin's (2008) theorising on the relationship between language and reality. Epistemologically speaking, what is meaning and how does language in particular refer to the real world? Given the subtleties, imprecision and opacity of language, we can at best hope for interpretation and, at worst, downright misperception. However, it was the discipline of trying to understand a central discourse (critical pedagogy within critical theory) that obliged me to construct a particular meaning (via thought, text and speech acts) that revealed the role of language as critical agency.

Faced with a considerable challenge in conceptualising Chapter 1 (more so than in the other chapters), I agonised about providing adequate justification for including the section on the 'clarification of key concepts'. There always was the danger that my attempt to overcome the vague yet overused generalisations of specific words in a discourse might lead to that section being misunderstood as a glorified dictionary. But, on closer inspection, the unifying element and raison d'être eventually began to make sense: these terms are crucial to a discussion of

critical student agency because it requires of students to look at the terms (and by implication themselves and their world) in a new light, and to infuse them with new connotations and to apply them in different contexts from the ones I suggested. Without realising it at the time, the contested section coincides with Freire's (2005a) notion of generative themes as an educational device in transformative pedagogy, albeit that I (the teacher) generated the themes, in contrast to Freire's model, where the students generate the themes. Consequently, generative themes demonstrate the vacuous nature of universalising words, while simultaneously creating the very opportunity for students to subvert certain meanings to suit their real-life experiences, just as capitalism has done. Judging from the words included in Chapter 1, it is evident that some words derived their origin and meaning directly from the Industrial Revolution, while others have been adapted, altered, extended or transferred (Williams, 1983) throughout history in order to be assimilated into a world framed by capitalist social relations. Thus, to develop a set of words unhinged from capital for their meaning implies the imaginings of a world in which capitalist ideology has no foothold, and a world in which capitalist means of production have no purchase.

The imagining of alternate ways of being and doing in the world is central to this study and to diverse theories of human agency. From the accounts of critical student agency in this investigation, it was noted that some students independently arrived at a consciousness that informed them that their suffering was socially constructed, and that they had done nothing to have to confront exclusion (such as classism, racism, sexism, 'able-ism'), except to be marginal in a capitalist society. Through self-effort, these students exposed the hollowness of a language that speaks democracy yet acts on inequality, 'unfreedom' and injustice. This way, critically agentive students provide the material basis and urgency for teachers to "intervene ethically and pedagogically" (Freire, 2005a:20) on behalf of a greater number of students than those chronicled in this study because the palliative solutions offered by capital for social problems (money as well as social and political power) are slowly being eroded (through recessions, rising unemployment and the gaping wealth inequality). Likewise, the student and teacher behaviours discussed in this document highlight certain unrealised possibilities for transformation. This is especially true for the oppressive pedagogy of certain teachers who stultify critical student agency for a great majority to students.

On a completely different note, when I initially conceptualised this study, it was predicated on the student identities I could theoretically conceive of at the time: student as learner- participant, student as co-teacher, student as researcher, student as collaborative lesson planner, student as

evaluator, student with equal power in a democratic classroom, student as activist, student as co-creator of meaning. However, as a conceptual study, some identities were sacrificed (critical student agency as a co-teacher, collaborative lesson planner, evaluator, student/teacher equality). It is perhaps plausible that some of these limitations could (hypothetically) have been overcome were it an empirical study relying on a collaborative action research methodology. Still further limitations arose from the fact that, while critical pedagogy is evident in official education policy, it is not legible in actual classroom encounters, meaning that critical student agency is hamstrung when unaccompanied by the essential thinking skills necessary for critical social action.

Besides the limitations, when dealing with dense, abstract concepts that demand metaphysical extrapolations, the explanations usually lead to open conclusions rather than functional certainties. To clarify, the research question I asked could be rephrased: *What is critical student agency and how might students subvert social oppression using critical student agency?* Considering the evidence presented in this study, one might start by describing what critical student agency is not, and how students reveal their critical agency by subverting social oppression. On the other hand, if I asked a functional question, the best I could get in answering it would be a closed, formulaic and procedural response, such as those found in 'banking' pedagogy. Thus, the nature of the question provided an opportunity for expansive theorising by first setting the expectation that a particular notion of critical student agency might emerge (when one does not yet exist). Secondly, the nature of the question changed teacher-centred classroom pedagogy to learner-centred agency and thereby subverted the traditional hierarchy in classroom politics. Thirdly, the scope of the question did not stop in classrooms, but turned outward by asking questions about critical student agency in the local community, society and the world. Thus, as an epistemic agent, my epistemic expertise increased as I first had to develop a clear understanding of the historical and contextual dimensions of students' lived lives to be able to comment on the possibilities and limitations of critical student agency in order to answer the question.

Lastly, as an exercise in analytical philosophy, I further had to ask myself what the practical things were that critically agentive students currently could do (in the absence of critical pedagogy) to overcome the alienation and social misery that come as a result of capitalist hegemony. Considering the case of the Philippi High School students who displayed critical student agency, it was clear that an injustice had been visited upon the students that they sought to address. And, even while they demanded their rights, their actions left the researcher with

many more questions, such as why one injustice was met with an even greater injustice (such as verbal and physical abuse, deception and false promises from public officials). This incident points to the dangers inherent in exercising critical agency, as well as to the short-lived and Pyrrhic victories of opposition to political and economic organisation in advanced capitalist societies. However, it is also cases such as the Philippi High School students that legitimise the philosophical project by demanding more satisfactory answers to the questions of our lives, because they at least provide hope at personal and social level that we all may come to a better understanding of our agency to transform man and nature qualitatively. Taken together, this study refused purely deterministic and meritocratic views of schooling, even while it rejected overtly romanticised notions of critical student agency. However, by highlighting critical student agency it has elevated the position of those marginal, subjugated and excluded students through their suppressed stories, perspectives and actions and presented a unique understanding of how counter-hegemonic education might work.

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