

A critical investigation into the process of negotiating a
mathematics education curriculum with pre-service
teachers

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER IN EDUCATION

of

Rhodes University

by

Lise Westaway

December 2004

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been presented in part or whole for the submission of a degree before. To the best of my knowledge, all sources used and quoted have been indicated, acknowledged and fully referenced throughout.

Lise Westaway

ABSTRACT

It's almost like a dinner party and a buffet. A dinner party you get dished up stuff and you eat it and a buffet you can choose what you want out of a range of stuff. I mean, think about it, when you go to a dinner party, they always dish up something you don't like and you don't want to eat it anyway. It's the same if you have a lecturer in the front that just dishes out what you're going to learn, ... you have to learn it. But in terms of the curriculum negotiation process, I've got to choose what I wanted to learn.

(Melissa II 27/11/01: 3)

This thesis focuses on the process of negotiating the curriculum with twelve pre-service teachers registered for the Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree during their Mathematics Education Course in their third year of study.

The research is presented methodologically as an action research located within two paradigmatic positions, interpretive and critical. The research attempted to understand, interpret and critique the process of curriculum negotiation within the context of teacher education in South Africa. In order to understand the negotiated curriculum process, experiences of the participants are presented through the use of their voices within the thesis. The interpretation is based on the construction and reconstruction of meaning during the enactment of the negotiated curriculum process and during the writing and reviewing of this thesis. The critique is rooted in the historical, cultural and social contexts of both the students and the author.

The main contention of this thesis is that curriculum negotiation is not necessarily a suitable vehicle for developing a critical pedagogy in preservice teacher education when all the participants form a homogenous group in this case, white middle-class women. The democratic values promoted within the context of our curriculum negotiation were fraught with dilemmas and entrenched the values of western liberalism. At most, the curriculum negotiation process and the development of a democratic learning environment, promoted a conscientisation at an individual level, namely a 'transformation of consciousness'. The democratic values promoted in our pedagogy were not sufficient in bringing about social change, a 'transformation for social action'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to the twelve *students* I worked with during this research process. They have all taught me so much about teaching and learning within the context of teacher education. In writing this thesis I need to echo Shor's words (as quoted in Shor & Freire 1987: 176)

I find myself more changed by the students than I've been able to change them!

Indeed, I think my students have taught me more than I have taught them. I hope that one day I'll have the opportunity to tell them this directly.

My *supervisors*, *Margaret Irvine* and *Marc Schafer* have been brilliant! Thanks to *Marc* for always being so positive. From my interactions with other postgraduate students, I believe this is a rare quality. Your constant enthusiasm and faith in what I was doing and my writing ability really urged me forward in what others have described as a very lonely experience. I appreciated those e-mails ("beep, beep!") to find out where I was and how the writing was going. Thank you, also, for ensuring that I did 'all the right things' with regards to the formatting and structure of this thesis. To *Margaret*, thank you for always asking the 'right questions'; for constantly pushing my thinking further; for acknowledging openly the dilemmas with our identities; your open-door policy; and for sharing your own experiences with me.

To all my *colleagues*, I thank you for encouraging me to complete this thesis and for giving me the space to do what I wanted. While I cannot name all my colleagues here, I need to say thank you to *David* (for encouraging me to register), *Margie* (for shouting at me to get the thesis done), *Xoliswa* (for sharing your own enthusiasm and passion for research), *Carol* and *Peter* (for being in the same boat as me and for sharing your stories) and *Brenda* (for listening and instilling a research ethic in me, on the balcony outside your office – I'll never forget the research, albeit rather positivistic, on the growth pattern of a plant root.

Shiela and *Kathy*, my *proof-readers*, you've been fantastic.

Ashley, I know that it was tough at times, probably most of the time, especially when my mind was so steeped in this research that I didn't hear a thing you said. Thank you for reading sections of this thesis and for constantly encouraging me throughout the four years. It is your turn to write that PhD now!

To all my *friends*, they know who they are. I know you can't wait for me to complete this thesis, probably, an excuse for yet another party.

To my *parents*, who taught me that if you work hard, you should play hard. I did work hard, but I had an enormous amount of fun during that time too. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Abbreviations	ix
CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH	3
1.3 CURRICULA REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA	5
1.3.1 Curricula reform in higher education	5
1.3.1.1 Purpose	5
1.3.1.2 Modes of knowledge	6
1.3.1.3 Competence	7
1.3.2 Curriculum reform within the general education and training band	8
1.3.3 View of teacher education in South Africa	9
1.4 CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	12
1.4.1 The discourses of critical theory and critical pedagogy	12
1.4.2 My critical pedagogy	15
1.5 CURRICULUM NEGOTIATION	16
1.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT	17
1.7 STUDENTS' HISTORIES	21
1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	23
1.9 THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS	25
1.10 SIGNIFICANCE	26
1.11 LIMITATIONS	27
1.12 CONCLUSION	27
CHAPTER 2: THE RESEARCH PROCESS	29
2.1 INTRODUCTION	29
2.2 PARADIGMS	30
2.2.1 Positivism	31
2.2.2 Interpretive	32
2.2.3 Critical	32
2.2.4 Postmodern / Poststructural	33
2.2.4.1 Postmodernism	33
2.2.4.2 Poststructuralism	34
2.3 KEY PARADIGMATIC ISSUES IN THIS RESEARCH	35
2.3.1 Objectivity	35
2.3.2 Power	37
2.3.3 The relationship between theory and practice	37
2.4 EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF RESEARCH	39
2.4.1 Voice	39
2.4.2 Reflection	40
2.4.3 Researcher and researched versus research participants	41

2.5	CRITICISMS OF THE CRITICAL PARADIGM	42
2.6	ACTION RESEARCH	43
	2.6.1 Definitions of action research	44
	2.6.2 Action research that is emancipatory	45
	2.6.3 The action research cycle	47
2.7	RESEARCH TOOLS USED IN THIS ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS	50
	2.7.1 Interviews	50
	2.7.1.1 Focus group interviews	52
	2.7.1.2 Group interviews	53
	2.7.1.3 Individual interviews	54
	2.7.2 Journals / Field notes	54
	2.7.3 Small group instructional diagnosis	55
2.8	DATA ANALYSIS	56
	2.8.1 Narratives	57
	2.8.2 Dilemma analysis	57
2.9	VALIDITY AND GENERALISATION	59
	2.9.1 Triangulation	63
2.10	REFERENCING	64
2.11	CONCLUSION	65
CHAPTER 3: NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM – THE PROCESS		67
3.1	INTRODUCTION	67
3.2	THE PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT	67
3.3	LEARNING AND TEACHING	69
	3.3.1 Developing shared meanings	70
	3.3.1.1 The nature of negotiation	71
	3.3.1.2 The negotiated curriculum process	72
	3.3.1.3 Constraints	72
	3.3.2 Student perspectives on learning	73
	3.3.2.1 Approaches and conceptions of learning	74
	3.3.2.1.1 ‘Surface’ versus ‘deep’ approaches to learning	75
	3.3.2.1.2 Conceptions of learning	77
	3.3.2.2 Conceptions of teacher education	80
	3.3.2.2.1 Learning in-the-field	81
3.4	NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM	85
	3.4.1 Curriculum as praxis	85
	3.4.2 Curriculum as political	87
	3.4.3 Curriculum as constructed	88
3.5	ENACTING THE CURRICULUM NEGOTIATION PROCESS	90
	3.5.1 The first action research cycle	91
	3.5.2 The second action research cycle	96
	3.5.3 The third action research cycle	99
3.6	ASSESSMENT	102
3.7	CONCLUSION	103
CHAPTER 4: NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM – DILEMMAS		105
4.1	INTRODUCTION	105
4.2	AUTHORITY AND POWER AS ‘SITES OF STRUGGLE’	106

4.3	‘EMANCIPATORY AUTHORITY’ VERUS ‘AUTHORITARIANISM’	106
4.3.1	Participation	109
4.3.1.1	Choice	110
4.3.2	Collaboration	117
4.3.3	Self-motivation	121
4.3.4	Dialogue	125
4.3.5	Situated	128
4.4	CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE VALUES AND AUTHORITY	133
4.5	CONCLUSION	134
CHAPTER 5: CURRICULUM NEGOTIATION – CRITIQUE		136
5.1	INTRODUCTION	136
5.2	THE RESEARCH AIMS	136
5.2.1	Understanding the relevance of curriculum negotiation	137
5.2.1.1	The negotiated curriculum process	137
5.2.1.2	Taking ownership and responsibility for learning	142
5.2.2	My professional development	147
5.2.2.1	Curriculum negotiation: A suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy?	148
5.2.2.1.1	‘Positions of privilege’	150
5.2.2.1.2	Teaching as a practical activity	152
5.2.2.1.3	Instrumental rationality	153
5.2.3	A final comment on the aims	154
5.3	A POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD	155
5.4	CONCLUSION	159
CHAPTER 6: A FINAL REFLECTION		161
6.1	INTRODUCTION	161
6.2	CONTEXT	161
6.2.1	Field of research	161
6.2.2	Research process	161
6.2.3	Chapter overview	162
6.3	ARGUMENTS	163
6.3.1	Action research	163
6.3.2	Curriculum negotiation	164
6.4	LIMITATIONS	165
6.5	RECOMMENDATIONS	166
6.6	A FINAL WORD	167
REFERENCES		168
APPENDICES		
APPENDIX 1 OUR NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM		179
APPENDIX 2 PARTICIPANTS’ ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES		182
APPENDIX 3 SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTIONAL DIAGNOSIS REPORT		183
APPENDIX 4 FOCUS GROUP OBSERVATION REPORT		185

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Action Research Model	49
Figure 3.1	Constructivism: Three dimensions	89

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1	'Conceptions of learning'	78
-----------	---------------------------	----

ABBREVIATIONS

C2005	Curriculum 2005
CNE	Christian National Education
DoE	Department of Education
ELP	Experiential Learning Programme
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Framework
SGID	Small Group Instructional Diagnosis

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

... research liberates curiosity and generates excitement. And now more than at any time the teaching profession needs, as a counter to increasing bureaucratic demands, a sense of professional excitement that can draw attention back to the professional core of schooling – the mutuality of teaching and learning as an interactive process.

(Rudduck as quoted in Reid 1992:125)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of curricula in many higher education institutions, particularly in the field of teacher education, is largely seen as the responsibility of the teacher educator (Doll 1993). The National Department of Education (DoE) has attempted to regulate teacher education in South Africa by providing defined competencies that pre-service teachers need to be able to demonstrate at the end of their Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree (Technical Committee on the Revision of the Norms and Standards for Educators 1998). While teacher educators are given the ‘democratic’ space to develop their own curricula that will promote the achievement of these defined competences, some perceive that teacher educators are being disempowered as teaching is reduced to achieving behaviourally based outcomes (Apple as cited in Marsh 1999: 82). This in turn could undermine the process of developing future teachers who are ‘critically-minded intellectuals’ (Giroux & McLaren 1986: 302). As many lecturers¹ or teacher educators continue to promote their beliefs of what constitutes good knowledge and practice, many students² (pre-service teachers) fail to take responsibility for their own learning (Levitan as cited in Rogers 1980: 76). The result of this is that students are disempowered³.

Ruddock (as quoted in Reid 1992:125), in the above quote, argued that research in the teaching profession is essential to re-focus our attention on the interactive ‘nature’ of learning

¹ I have used the terms ‘lecturer’ and ‘teacher’ in this thesis as opposed to educators as it was necessary in some instances to distinguish between educators in higher education institutions and educators in schools.

² I have used the term ‘students’ as opposed to learners to refer to learners in higher education institutions.

³ According to the White Paper, *Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE 1997a), one of the goals of higher education is to “produce graduates with the skills and competencies that build the foundations for lifelong learning, including, critical, analytical, problem-solving and communication skills, as well as the ability to deal with change and diversity, in particular, the tolerance of different views and ideas.” If one of our goals is to promote lifelong learning, then the issue of students taking responsibility and ownership for their learning is important. I argue in this chapter that practices that promote the view of the lecturer as ‘expert’ and ‘knower of all’ disempower students in the sense that, in many instances, they fail to take responsibility for their learning.

and teaching. With the ever-increasing bureaucratisation of the teaching profession; control over what should be taught and how it should be taught; Reid (1992:125) explained that as teachers, we are “losing ... our sense of ourselves as *teachers* rather than technicians.” While Reid (1992) focused on schooling, I will argue in this chapter that her argument has direct implications for teacher education, and that there is an increasing need for research into learning and teaching in teacher education. If we as teacher educators are serious about empowering⁴ our students, we need to provide a context that encourages them to engage with the learning process. The students “must be encouraged to voice concerns, opinions and plans as learners, to discuss decisions, to talk and act like citizens in a democracy⁵” (Allen as cited in Marsh 1999: 50). Furthermore, we need to encourage our pre-service teachers to engage with emancipatory possibilities and work towards achieving those possibilities in order to continue developing the interests of democracy (Giroux & McLaren 1986: 303). At the start of this research process, my belief was that negotiating the curriculum with pre-service teachers would create an opportunity for them to be actively involved in the learning process.

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold. Firstly, I attempt to re-create the context of teacher education in South Africa, particularly with regards to curricula reform. Secondly, key concepts related to the research are explained within the context of this research. It is necessary for me to explain my understandings of key concepts in this introduction, as my thesis does not have a separate literature review. In keeping with a critical theory tradition, where the relationship between theory and practice is reciprocal, I have linked the theory and

⁴ The term ‘empower’ is used throughout this thesis to signify an attempt to enable the students to challenge the dominant education discourses that promote authority dependence. In the context of this research, this refers to the students, through the creation of a democratic learning environment, taking ownership and responsibility for their learning.

⁵ The term democracy is touted about in much of the literature that I have read yet there is very little explanation of what the various authors mean by the term. As I have used the term democracy extensively in this thesis, it is necessary for me to provide the reader with some sense of my understandings of this term. I refer to democracy largely in two forms. Firstly, I refer to democracy that is rooted in western liberal ideology. By that I mean democracy that has its roots in the United Kingdom initially and later in the United States of America. This version of democracy emphasised the sovereignty of the individual, and is focused on individual rights and freedoms. I view this form of democracy as being endemic in the higher education institution where I lecture. The second form of democracy that I refer to in this thesis, I would argue is more in line with the notions of democracy as represented in the South African constitution. Here, the rights of the individual and community are both given status (Pandor 2001). While for some, this notion of guaranteeing both individual and community rights is problematic, I believe that this balance is a necessary prerequisite for addressing the economic, social and cultural inequalities of our past. The implication of this view of democracy for the classroom would be the construction of a community of learners who work towards transformation for the social good. This form of democracy is participatory (Wringe 1984; Pateman as cited in Sullivan 1998; Borda 1997) in the sense that “those who will be most affected by the decision to be made or the action to be taken, actually take part in the discussion and take the decision, and the responsibility for the decision, themselves” (Wringe 1984: 16). Furthermore, I would add, having written this thesis and engaged with this research process, that the decisions taken need to be interrogated in terms of what values and assumptions are promoted and whose interests they serve.

practice throughout the thesis. Thirdly, I highlight the context within which this research is situated.

In order to situate this research, I will present my perceptions of key issues relating to this study. These issues include a summary of the environment within which this research took place, by highlighting both the macro (teacher education policies in South Africa) and micro perspectives (teacher education within the context of this research). I will reflect on teacher education, particularly within the context of curriculum pre-1997⁶, to demonstrate the principles underpinning the education system that the students involved in this research were part of, and which, to some extent, are still prevalent in higher education today, post-1997. Curriculum developments post-1997 are supported by documentation from the DoE (1997a; 1997b) and South African Qualifications Framework (SAQA 2000a; 2002b). Using the above documentation, key concepts related to this study are addressed and an argument is constructed to highlight the relevance of critical theory and in particular, critical pedagogy, in teacher education. Furthermore, curriculum negotiation is explored through the vision highlighted in the above documentation, particularly in relation to life-long learning, and as a vehicle for developing a critical pedagogy.

In concluding this chapter, I reflect on the ethical considerations, significance of the research and the limitations related to this research process. Finally, a short overview to the subsequent chapters is provided for the reader.

In order for me to begin the process of situating this research, it is necessary to highlight the aims of the research process as these informed both the research process and the construction of this thesis.

1.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The aims of this research were to:

- Gain an understanding of the relevance of curriculum negotiation within teacher education by:

⁶ I have chosen to use 1997 as a reference point. This date, which corresponds with the White Paper on the *Programme for Higher Education Transformation*, signals the date of transformation within higher education institutions. Furthermore, this date coincides with the introduction of the new national curriculum, Curriculum 2005, which was introduced in the General Education and Training Band in 1997 (DoE 1997b).

- Critically investigating the process of negotiating a curriculum with pre-service teachers; and
- Analysing the influence of a negotiated curriculum on pre-service teachers' learning, particularly in relation to pre-service teachers taking ownership and responsibility for their own learning.
- To enhance my own professional development in teacher education by:
 - Evaluating whether curriculum negotiation is a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy based on democratic principles and values.

The essential reason for pursuing curriculum negotiation was my belief that many students are reluctant to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning. Levitan (as cited in Rogers 1980: 76) argued that one of the reasons students fail to take responsibility for their own learning is that teachers in higher education institutions continue to promote *their beliefs* of what constitutes 'good' knowledge and practice. While Levitan's view is acknowledged in this thesis, a range of further issues that limit students taking responsibility and ownership of their own learning are presented in chapters three (see page 67) and four (see page 105). Furthermore, the notion of taking responsibility for one's learning is critiqued in chapter five (see page 136).

Before I explore the concept of curriculum negotiation, it is necessary to look at curriculum more broadly and within the context of South Africa. At this point, it is necessary to note that there are two aspects of curricula reform⁷ that need to be considered. Firstly, I reflect on curricula reform within higher education, and secondly, within the context of the general education and training band, namely Curriculum 2005 (DoE 1997b; DoE 2002a). That is because the students participating in this research process were all registered at a higher education institution for a Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree, a pre-service teacher qualification for teachers within the General Education and Training Band. In examining the curricula, the life-view promoted through the curriculum, and the impact that this has on teacher education will be discussed.

⁷ I use the term 'reform' as opposed to 'transformation' as my understanding of the latter, which is rooted in a critical theory perspective, refers to change through social action rather than change that has been suggested through policy.

1.3 CURRICULA REFORM IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.3.1 Curricula reform in higher education

The White Paper on the *Programme for Higher Education Transformation* (DoE 1997a) focused on the role of higher education institutions in the process of reconstruction and development in order to redress the inequalities and imbalances of the past and create a critical civil society. In so doing, higher education needed to be transformed so that it could “meet the challenges of a new non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society committed to equity, justice and a better life for all” (DoE 1997a: 9). The White Paper (DoE 1997a) proposed a single, coordinated education programme to meet the transformation requirements of education in South Africa.

1.3.1.1 Purpose

“Outcomes-based education (OBE)⁸ in South Africa is part of an ambitious reform plan to project all certified and certifiable learning activities into a single national qualifications grid, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)” (Muller 2000: 96). The purpose of the NQF and South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the parent body, is to introduce the outcomes-based approach throughout *all*⁹ education institutions from general education right through to higher education (Muller 2000: 96), thereby ensuring an integrated system (SAQA 2000a: 1); to support life-long learning and unify the previously separate academic and vocational curricula (Donn 1998: 74).

Outcomes-based approaches as defined for the South African context, focused on “maximizing the citizen-learner’s flexibility, opportunities, mobility and access” (DoE as cited

⁸ The origins of OBE for C2005 and SAQA and the NQF differ. In the early 1990’s COSATU proposed a system that would recognise the prior learning of black workers who were skilled but neither qualified nor being paid appropriately. This is the origin of OBE for the NQF (Young 2001). The decision to implement a curriculum (C2005) based on the principles of OBE was influenced by curricula models in “English-speaking western countries”, and the need to ‘undergo’ a “clean break” from the apartheid curricula (Young 2001:33). According to Spady (as quoted in DoE 1997a: 10-11), “Outcomes-based education means clearly focusing and organising an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experience. This means starting with a clear picture of what is important for students to be able to do, then organising curriculum, instruction, and assessment to make sure this learning ultimately happens”. This view, which is highlighted in the National Qualifications Framework, concurs with the vision for a new South African education system that “curriculum change ... is part of systemic change” (DoE 2000b: 10-11).

⁹ The aim of the NQF is to introduce an outcomes-based approach throughout all education institutions including higher education. However, I need to state here, that this has not simply been accepted unconditionally, as there are institutions critical of this approach. It is not the place in this thesis to express the various opinions on this issue. Rather, I am referring to this documentation to situate this thesis within the field of teacher education in South Africa.

in Muller 2000: 95; Young 2001: 26). Developing citizens who would be both productive and responsible members of society, as well as lifelong learners, was central to South Africa's curricula reform (Killen 2000: vii). This is articulated through the development of learning programmes that are learner-paced and learner-centred where "learners determine their own pace, maximizing their occupational opportunities and becoming fully fledged citizens in all spheres of social, political and economic life ..." (Muller 2000: 95).

The White Paper on Education and Training (DoE 1995: 15) emphasized that:

Successful modern economies and societies require the elimination of artificial hierarchies, in social organization, in the organization and management of work, and in the way in which learning is organized and certified. They require citizens with a strong foundation of general education, the desire and ability to continue to learn, to adapt to and develop new knowledge, skills and technologies, to move flexibly between occupations, to take responsibility for personal performance, to set and achieve high standards, and to work cooperatively.

The traditional view of knowledge in higher education institutions emphasized "language, especially through writing, an open process of communication, and formal and discipline-bound conventions" (Barnett as quoted in DoE 1997a: 3). Barnett (as quoted in SAQA 2000a: 3; SAQA 2000b: 17) believed that:

The new vocabulary in higher education is a sign that modern society is reaching for other definitions of knowledge and reasoning. Notions of skill, vocationalism, transferability, competence, outcomes, experiential learning capability and enterprise, when taken together, are indications that traditional definitions of knowledge are felt to be inadequate for meeting the systems-wide problems faced by contemporary society ... the new terminology urges higher education institutions to allow the term knowledge to embrace knowledge-through-action, particular outcomes of a learning transaction and transdisciplinary forms of skill.

1.3.1.2 Modes of knowledge

This view of knowledge concurs with Gibbons (as cited in Delanty 2001: 3) that the mode of knowledge production has and is changing. For Gibbons (as cited in Delanty 2001: 3), the model of knowledge representing "organized modernity" (Mode 1) is being replaced by a new model of knowledge called Mode 2. Mode 1 forms of knowledge arose out of research conducted within a set discipline (Muller 2000; Young 2001:36-37) within the academe (Delanty 2001) as opposed to "a context of application" (Muller 2000: 46). Within this

perspective (Mode 2), the university is no longer seen as the site of knowledge production, but rather that there exists a “range of new knowledge producers” within a range of contexts (Delanty 2001: 3). Knowledge is described as “transdisciplinary and fluid” (Delanty 2001: 109).

Scott (as cited in Muller 2000) argued that higher education should be moving from Mode 1 forms of knowledge production to Mode 2¹⁰. However, Muller (2000: 48) emphasized that the move from one mode of knowledge production to the other is simplistic and problematic as “Mode 2 competence depends upon a prior disciplinary competence” (Mode 1). Muller (2000) referred to Young’s (as cited in Muller 2000) proposal of ‘curriculum of the past’ and ‘curriculum of the future’ to support his claim that a Mode 2 replacement-type view is problematic. Young’s ‘curriculum of the past’ can be likened to Mode 1 forms of knowledge production where the curriculum is described as “inward looking, transmission orientated, disciplinary and makes a strong distinction between everyday and school knowledge” (Muller 2000: 53). ‘Curriculum of the future’, like Mode 2, is “outward looking, innovative and problem orientated” (Muller 2000: 53), and offers emancipatory possibilities. However, Young (as quoted in Muller 2000: 53) concedes that there are aspects of the ‘curriculum of the past’ that are still essential for a ‘curriculum of the future’ such being, “learning for its own sake” (Young as quoted in Muller 2000: 53). Continually having to search for the uses of knowledge can be constraining. For Young (as cited in Muller 2000: 53) “polarizations that pitch models in opposition to one another ... have weaknesses that a more relational approach might avoid.”

Barnett (1994) argued that this new language was not merely indicative of a change process within higher education, but reflected the contemporary demands of society. “In a society where immediate mastery, actions to effect, and information count, what is regarded as knowing undergoes change within the academy” (Barnett 1994: 43).

1.3.1.3 Competence

The new language emphasises the notion of applied competence, which is the ability to apply one’s knowledge to a practical and authentic context (SAQA 2000a: 3). “Applied competence

¹⁰ I would argue that within the context of teacher education, we (the education department within our higher education institution) have always stressed the importance of the “context of application” (Muller 2000: 46) and the need for our students to have authentic experiences in-the-field in order to relate theoretical aspects of their Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree with the practice.

suggests that foundational competence, practical competence and reflexive competence are all necessary for the meaningful accomplishment of a task in any real world context” (SAQA 2000a: 5). Understanding ‘what is’ and ‘why’ refers to foundational competence. Practical competence refers to the ability to demonstrate one’s abilities, and reflexive competence incorporates the notion of reflection-on-action in order to promote change and adapt to unexpected circumstances (SAQA 2000a: 5; SAQA 2000b: 16; Killen 2000: vi). The notion of knowledge as praxis¹¹ is central to the idea of applied competence (SAQA 2000b: 17). “Applied competence indicates that a qualification must address both the ‘theory’ needs as well as the practical needs of learners” (SAQA 2000b: 16).

Despite the NQF’s (DoE 1997a) focus on *competencies*, many higher education institutions in South Africa still focus on norm-referenced and examinations-based learning. Dore (as quoted in McGrath 1998: 115 –116) emphasised “those who have been subjected to a ritualistic examination-orientated learning as children and adolescents are likely to turn into ritualistic, performance-evaluation orientated workers, incapable of the sort of entrepreneurial initiative-taking which developing countries need.” The paradox between a competence-based approach as promoted by the NQF (DoE 1997a) and the still present and pervasive performance-based approach that is still entrenched in many higher education institutions in South Africa, places the teacher educator in a difficult position. This position of the teacher educator will be developed further at a later point in this chapter (see page 9), and analysed in chapter five (see page 153) when I explore the possibilities of a critical pedagogy in teacher education within the context of the curriculum reform highlighted in this section. At this stage it is necessary to reflect on the principles underlying curriculum development within the general education and training band as these impact on teacher education.

1.3.2 Curricula reform within the general education and training band

After the first non-racial democratic elections in 1994, the newly elected government was under pressure to restructure and reform education in South Africa (Jansen 2001:42-43). Having inherited nineteen racially divided education departments, and policies “governing teachers, learners, governance and curriculum” based mostly on apartheid ideology; the new government focused their attention on reform through policy production (Jansen 2001: 43).

¹¹ My understanding of praxis has changed over the course of constructing this thesis. Initially, I understood praxis to be the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice. My present understanding, which informs the analysis in this thesis, particularly in chapter four (see page 105) is that it is the constant reciprocity between theory and practice resulting in action for social change.

According to the DoE (2002b: 10), the two challenges facing curriculum reform are the post-apartheid challenge (overcoming the legacy of apartheid education and promoting social, economic and political justice) and the global competitive challenge (educating citizens for the 21st century that can respond to the social and economic needs of our country).

The apartheid legacy runs deep and clearly requires that the curriculum of post-apartheid South Africa deals forcibly and systematically with issues of justice, democracy, and respect for diversity and difference. However, it should also address the means to promote innovations and economic growth as the basis for social development for all. In this view of curriculum, learners are enabled to contribute to society when they have access and the cognitive tools required by such a society.

(DoE 2002b: 11)

The DoE (2002b: 11) argued that these two challenges could not be separated. For them, social transformation will only occur when everyone has access to knowledge and skills, and when development “serves the social values of our new democracy. A high knowledge and skill curriculum thus becomes the means to promote social justice, growth and development” (DoE 2002b: 11). C2005 was thus seen as central in promoting the transformation of South African society. The goal of C2005, is the development of a “prosperous, truly united, democratic, and internationally competitive country with literate, creative, and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination, and prejudice” (DoE as quoted in DoE 2002b: 10).

It is this focus on social transformation, which I argue in this chapter, has implications for teacher education programmes in South Africa.

1.3.3 View of teacher education in South Africa

Stones (1992: 301) argued that in the English-speaking world, the delivery view of education is predominant. This view of education “is probably the greatest single obstacle to a development of a form of teaching fit for human beings” (Stones 1992: 301). For Zeichner (as quoted in Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 36):

Underlying this orientation to teacher education is a metaphor of ‘production’, a view of teaching as an ‘applied science’ and a view of the teacher as primarily an ‘executor’ of the laws and principles of effective teaching. Prospective teachers may or may not proceed through the curriculum at their own pace and may participate in varied or standardised learning activities, but that which they are to master is

limited in scope (e.g., to a body of professional content knowledge and teaching skills) and is fully determined in advance often on the basis of research on teacher effectiveness. The prospective teacher is viewed primarily as a passive recipient of this professional knowledge and plays little part in determining the substance and direction of his or her preparation programme.

Avalos (as cited in Harber 1994: 2) argued that the dominant model used in teacher education programmes in developing countries is the 'behavioural' model associated with such approaches as 'competency based teacher education'¹² and 'mastery learning'. The emphasis of such models is focused on learning to do as opposed to learning to think. Al-Salmi (as cited in Harber 1994: 2) confirmed this view. He stated that the focus of teacher education in developing countries is based on the 'transmission' model where the aim is for the student to reproduce the knowledge that has been passed down from the lecturer to the student in the assignments and examinations.

The implication of this is that pre-service teachers, enrolled in teacher-education programmes, are viewed as 'obedient civil servants' rather than 'critically-minded intellectuals' or 'teacher-scholars' who can engage meaningfully with "the immediacy of school problems and ... critically analyse the underlying conditions that structure school life" (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 37).

For Holmes (as cited in Giroux & McLaren 1986: 301), if teachers are not perceived as 'critically minded intellectuals', then teacher education institutions will resort to methods of teacher education that undermine the intellectual capacity of future teachers. In viewing schools as sites of democratic struggle, it is important that the curriculum developed for teacher education programmes views "schooling as taking place within a political and cultural arena where forms of student experience and subjectivity are actively produced and mediated" (Giroux & McLaren 1986: 317). Curriculum within schooling and teacher education "is more than just an introduction of students to particular subject disciplines and teaching methodologies; it also serves as an introduction to a particular way of life" (Giroux & McLaren 1986: 317).

The NQF, has refuted the traditional notion of 'the teacher', as dispenser of knowledge (DoE as quoted in Muller 2000: 98), and has constructed "a new pedagogical persona, the

¹² While OBE emphasised competence, the difference for me is that the 'behavioural model' that Avalos (as cited in Harber 1994) mentioned, focused on foundational and practical competences and not reflexive competence.

‘education and training development practitioner’ ... who is engaged in ‘the practice of organizing systematic learning’ ...” (DoE as quoted in Muller 2000: 98). The NQF promotes “a shift from a transmission-content pedagogic model to an acquisition-competence model. It moves [the] focus ... to learning” (Muller 2000: 98). The outcomes-based curriculum, with its focus on the achievement of clearly defined outcomes, which include knowledge, values and skills, was different to the content-based curricula of apartheid. Furthermore, the pedagogy of “learner-centeredness, ‘freeing teachers’, and the idea that ‘everyone can succeed’” fitted with the post-apartheid focus on participation and access (Young 2001:33).

The development of curricula in line with the stated competencies (Technical Committee on the Revision of the Norms and Standards for Educators 1998), in higher education institutions, particularly in the field of teacher education, is still largely seen as the responsibility of the higher education institutions and the teacher educator. A *Policy on Curriculum Development and Review* for staff, which focuses on satisfying “human resource requirements and the need for greater accountability when developing curricula”, was developed within the higher education institution where I am situated (Academic Development Centre 2000: 3). This policy stated that curricula must articulate learning outcomes based on the outcomes for the ‘whole qualification’ that have been registered on the NQF. The onus therefore, rests on the teacher educators (lecturers within our higher education institution) to ensure that teacher education prepares the students for education in democracy and encourages the development of teachers that are ‘critically minded intellectuals’ and active citizens.

In order to promote the principles of democracy as articulated in C2005 (DoE 2002a), it is my opinion that teacher education programmes need to ensure that those principles (social justice, economic and political equality) are apparent in our courses. As Harber (1994: 2) stated: “It is not a case of student teachers forgetting what they have learned at college [or university] once they enter the ‘real world’ of schools, but rather the relationships between students and tutors in the college or university has actually prepared them for it.” I believe that the interactions between students and lecturers within teacher education programmes should reflect the principles of C2005 (DoE 1997b; DoE 2002a). This has implications for both curriculum development within teacher education, and learning and teaching.

1.4 CRITICAL PEDADOGY¹³

I believe that the pedagogies within teacher education institutions need to support the democratic values inherent in C2005. These pedagogies, as with the curriculum, need to be critical in order to transform our social realities.

While there are a number of different critical pedagogies, the central aim of social justice remains consistent. In order to locate myself within particular critical pedagogies, I will reflect on the 'definitions' that have informed my thinking, and the critical theorists and pedagogues that I have referred to in this thesis.

I have used the terms critical theory and critical pedagogy throughout, and refer to the critical theorists, Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986; as cited in Grundy 1987) and Giroux (1983; 1988; 1997) and the critical pedagogues Freire (1972; 1994; 1997; 1998), Shor (1993; Freire & Shor 1987) and Grundy (1987) extensively. In order to ensure that the readers of this thesis understand what is meant by these terms, it is necessary to explain my understandings and particular usage of these terms and why I have 'labelled' certain authors as critical theorists and others as critical pedagogues.

1.4.1 The discourses of critical theory and critical pedagogy

The discourses of both Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986; as cited in Grundy 1987) and Giroux (1983; 1988; 1997) are theoretical and have their political roots in Marxism and Neo-Marxism respectively. Their theory is influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School.

¹³ While I acknowledge that the students who participated in this research are all young adults (between 20 and 23 years of age), I have chosen to use the word pedagogy throughout this thesis. Knowles (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 58) coined the term 'andragogy' "to describe a model of learning that he felt was distinctive of adults". For Knowles (as cited in Light & Cox 2001), the central difference between pedagogy and andragogy was that adults are self-directed and responsible for their own lives. However, Jarvis (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 59) has argued that instead of viewing the two terms as distinctive, we need to visualise a continuum between pedagogy and andragogy that children and adults move between. According to Light & Cox (2001), while 'andragogy' does not "define a unique theory of learning with respect to 'adulthood'", it does have implications for the practice of teaching in that learning is "'self-directed' ... as opposed to 'teacher-directed'". Based on my own experiences in pre-service teacher education, I would argue that this is indeed a moot point. However, it is not the focus of this thesis to formulate arguments in contradiction to the views of Light & Cox (2001). To remain consistent throughout the thesis, and because 'pedagogies' have been described and explored more extensively in the literature that I have read, I have decided to use this term. The reader needs to be aware that when I use the term pedagogy in the context of this thesis, I am not only referring to children, but to the learning of the students who participated in this research.

Critical theory was the name chosen by the founders of the Frankfurt School in the period of the two world wars to symbolise their attempt to achieve a unity of theory and practice, including a unity of theory with empirical research and both with a historically grounded awareness of the social, political and cultural problems of the age.

(Calhoun 1995: 13)

Giroux (1997) developed the critical theory of the Frankfurt School further by examining three of the constitutive elements. Firstly, critical theory rejects the “absolutizing of facts” (Giroux 1997: 42). In other words, the critical theorist understands that the current state of affairs “does not exhaust all possibilities”, and the critical theorist needs to look for “positive implications for social change” (Calhoun 1995: 35). Secondly, theory needs to acknowledge whose interests are being represented “and be able to reflect critically on both the historical development or genesis of such interests and the limitations they may present” (Giroux 1997: 42). The critical theorist needs to examine his/her own historical and cultural situatedness and assumptions, which inform his/her own “intellectual activity” (Calhoun 1995: 35). Thirdly, theory needs to be criticised rather than reified (Giroux 1997: 42). Critical theorists continue to critically re-examine the assumptions upon which his/her conceptual understandings are based.

Critical thinking as a political act means that human beings must emerge from their own ‘submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled.’ Not only does this indicate that they must act with others to intervene in the shaping of history, it also means that they must ‘escape’ from their own histories, i.e., that which society has made them.

(Giroux 1997:27)

Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986: 136) argued that the aim of critical social science¹⁴ is emancipation¹⁵. Emancipation can only be realised if we eliminate oppressive myths. Critical social science needs to move beyond an ‘interpretive framework’¹⁶, which produces “uncritical renderings of individuals’ self-understandings” in order to “distil the historical processes which have caused subjective meanings to become systematically distorted” (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 137). Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986: 138)

¹⁴ Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986) used the term critical social science as opposed to critical theory as his is a theory of ‘knowledge-constitutive interests’, because for him, knowledge is never neutral, but rather rooted in our historical and social contexts. Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986: 133) argued that his theory of critical social science is located between “philosophy and science”.

¹⁵ According to Miedema & Wardekker (1999: 73), within an educational context, emancipation “is the realisation of an educational ideal, which under current circumstances in society is being denied.”

¹⁶ The ‘interpretive framework’ can be linked to Habermas’s (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986; as cited in Grundy 1987) ‘practical knowledge-constitutive interest’. The focus of this interest is understanding the status quo. This is elaborated in chapter 2 (see page 32).

introduced the Marxist notion of 'ideology critique' into his critical social science. 'Ideology critique' aims to expose the deceptive nature of beliefs and ideas presented as commonsense.

Freire (1972; 1994; 1997; 1998) and Giroux's (1983; 1988; 1997) is a "critique (embedded within a language of possibility) of social injustice and inequalities" (Gore 1993: 34). Unlike Habermas, Giroux has experience teaching in school and in teacher education. Giroux's critical 'pedagogy'¹⁷

is a social vision for teachers' work rather than guidelines for instructional practice – it is a vision of teachers who work to create 'a politicised citizenry capable of fighting for various forms of public life and informed by a concern for equity and social justice'.

(McLaren as quoted in Gore 1993: 34)

In attempting to develop a definition of critical pedagogy, I refer to Simon (1987: 371), who stated that:

'Pedagogy' is a more complex and extensive term than 'teaching', referring to the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, a time and space for the practice of those strategies and techniques, and evaluation purposes and methods. All of these aspects of educational practice come together in the realities of what happens in classrooms. Together they organise a view of a teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular vision of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others and our physical and social environment. In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. To propose a pedagogy is to propose a political vision. In this perspective, we cannot talk about teaching and practice without talking about politics.

What I believe is significant about this view of critical pedagogy, is that it emphasises both the importance of 'instructional practices' and the 'political vision', and views the two as being reciprocal. While Freire (1972; 1997) and Shor (in Freire & Shor 1987) both share the 'political vision' (they too have their roots in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School) that is at the heart of critical theory, they offer their readers concrete suggestions of the implications of critical theory for the classroom. In my mind, theirs is a critical pedagogy as it focuses on both 'instructional practices' and the 'political vision'.

¹⁷ I place the term pedagogy in single inverted commas to signify that I don't agree that his focus is pedagogical as I explain in this paragraph.

1.4.2 My critical pedagogy

At this point, it is necessary for me to explain that my understanding of critical pedagogy has changed significantly over the past three years. While the negotiated curriculum process was conducted in 2001, it is only in 2003 that I began writing this thesis. The reason was that I was both actor and academic in this research process. If I had written the thesis during the course of the research process, I would have probably presented a very different perspective, as I was personally involved in the curriculum negotiation process at that time. For this reason, it was necessary for me to distance myself from the research process before writing the thesis.

In the interim, my perspectives of critical theory and critical pedagogy have changed. The difficulty now, in writing the thesis, is to try and create a more nuanced representation of this research, as I need to both explain my thinking at that time, and reflect critically on the limitations of that thinking now that my understanding of critical pedagogy has changed.

At the time of constructing my proposal, co-developing and participating in the research process, my understanding of critical theory and critical pedagogy was 'simplistic' in the sense that I believed, that although my students were all white, middle-class females, they were still 'oppressed', even though I know fully, that they have had privileged experiences growing up in South Africa. This 'oppression' was a result of a technical rationality¹⁸ that in my opinion was pervasive in education in South Africa. In my previous pedagogical experiences with this group of students, I realised that they were dependent on the lecturers for their education, and were generally not prepared to take responsibility for or ownership of their learning. My reflections around this issue led me to believe that if these students participated in the decision-making processes, particularly with regards to what and how they wanted to learn, they would be empowered to take responsibility for their own learning; and ultimately become lifelong learners. So, it is in this context that my critical pedagogy was situated. The task in this thesis is to present the research from a previous understanding of critical pedagogy and to criticise it from my current perspective.

Within the context of this research, curriculum negotiation (see chapter one page 16) was the vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy. The extent to which this relationship is suitable in teacher education is critiqued in chapter five (see page 148).

¹⁸ 'Technical rationality' is a positivist-orientated discourse that places emphasis on 'techniques', which become increasingly 'value-free' as opposed to critical thought.

1.5 CURRICULUM NEGOTIATION

The idea of negotiating the curriculum with one's students is not new (Carr & Kemmis 1986; Grundy 1987; Boomer 1992a; 1992b; 1992c; 1992d; Cook 1992; Hyde 1992; Lester 1992; Reid 1992; Harber 1994; Wraga 2002).

According to Cook (1992:15), to negotiate means that,

... all the parties in an operation come together, bringing with them their own points of view, needs and wants, and together they work for the outcomes most satisfactory to all concerned. In educational terms, the result of negotiation may come to a meshing of the minds, an interlocking of intentions, an agreement about the means and ends between teachers and learners.

It is my opinion that the intention of curriculum negotiation was to promote the development of learners who can go out into the world as life-long learners, as curriculum negotiation provides an opportunity for students to "rehearse and test out their independent, critical voices" (Lester 1992: 136) rather than accepting wholesale the view that 'teacher-knows-best'. Although Boomer (1992d: 278) argued that "negotiating the curriculum is a way of being and acting which transcends technique and formula", his initial descriptions, of curriculum negotiation, viewed curriculum as largely about the classroom (Boomer 1992a; Boomer 1992b). The focus, as with Cook (1992), was the method of negotiating together (the students and teacher) what and how the students wanted to learn. The problem with an over-emphasis on method is that the focus is localised within the classroom, and the classroom is seen as distinct and separate from society. "To treat content, pedagogy and environment as separate or separable, is to separate school from society" (Onore & Lubetsky 1992:256). Rather,

To make these connections requires more than bringing together academic and personal/experiential knowledge. It requires framing issues that arise from the intrusion of injustice and inequality into the classroom. If connections among the various aspects of the curriculum are to be redefined and thereby altered, so must relationships between the participants in this process of alteration, the teachers and the students. In order for relationships not to mirror those of the larger society they cannot reproduce the contours of dominance and submission, hierarchy and power which exist outside the classroom.

(Onore & Lubetsky 1992:256)

Curriculum negotiation does not imply a free-for-all as far as the content and process of the curriculum is concerned (Grundy 1987: 125). The promotion of a 'critical consciousness' is central to curriculum negotiation that has an emancipatory interest. While "traditional forms of knowledge may, within an already established education system, initially provide a basis for study, the legitimacy of the construction as well as the selection of pieces of knowledge for acquisition must form part of the focus of curriculum enquiry" (Grundy 1987: 125). The responsibility for the selection of content does not rest solely on the hands of the students in curriculum negotiation. Together, the students and teacher will be actively involved in the process of negotiating the content (Grundy 1987: 125). However, each suggestion is open to critical scrutiny by the participants.

"What is important, however (and extremely difficult, given the existing power relations between teachers and students embedded in systems of education), is that the possibility for authentic learning by the students, rather than coopted agreement, be safeguarded" (Grundy 1987: 125). Negotiating a curriculum, and "simply 'cooperationalising' a mandated curriculum, without researching and negotiating our own and our students' positions in relation to it, must lead ... to the 'de-skilling' of both parties" (Reid 1992:132).

There is a growing amount of research that points to an increased use of pre-packaged curriculum materials that accentuate delivering instruction while at the same time removing conception and critique from the pedagogical act.

(Giroux 1983:138)

Ruddock (as quoted in Reid 1992: 133) claimed, "as we have come to realise through analyses of attempts at education reform, a common phenomenon is 'innovation without change' – where surface realities have been cosmeticised but the basic structures and values remain unchanged." In this thesis, the extent to which a negotiated curriculum is a suitable vehicle for bringing about social change, which is essential to critical pedagogy in teacher education, is discussed throughout, but particularly in chapter five (see page 136).

1.6 RESEARCH CONTEXT

In 2001, I negotiated the curriculum (see appendix one page 179 for the negotiated curriculum and chapter 3 page 67 for a narrative of the negotiated curriculum process) with twelve third

year pre-service teachers for their Mathematics Education Course¹⁹. This course forms part of Foundation Phase Studies, which is three year major in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree. The courses contributing to Foundation Phase Studies include the eight learning areas as defined in C2005 - Language, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Technology, Economic Management Sciences, Arts and Culture, and Life Orientation (DoE 1997b; DoE 2002a).

The reasons for negotiating the curriculum with these pre-service teachers was to provide a context that would encourage the students to become more active in the learning process by taking responsibility and ownership for their own learning; and to further develop myself as a professional teacher educator, particularly with regards to mathematics learning and teaching.

If we, as teacher educators, are serious about empowering our learners to take responsibility for their own learning then they “must be encouraged to voice concerns, opinions and plans as learners, to discuss decisions, to talk and act like citizens in a democracy” (Allen as cited in Marsh 1999:50). It was my opinion that negotiating the curriculum would provide the necessary space for the pre-service teachers to be actively involved in the learning process.

As articulated by SAQA (2000a: 7), the design of learning programmes should be the responsibility of all the relevant stakeholders. While the NQF’s role was to,

... set in place standards and qualifications which becomes the starting point for learning programme design, development and delivery. It establishes a new framework for who asks the questions of what should constitute a qualification or standard and who decides whether what has been done is of the specified degree of excellence. The fundamental challenge of the NQF to educators is not in terms of what should be included in a learning programme and how it should be taught and assessed, but in terms of who is included in the decision-making process and the relationship between different partners in the process i.e. the social milieu in which the curriculum unfolds.

(SAQA 2000a: 7)

¹⁹ At this point it is necessary to state that my intention in this research was to critically investigate the negotiation of a mathematics education curriculum with pre-service teachers registered for the Bachelor of Education Degree. The research is contextualised within a mathematics education course, as explained above. However, the focus of this textual representation, which was constructed subsequent to the implementation of the negotiated curriculum, is not mathematics, but rather the extent to which curriculum negotiation was a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy. During the research process a number of dilemmas emerged related to curriculum negotiation and the enactment of democratic practices (see chapter 2 page 57; chapter 4 page 105). In this sense, the focus was diverted from mathematics to teacher education more broadly.

In other words, the responsibility for the success of a learning programme²⁰ does not rest solely on the lecturer (teacher), but rather on “all who participate in the system” (SAQA 2000a: 8). This is particularly relevant in the context of curriculum negotiation as the learners are central to the process.

Teacher education programmes in South Africa need to enable pre-service teachers to teach a curriculum (C2005) that is based on democratic principles; social justice, political and economic equality. It is my opinion that pre-service teachers will need to implement a socially-critical curriculum in order to challenge the dominant ideologies²¹ of the past. Given this situation, it was necessary to demonstrate a critical pedagogy in the classroom.

Furthermore, I believed that teacher education programmes needed to provide contexts that encourage students to use their own critical voices to enable them to engage with “the reality of what goes on in the daily lives of teachers” (Giroux 1997: 107), as well as learning and teaching.

One of the criticisms of critical theory, particularly in relation to the form of critical ‘pedagogy’ that Giroux (1983; 1988; 1997) argued for, is that Giroux appears reluctant to articulate specific practices for creating a critical pedagogy in the classroom (Gore 1993). Gore (1993: 111) argued:

this strand of discourse [namely critical theory] which expresses such optimism about what teachers might do, and which claims to function as a critical pedagogy for schools (an other institutions), seems limited by the extent to which it refuses to grapple with the details of pedagogical practice.

Within this context, it is necessary for the teacher to construct and conceptualise a critical pedagogy for the classroom. To do this, I decided to use a negotiated curriculum as a vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy. It was my opinion that negotiating the curriculum would facilitate the implementation of democratic practices in the classroom and would empower the students to take responsibility and ownership for their learning. In this research, negotiation, praxis and reflection form central tenets of the type of critical pedagogy implemented during the Mathematics Education Course.

²⁰ A ‘learning programme’ refers to the qualification, in this context, the Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree.

²¹ Here I am referring to the ideology of apartheid that promoted values that are contrary to the values underpinning education in South Africa today.

Giroux's (1983; 1988; 1997) critical theory has been criticized for the separating of the 'pedagogical strategy' from the 'critical political project', when the two are mutually inclusive. Furthermore, creating this dichotomy constructs a further dichotomy, that of theorist versus practitioner. As Gore (1993: 110) stated,

... this separation (of theory from practice) reflects the theorists' view that their role is to outline the political project for teachers, while the role of the teachers, ... is to conceptualise and implement the pedagogical strategies or practices.

(Gore 1993:110)

A further criticism, of mine, is that Giroux's (1983; 1988; 1997) discourse of critical theory sees schools as failing to promote active critical citizens. In my readings of Giroux (1983; 1988; 1997), who is situated within a higher education institution, where I assume he not only researches, but also engages in pedagogical practices, there are few references to his own teaching, and the extent to which his critical 'pedagogy' is practised.

With these criticisms in mind, I decided to develop my own critical pedagogy in action. Doing this put me in the position of theorist, teacher and participant, which provided a unique opportunity for me to explore the extent to which the negotiated curriculum could be used as a vehicle for practising a critical pedagogy, but also, to ascertain the compatibility between critical pedagogy and curriculum negotiation, and to explore the extent to which a critical pedagogy is suitable to teacher education. In chapter 4 (see page 105) and chapter 5 (see page 136) I have reflected on these two issues in the light of the negotiated curriculum. At this point it is necessary for me to state that trying to implement a critical pedagogy is very different from articulating a critical pedagogy. This will be discussed in chapter four (see page 105) and chapter five (see page 136). One of the problems that emerged through this research with the use of a negotiated curriculum as a vehicle for implementing a critical pedagogy related to the homogenous 'nature' of the group of students with whom I worked. This is explained in the next section.

1.7 STUDENTS' HISTORIES

All²² of the students in this study spent part of their lives in schools that promoted the values of Christian-National Education (CNE)²³ and were racially segregated for the majority of their primary schooling. While schools were open to all races from 1991, government insisted that education would be in English or Afrikaans and the values of CNE²⁴ would continue to be promoted (Christie 1991: 191). In 1994 when the first democratically elected government came into power, the majority of the students that participated in this research were already in Standard 6 (grade 8). The new curriculum, C2005 (DoE 1997b), based on democratic principles, was introduced in 1997, but had no effect on these students as they were in the process of completing their secondary education.

The curriculum informing schooling policies and practices prior to C2005 (DoE 1997b) was developed nationally and not open to public scrutiny and review, and promoted CNE. The central aim of CNE was to actively promote the values and beliefs of the dominant culture (white, Christian Afrikaners). This curriculum viewed the students as passive learners, encouraged rote learning and memorisation of 'facts' through a discipline-based, content-knowledge approach; it was textbook and worksheet bound and exams driven. Teachers were responsible for learning in the sense that they determined the learning objectives in line with the curriculum, and they were required to motivate their students to learn the content in a set and rigid, non-negotiable curriculum, that placed the content into rigid time-frames (Meerkotter 1998: 59). Morrow (1989: 152) argued that the South African schooling system did not encourage students to think critically. "The most pervasive characteristics of schooling ... is rote-learning, the reproduction of dominant social structures, incorporation into the status quo" (Morrow 1989: 152).

²² While some of these students may have been exposed to an education more consistent with liberalism, which promoted "the importance of the individual as the centre of social life" (Ashley 1989: 29, 31; Cross 1999), these principles were not dominant at the time and thus I have not chosen to focus on them in the context of student histories. While many liberals in the 1930's supported the notion of parallel institutions (that is, separate but equal), the response to the Christian-Nationalism of the Apartheid Government was to "promote a new South Africanism beyond racial boundaries" (Cross 1999: 185) and the advancement of individual liberty. However, it should be noted that while these principles of individual autonomy and tolerance of others may have been promoted in many schools, these students were still, prior to 1991, learning in schools that were segregated according to race.

²³The ideological position of the Afrikaner Nationalists for education in South Africa was CNE. CNE was underpinned by two central tenets. Firstly, all education should be based on the teachings of Christianity, and secondly education should reflect national differences (Ashley 1989: 7).

²⁴ While the 1967 National Education Policy promoted CNE and was confirmed through the 1983 White Paper (a response to the De Lange report), it is not possible to assume that this was taught explicitly in all the white schools, however, the "flag-raising, festivals 'honouring' (white) heroes, religious assemblies, and so on, are all designed to 'imprint' Christian-National views" (Christie 1991: 179). The values of CNE were entrenched through the hidden curriculum.

Schooling in South Africa prior to 1997 was based on a set of assumptions that reveal positivist characteristics. In many instances, teacher education was based on fundamental pedagogics; a theoretical model based on a scientific model (Kihn 2002: 330) and instrumental rationality. Knowledge was viewed as objective and 'out there'. It was viewed as "independent of time and place, and becomes universalized, ahistorical knowledge" (Giroux 1997: 21). Furthermore, knowledge becomes technical and 'fact' as it is presented as context free since it is "divorced from the political and cultural traditions that give it meaning" (Giroux 1997: 21).

There is little in the positivist pedagogical model that encourages students to generate their own meanings, to capitalise on their cultural capital, or to participate in evaluating their own classroom experiences. The principles of order, control, and certainty in positivist pedagogy appear inherently opposed to such an approach.

(Giroux 1997: 25)

Giroux (1997: 119) used the phrase 'reproductive theory of schooling' to demonstrate how public schools in the United States are not valued as "public spheres engaged in teaching students the knowledge and skills of democracy", but are rather concerned with the "values, social practices, and skills needed for the dominant corporate order." In South Africa, CNE legitimated and promoted the dominant ideology of apartheid by segregating learners according to race, and provided the different races with forms of knowledge and skills that would result in a labour force that was differentiated on racial grounds²⁵.

White schools "were little affected by the more than twenty years of struggle and strife" (Meerkotter 1998: 51). These twelve students that participated in this research process benefited from Apartheid economically, politically and socially. Education was compulsory for white students and the facilities in white schools were predominantly better (Christie 1991: 171) While intellectually they received a privileged form of education, the beliefs about teaching and learning promoted in the schools that they attended did not encourage critical or reflexive thinking.

One of the reasons for this was that many teachers themselves were not encouraged to think reflexively. When these twelve students were at school, Kihn (2002:328) argued that traditional professionalism viewed education and politics as being separate; "professional

²⁵ One could include gender or class into this discussion, but I have chosen not to as this is not the purpose of this introduction.

teachers educated children and did not involve themselves in appropriate political activity.” With the emergence of new teacher unions in 1991, he argued that the potential existed for teachers to redefine themselves. However in 1991, the new teacher union National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), which was a union founded in opposition to the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU), a mass democratic union, reiterated the responsibility of educators as teachers as opposed to politicians. ““The members of this organization are not politicians, but educators’, said Professor Maree. ‘If they want to be politicians they can become candidates in political organizations and not here”” (Kihn 2002: 328-329). For many teachers, Kihn (2002: 329) argued, “Associations that embodied traditional ideas of professionalism had, in their view, been co-opted by the state and were guilty of collaboration.”

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The *voluntary consent* of the human subject is absolutely essential. This means that the person involved should have legal capacity to give consent, should be so situated as to be able to *exercise free power of choice* without the intervention of any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress, over-reaching or any other form of constraint or coercion; and *should have sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved* as to enable him (sic) to make an understanding and enlightened decision. (*my italics*)

(Reynolds as cited in Homan 2002:25)

There are two issues with regards to the notion of ‘voluntary consent’ that need to be highlighted in the above quote. Firstly, the issue of the participants being able to “exercise free power of choice” and secondly, the participants need “sufficient knowledge and comprehension of the elements of the subject matter involved” (Reynolds as cited in Homan 2002: 25). I have chosen to address these two issues through three conditions as defined by Tickle (2002) that are necessary to obtaining ‘voluntary consent’. Tickle (2002: 44) argued that consent for access and use of data needs to be negotiated with the participants, and the conditions of openness, confidentiality and anonymity need to apply throughout the research process. ‘Openness’ refers to the accessibility of the data and information. Every participant in the research process should have access to the information (raw data) and disseminated research. ‘Confidentiality’ protects the participants, as the data may not be disseminated to anyone else without their permission. ‘Anonymity’ ensures that the participants of the data are not identifiable in the research thesis.

Before embarking on the negotiated curriculum with the students, I provided the twelve students with a copy of my research proposal. The reason for doing this was that I felt it important to be clear about the 'fact' that this course was going to be part of an action research project, and that this action research would result in my master's dissertation. Furthermore, I wanted these twelve students to be my research participants. Their comments, ideas and reflections would thus form part of the research data and would inform my analysis of the data. It was essential to make this explicit, since to negotiate the curriculum successfully I would need to have all of the students' consent.

Once all the students had agreed to participate in the research process, a number of ethical issues were discussed with them. They had the right to refuse to participate in the process at any point during the year. Throughout the entire process, I asked the students if I could record or document their opinions and ideas. All of the interviews and discussions were open to scrutiny by the participants in order to ascertain that my interpretations were valid.

During the focus group interviews (see chapter two page 52) and individual interviews (see chapter two page 54), I asked each of the students if I could record their comments. The students agreed to be taped and for their comments to be used in this thesis. However, in one of the individual interviews a student asked me to stop the tape for a few minutes. This student wanted her opinions, during this time, to remain confidential and not be used in any form. During the group interviews, the students' comments were recorded in writing.

Transcriptions of the data were available to the students. We referred to the transcripts of the focus group interviews during one of the lecture-sessions in order to focus on their beliefs about learning and teaching. In 2002, we (the same research participants) used the transcriptions of the focus group interviews to explore data analysis during a research methods course that I developed to assist them with their own action research projects.

I assured the students that their anonymity and confidentiality would be protected. The students said they were at ease with their names being in the master's thesis. However, as the students have not been part of the writing of this thesis in the sense that they have not been able to check my interpretations, I have decided to use pseudonyms throughout.

I had to ensure throughout the research process that my opinions, or those of the participants, did not silence the members of the group (Green & Hart 1999:32). This is particularly

relevant in the context of collaborative action research, as one should ensure that all the voices of the participants are represented. In addition, I had to be careful not to promote my ideas and beliefs about the process as being more important than that of the participants. This issue is discussed at length in chapter four (see page 115, 127).

In this research, I was conscious of avoiding treating the participants as research subjects. I communicated with them both the nature and purpose of the research and tried to include them in interpreting the data from the focus group interviews and group interviews at the end of cycle one and two. Furthermore, I tried to keep the channels of communication open throughout the research process by encouraging the students to express their opinions.

The raw data from this research process has not been included in the appendices due to the sheer volume of data, but it has been stored in the Department of Education, University of Fort Hare, East London Campus, East London. Hard copies of all the interviews (focus group and individual interviews), field notes and student journals are available. Transcripts of the interviews are also available on disc.

1.9 THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS

Chapter two (see page 29) locates this research process within research paradigms. The methodology of action research is explained, particularly action research that has emancipatory potential. The tools used to obtain the data are explained, and the limitations and advantages of the tools are reflected on in relation to this study. Finally the process of data analysis is described and issues around validity and generalisability are presented.

The focus of chapters three (see page 67), four (see page 105) and five (see page 136) is the negotiated curriculum, and the attempt to locate this research process within a critical paradigm. Chapter three highlights the action research cycles (see page 90) occurring during the negotiated curriculum process. The focus of this chapter is to narrate my story of the negotiated curriculum process by drawing on the opinions and comments of the students who formed part of the research process through the interactions recorded in the focus group interviews (see chapter two page 52), classroom interaction in the form of field notes (see chapter two page 54, group interviews (see chapter two page 53), individual interviews (see chapter two page 54) and small group instructional diagnosis (see chapter two page 55). This

chapter draws on critical theory and critical pedagogy to locate the negotiated curriculum within the critical paradigm.

In chapter four (see page 105) the central dilemmas that emerged during the research process are presented and analysed. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, the chapter attempts to explore the extent to which the research was located within a critical paradigm. Secondly, the chapter provides the reader with the necessary 'groundwork' for chapter five (see page 136).

Chapter five (see page 136) uses the data analysis of chapter four (see page 105) to reflect on the aims of this study and the extent to which the negotiated curriculum provided a space for the students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, in lieu of the second aim (see chapter one page 3), which concerns my own professional practice, I explore the significance of curriculum negotiation in teacher education. In formulating the central arguments, the problems and limitations of this study will be articulated.

Chapter six (see page 161) presents the key findings of the research. The limitations and significance of the research are presented. Finally, this concluding chapter offers the reader further possibilities for developing a praxis that has emancipatory potential, and makes recommendations for further research in this area.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE

The research focused on pre-service teacher education, in particular curricula development, in South Africa. C2005 expects teachers to promote the values of democracy in their own classes. As these students (pre-service teachers) have been, predominantly, exposed to a technicist view of education (see page 9), it was necessary to develop a learning environment countering this perspective; an environment that enabled students to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning, and that promoted a pedagogy based on democratic principles. The significance of this research is that it questions the extent to which curriculum negotiation is suitable in promoting a critical pedagogy based on democratic values with a homogenous²⁶ group of students who are all white, middle-class women.

²⁶ I realise that many post-structuralists would find my use of the term 'homogenous' problematic. However, I agree with Bruner (as cited in Light & Cox 2001) as articulated in chapter three (see page 70) that we cannot separate our 'self' from our historicity and culture. As all the participants in this study, including myself, were

1.11 LIMITATIONS

Although the limitations of this research are embedded in chapter four (see page 105) and chapter five (see page 136), it is necessary to reflect on some of the key limitations of this study in the introduction.

- As mentioned earlier in this chapter (see page 15), all the students participating in this study were white, middle-class women.
- My understanding of critical pedagogy at the time of this research process was ‘simplistic’ (see chapter one page 15).
- I saw the students’ reluctance to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning as problematic, and I decided that negotiating the curriculum would encourage them to take responsibility. As I argue in chapter five (see page 140), this was a limitation, as the students were not emotionally committed to the research process as negotiating the curriculum had been ‘enforced’ rather than negotiated.
- My initial paradigmatic choice and that of the students’ differed (see chapter two page 30; chapter four page 105; chapter five page 136).
- While collaboration is central to emancipatory action research (see chapter two page 45), collaboration, in terms of our reflecting on the research process, occurred during the research process and not during the writing of this thesis

1.12 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to situate the research. To do this, I have highlighted the aims of the research, located the research within historical contexts, and explained key concepts that were central to the research process and the construction of this thesis. Teacher education, particularly curriculum development have been explored at a national level with reference to the White Paper on the *Programme for Higher Education Transformation* (DoE 1997a), the White paper on *Education and training in a democratic South Africa: First steps to developing a new system* (DoE 1995), and C2005 (DoE 1997b; DoE 2002a). Furthermore, the implications of these documents have been addressed at a local level, from a higher education institutional perspective, and with regards to my own perspectives of teaching and learning within the context of pre-service teacher education. To address the social transformation

white, middle-class women, there are a number of identities that we share. It is within this context that I use the term ‘homogenous’.

needs of our country, I argued, in this chapter, that a critical pedagogy is important in pre-service teacher education. In order to promote a critical pedagogy, I suggested that my students and I negotiated the curriculum. It was my assumption that negotiating the curriculum with my students would facilitate the development of a critical pedagogy that had transformation for social action (Freire 1994) as its goal. Furthermore, I believed that negotiating the curriculum would create a democratic learning environment that would encourage students to take responsibility and ownership for their own learning.

However, as mentioned in this chapter, there were a number of limitations in this research process that impacted on the extent to which the aims of the research were realised. These are elaborated on in chapter four (see page 105), and chapter five (see page 136).

The next chapter (see page 29) situates the research within a methodological framework and highlights the processes that have informed this research.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

If research is to be worth the effort, it needs to offer the prospect of going beyond competing ideologies, to offer the possibility of changes in our thinking and practice.

(Winter 1996:18)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to review the research process in this study. In order to analyse the research methodology²⁷ as articulated on page 43, it is necessary to draw the reader's attention to the aims of this study as stated in chapter one (see page 3).

The aims informed both the research methodology and the research tools used in this study. Before I analyse the research methodology and tools, I locate the study within paradigms, as these are central to the research in the sense that they inform the research process. A number of key issues relating to the research paradigms will need to be addressed. These include the concepts of objectivity, power, and the relationship between theory and practice. The methodology of action research (see page 43), particularly emancipatory action research (see page 45) is explored, and specific reference is made to issues of voice, reflection and the relationship between the researcher and research participants.

The research tools included focus group interviews (see page 52), group interviews (see page 53) and individual interviews (see page 54). The differences between these research tools are explained later in this chapter. Data from the interviews is supplemented with student journals (see page 54), my own field notes (see page 54), and a small group instructional diagnosis (SGID) conducted by the Academic Development Centre²⁸ (see page 55). Data analysis includes the construction of a narrative (Mishler 1986) (see page 57), and dilemma analysis (Winter 1982) (see page 57). Finally issues related to validity (see page 59) are explored.

²⁷ For me, the term 'methodology' refers to the research method, which in this research process was action research. The 'meta-methodology' or paradigms as I have referred to them in this thesis situate the methodology of action research within a framework of ideas and beliefs.

²⁸ The Academic Development Centre is located in my higher education institution. It focuses on assisting lecturers in supporting the development of students' academic writing, and evaluating modules, courses or learning programmes.

2.2 PARADIGMS

Scott and Usher (1999:10) believed that there are philosophical issues integral to the research process, but which are often only thought about at the end of the research process. The research process is governed and informed by a set of assumptions, values and ethics. Thus, research is never neutral, but is “replete with unconscious assumptions about what the world is like and about the nature of things” (Popkewitz 1984:33). Locating one’s research requires that the researcher interrogates his/her assumptions about what constitutes knowledge and to what purpose is the research. For the researcher, these assumptions are ‘fact’ as they are deeply rooted in our existence / reality, giving form to our understanding and interpretation of our world (Popkewitz 1984:34).

Paradigms embody “the particular conceptual framework through which the community of researchers operates and in terms of which a particular interpretation of ‘reality’ is generated” (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 72). It is through these paradigms that one can locate one’s assumptions, values and beliefs in terms of one’s understandings of the nature of knowledge and reality.

A paradigm is a worldview, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world. As such paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners. Paradigms tell them what is important, legitimate, and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do without the necessity of long existential or epistemological considerations. But it is this aspect of paradigms that constitutes both their strength and their weaknesses – their strength in that they make action possible, and their weakness in that the very reason for action is hidden in the unquestioned assumption of the paradigm.

(Patton as quoted in Fein & Hillcoat 1996:26)

It is important to note at this point that research should not necessarily be paradigm-bound, as this is both restrictive and stagnating (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000:106). Within the context of this study, it is worth noting that my initial paradigmatic choice was not the paradigmatic position of the participants in the study. The research, for me, was informed by a critical paradigm, which has emancipatory aspirations as its aim. However, as I argued in chapters four (see page 105) and five (see page 136) the emancipatory aim was not realised for a number of reasons, one of which related to the ‘position’ of the research participants in society (see chapter five page 150). It thus emerged that the research was underpinned from two epistemological viewpoints (interpretive paradigm and critical paradigm), which I will

argue are compatible, but not ideal, if transformation for social action (Freire 1994)²⁹ is our aim, in chapter five (see page 136). Furthermore, the textual representation of this research process is constructed in layers reflecting the above-mentioned paradigms. In chapter three (see page 67) I have constructed a narrative of the negotiated curriculum process in order to explain what occurred during the research process. The analysis in chapter four (see page 105) is rooted in a critical paradigm as the focus is on analysing key dilemmas in the research process that impacted on the extent to which the research promoted social change.

In order to situate the research within paradigms, it is necessary to explain the paradigms³⁰ that have emerged in educational research: positivist, interpretive, critical, and postmodern and post-structural. Each paradigm has their own theories of epistemology, ontology and values that influence the research process. While these paradigms are dynamic and ever-changing, the general assumptions underpinning each are highlighted in this chapter.

In order to locate this research within one or more paradigms, I have briefly analysed some of the assumptions and implications of the four paradigms within the context of this action research.

2.2.1 Positivism

Researchers influenced by the positivist paradigm, attempt to explain and predict that which is observable. Knowledge is based on what can be observed and thus, it is necessary to “separate human behaviours into its constituent elements” (Popkewitz 1984:36). According to Kincheloe (1991: 50) that which is observable are “micro-expressions of universal laws that are appropriate to all contexts.” Thus theory (knowledge) is not contextual, but rather universal. Universal ‘truths’ or ‘facts’ are obtained through observation. It is believed that “the social world exists as a system of variables. These variables are distinct and analytically separate parts of an interacting system” (Popkewitz 1984:37). By making these variables explicit prior to the research inquiry, and through the process of elimination of these ‘distinct and separate variables’, the researcher is able to identify a ‘true’ description or ‘fact’ based on the ‘effects’ produced on one variable through manipulation of another variable (Scott & Usher 1999; Popkewitz 1984).

²⁹ This phrase, which is attributed to Freire (1994), is used extensively in this thesis. I have cited Freire here, but will continue to use the phrase without the reference.

³⁰ I use the term paradigm, although the poststructuralists would argue that poststructuralism is not a paradigm, but a ‘discourse’ (Lather 1991).

The ultimate goal of positivist research is analytical. The focus is to identify 'what is' rather than 'what should be'. The implication of this is that "society has a life of its own, and that no matter what human beings might do they cannot interfere with this social determinism" (Kincheloe 1991:53).

2.2.2 Interpretive

The interpretive paradigm views social science as influenced by interactions and behaviours. Human existence is defined through interactions, concepts and ideas. Rather than focusing on human behaviour as with positivism, interpretive research focuses on social action, the interactions and negotiations through which people define appropriate behaviour (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 87). "Actions, unlike behaviour ... always embody the interpretations of the actor" (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 88). On some level, the positivist and interpretive paradigms can have the same purpose, which is to develop theories about "social affairs" (Popkewitz 1984:41). The difference is the shift in researching the nature of social behaviour to focusing on researching the social rules or 'facts' that govern and inform social affairs. What is described as 'fact' within the interpretive paradigm is seen as 'real' and 'valid' by society.

2.2.3 Critical

As with the interpretivists, critical social science argues that research is not neutral, but rather that it is grounded in historical, social and political contexts (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997; Carr & Kemmis 1986). The purpose of this paradigm is to "demystify the patterns of knowledge and social conditions that restrict our practical activities" (Popkewitz 1984: 45). The role of critical social science is to understand our 'social conditions' and to try and change them. The aim of the critical researcher is emancipation.

For Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986: 44), there is a difference between critical theory and critical social science. The former changes the way we see the world, but does not necessarily promote change, while the latter, attempts to overcome this. Critical social science is a

social process that combines collaboration in the process of critique with the political determination to act to overcome contradictions in the reality and justice of social action and social institutions ... [It] goes beyond

critique to critical praxis, that is, a form of practice which the enlightenment of actors come to bear directly in their transformed social action. This requires an integration of theory and practice as reflective and practical moments of a dialectical process of reflection, enlightenment and political struggle carried out by groups for the purpose of their own emancipation.

(Carr & Kemmis 1986: 144)

Usher, Bryant and Johnston (1997) define critical theory in relation to Habermas's critical social science. For them (Usher, Bryant and Johnston 1997: 187), critical theory involves "*ideology critique*, unmasking or consciousness-raising; allied to this is the *organization of enlightenment*, taking action in the light of raised consciousness."

2.2.4 Postmodern /Poststructural

The terms postmodernism and poststructuralism refer to emerging reflexive discourses in research that reflect on the "assumptions underlying theory, practice and research" (Janse van Rensburg 1995:32). Lather (as cited in Brown & Jones 2001: 99) argued that the two terms are interrelated. Generally, "larger cultural shifts of a post-industrial, post-colonial era" are often described as postmodern, while poststructural concerns the "working out of those shifts within the arenas of academic theory" (Lather as quoted in Brown & Jones 2001: 99).

2.2.4.1 Postmodernism

Various educationists and researchers have articulated that we are now 'living in the postmodern age' (Kemmis 1996: 200). Jameson (as cited in Kemmis 1996: 201) defined the postmodern age as the emergence of a new "social formation." While this new "social formation is characterized by changed social structures and functions ... this new period has produced substantial shifts in the way people experience the world" (Kemmis 1996: 201). Postmodernism "does not designate a systematic theory or a comprehensive philosophy, but rather diverse diagnoses and interpretations of the current culture, a depiction of a multitude of interrelated phenomena" (Kvale 1995: 19).

'Postmodernists' argue that 'the real' is discursive (Lather 1991). "The focus is on the social and linguistic construction of a perspectival reality" (Kvale 1995: 19). They attempt to "foreground how discourses shape our experience of 'the real' ... that the way we speak and write reflects the structures of power in our society" (Lather 1991:25). The postmodernist era

is thus a time that signifies the “decline of absolute truths” (Lecourt as quoted in Lather 1991:51). As Rich (as quoted in Lather 1991:51) argued “there is no ‘the truth’, ‘a truth’ – truth is not one thing, or even one system. It is an increasing complexity.”

Postmodernists are critical of critical theory (chapter five page 136) and critical social science as it glorifies rationality and promotes the formulation of ‘grand narratives’ that are used to legitimate dominant ideologies. In an attempt to define postmodernism, Lyotard defined postmodernism “in terms of an increasing incredulity towards the ‘grand narratives’ of progress and emancipation” (Kemmis 1996:220). He defined ‘grand narratives’ as “overarching philosophies of history like the Enlightenment story of gradual but steady progress of reason and freedom” (Lyotard as quoted in Lather 1991: 5). Postmodernists are critical of the totalising and universalising ‘meta-narratives’ which view the subject as “an autonomous individual capable of full consciousness and endowed with a stable ‘self’ constituted by a set of characteristics such as sex, class, race and sexual orientation” (Lather 1991:5). For Foucault (as quoted in Lather 1991: 25) while critical theory is “at war with the dominant systems of knowledge production, is also inscribed in what it hopes to transform.” In other words, while critical theory works in opposition to forms of oppression, it has been criticised for “being yet another medium of oppression” (Burbules & Berk 1999: 57). This is explained further in this chapter when I explored some of the criticisms of the critical paradigm (see page 42).

2.2.4.2 Poststructuralism

According to Clifford and Marcus (as cited in Hall 1996: 30), “Poststructuralism aims to disrupt current ways of viewing and constructing knowledge in order to make way for and build towards a knowledge viewed as ‘contested, temporal and emergent’”. This echoes the sentiment of Campioni and Grosz (as quoted in Lather 1991:24) who argued that knowledge and reality are fluid, and trying to solidify what is “diverse and changing” is an attempt to “block and control it.” For Campioni and Grosz (as quoted in Lather 1991:24) theory is incapable of capturing “reality in its entirety or in its essence.”

The concept of discourse is central to poststructuralist approaches. Discourse in this ‘paradigm’ is more than the construction of meaning and understanding, but rather focuses on the use of language in the production and construction of knowledge. Language becomes the ‘object’ of study in the ‘poststructural paradigm’ (Lather 1991). Poststructuralists attempt to

deconstruct through reflexive inquiry, “the logic of a text’s language as opposed to the logic of the author’s claims” (Jefferson & Robey as quoted in Bennett 1996: 162). For Fairclough (as quoted in Bennett 1996: 162), “texts do not sprout ideology”. Ideology is often discrete in texts in order to “function coercively or consensually to gain the acceptance of less powerful members of society” (Fairclough as cited in Bennett 1996: 163). Ideology is a contested term for poststructuralists. While Marxists define ideology as false consciousness, for poststructuralists there is no false consciousness, as this would imply a true consciousness (Hall as cited in Lather 1991). Lather (1991:21) argued that the “dualisms which continue to dominate Western thought are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limited array of historical and cultural specificities.”

Research for the poststructuralists is about power relations and the development of discourses that are multi-voiced (Lather 1991). Ideological critique is produced through the process of deconstruction of “the nature of discourse, and the depictions of reality and the bias it conveys” (Bennett 1996: 163).

2.3 KEY PARADIGMATIC ISSUES IN THIS RESEARCH

In order to situate the research, three paradigmatic issues, namely, objectivity, power, and the relationship between theory and practice related to the research process are highlighted in this section. Each of these issues have been discussed further in chapters three (see page 67), four (see page 105) and five (see page 136) of this thesis. It is important to note that the purpose of presenting these issues is to provide an understanding of the assumptions underpinning this research.

2.3.1 Objectivity

In the context of this research process, my understanding of knowledge is that it is not objective, but rather socially-constructed through historical, political and social actions. Each individual or participant in the research process brings with him/her a set of assumptions, values and beliefs.

Positivism sees questions around the social-constructedness of knowledge as being irrelevant because inquiry in this tradition is seen as objective, value-free and apolitical. What is ‘true’

is universal and applicable to all. Giroux (as cited in Kincheloe 1991) questioned the ability of research to be objective or value free. He argued that positivism has been used to entrench the dominant ideology as it supports uncritically the status quo. For Giroux (as cited in Kincheloe 1991:52), positivism has moved beyond mere inquiry to “the realm of ideology and social practice.”

While interpretivists reject the positivist notion of ‘objectivity’ in the sense that reality exists independently of society or knowers, they would argue that what is ‘subjective’ (because of its context in history, culture etc.) has the potential to become ‘objective’ through a fusion of standpoints or situatedness (Scott & Usher 1999). “Objectivity, then, is not a law that guides individuals, but the result of an intersubjectivity consensus that occurs through social interaction” (Popkewitz 1984: 42). In other words, knowledge that is subjective (based on individual experiences) can become ‘objective’ through the process of interaction and the development of shared meaning. Gadamer (as cited in Scott & Usher 1999: 29) refers to this as a “fusion of horizons”, where a consensus may be reached despite or because of differences. As I have explained in chapters three (see page 93) and four (see page 115), ‘consensus’³¹, although not a pre-requisite in curriculum negotiation, is central to a critical pedagogy.

The interpretivist attempts to understand how meaning is constructed and negotiated through interaction. Understanding always includes a subjective facet in the sense that one interprets a context or interaction from a position of pre-understanding or prior knowledge.

Human action is inseparable from meaning, and experiences are classified and ordered through interpretive frames, through pre-understanding mediated through position. The task of research then becomes to work with, and make sense of, the world, through the frames and pre-understanding of the researched.

(Scott & Usher 1999: 25)

However, this implies that the researcher is able to suspend one’s own interpretations and understandings of the ‘world’, which is not possible. Critical social science argued that research is not neutral, but rather that it is grounded in historical, social and political contexts (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997; Carr & Kemmis 1986).

³¹ This term is explored more fully in chapter four (see pages 115, 116, 121).

2.3.2 Power

For Giroux (as cited in Kincheloe 1991: 52), positivism has moved beyond mere inquiry to “the realm of ideology and social practice.” Instead, it perpetuates issues of power, control and domination. Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986) uses the term ‘false consciousness’ to illustrate how the dominant ideology is entrenched in the minds of the oppressed. The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School argued that Marx’s socialist revolution did not materialize because the false consciousness of the workers was exploited to prevent them from participating in the revolution. ‘False consciousness’ leads one to accept the world ‘as it is’ because it is inevitable and rational. One way in which this false consciousness could be demonstrated within a university context is the way students expect their lecturers to impart knowledge and assess their understanding of that knowledge, because the lecturer is seen as the ‘expert’ (see chapter four pages 113, 115, 116, 124, 127). For Fromm (1992: 25) “our whole social system rests upon the fictitious belief that nobody is forced to do what he does, but that he likes to do it ... Force is camouflaged by consent; the consent is brought about by methods of mass suggestion.” In the above-mentioned example, students spend twelve years of their lives at schools being told what to learn and how to learn it (see chapter one page 21). Students in this context, are not seen as ‘critically-minded intellectuals’ (Giroux & McLaren 1986:302), but rather encouraged to conform and follow authority by accepting the status quo (Shor 1993: 28). In chapter three (see page 74) and four (see page 106), I have elaborated on this point further by reflecting on the students’ conceptions of learning and their dependence on authority respectively.

2.3.3 The relationship between theory and practice

In the positivist paradigm, theory is viewed as distinct from practice. “Researchers create, discover or invent theories about social behaviour. These symbol systems are separated from practice as value is from fact. Empirical-analytic theory is believed descriptive of what exists” (Popkewitz 1984:39). Theory therefore concerns the technical and rational procedures of researching “observable social events” (Popkewitz 1984:40). Knowledge is independent of human beings and therefore separate from customs, traditions and beliefs. For Giroux (as cited in Kincheloe 1991), knowledge then becomes a collection of facts that must be committed to memory. Aronowitz (as cited in Kincheloe 1991) argued that factual memorization is so prevalent in schools that students experience difficulty when trying to

learn conceptually. In chapter three (see page 73), this issue is explored through an analysis of the students' conceptions of learning (Entwistle 1998; Richardson 2000; Light & Cox 2001).

For the interpretivist researcher, "the purpose of a theory ... is to clarify the conditions for communication and intersubjectivity" (Popkewitz 1984: 44). Theory does not necessarily inform practice. While theory may illuminate practice, it does not necessarily give direction. In other words, theory may explain, but does not necessarily suggest a way forward. One of the criticisms of the interpretive paradigm is that like the positivist paradigm it too is concerned with 'what is' as opposed to 'what should be' (Popkewitz 1984). The focus is on trying to understand the world rather than change it and in doing so serves to maintain the status quo and possibly even entrench it.

The purpose of theory for Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986) is neither technical nor mechanical as in the positivist and interpretive paradigms. Rather, it should enable the participants to understand their situation through active reflection and "thus bring to consciousness the process of social transformation which in turn, provides conditions in which practical discourse can be conducted" (Popkewitz 1984:46). Research in this context, has four elements.

First it acknowledges the dynamic (i.e., non-steady-state) quality of human history; second it accepts the open-ended nature of research and action; third, it aims to reduce (or codify) the apparent complexity of human experience and finally, it operates through the translations of private accounts of the past, present and future in a form that can be 'tested' through further action and inquiry.

(Hamilton in Popkewitz 1984: 48)

Research within the critical paradigm, must involve praxis. In order for research to be emancipatory, dialogue and action are essential. Critical social science, as argued by Usher, Bryant & Johnston (1997:189-190) offers a

discourse of basic social needs, of distortions and false consciousness, of critical dialogue and its foregrounding of praxis, provide an appealing foundation of theory and practice for ... educators committed to social action. Its aim of emancipation and empowerment provide a purposive goal for educational activity. Its refusal to separate theory (research and knowledge) from practice (action) demolishes the debilitating tension between theory and practice and provides an answer to the question "What is knowledge for and how can it best be used to not only understand but to change the world?" Above all, it offers a critical standard by which the present can be evaluated and in the sense that the

empirically existing world is never going to match up to the standard it provides a never-ending source of activity for ... educators.

In chapter three (see page 82) and chapter four (see pages 129-130), I have explored the relationship between theory and practice, and the dilemmas that emerged during the negotiated curriculum more fully.

2.4 EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF RESEARCH

If a teacher never questions the goals and the values that guide his/her work, the context in which he/she teaches, or never examines his/her assumptions, then the teacher is not engaged in reflective teaching – and being a reflective teacher must be one of the tenets of doing teacher research.

(Zeichner & Liston as quoted in Kraft 2002:177)

According to Kraft (2002: 177): “The ultimate goal of (teacher) research is not to ‘change’ others, but through a process of reflection to achieve a deeper understanding of yourself and your role, and to consequently change your actions based on that understanding.” For Habermas (as cited in Cohen et al 2000: 29), however, the purpose of research with an emancipatory interest is to “restore to consciousness those suppressed, repressed and submerged determinants of unfree behaviour with a view to their dissolution.” The goal is transformation, transformation of individuals and society to social democracy (Cohen et al 2000). Grundy (1987) argued that emancipatory research is rooted in democratic values. I argued in chapter four (see page 105) that emancipation is not automatic in a learning environment that promotes democratic principles. Within the process of this research, and the construction and reconstruction of this narrative, I found myself changed, but I would hesitate to claim that my students were changed (see chapter five page 148).

In developing a research process that had emancipation as it’s aim; it was necessary to explore the concepts of voice, reflection and the relationship between the researcher and the research participants.

2.4.1 Voice

The concept of voice is crucial to a research process that focuses on ‘empowerment’ (Giroux

& McLaren 1986:324). The research participants in this action research project, which focused on the negotiated curriculum process (see chapter one page 16), were expected to engage in dialogue. Voice in the context of this research process, refers to the means through which all the research participants (pre-service teachers and the lecturer) engage actively in dialogue. However, 'voice' is not neutral, but is shaped by our histories. It is the instance of "self-expression through which students affirm their own class, cultural, racial and gender identities" (Giroux & McLaren 1986:324). According to Ellsworth (1989: 309), encouraging the students to speak "in their 'authentic voices'" encourages them "to make themselves visible and define themselves as authors of their world." The task of the researcher is to find "ways of working with students that enable the full expression of multiple 'voices' engaged in the dialogical encounter" (Simon as quoted in Ellsworth 1989: 309) thereby enabling the students to "speak in self-affirming ways about their experiences and how they have been mediated by their own social positions and those of others" (Ellsworth 1989: 309).

In this study, it was important to ensure that my interactions with the pre-service teachers encouraged all the research participants to participate actively through dialogue rather than silencing or legitimating particular voices. This was not easy in the negotiated curriculum process, as I needed to guard against promoting opinions with which I agreed. This is elaborated on further in chapter four (see page 127).

2.4.2 Reflection

According to Calderhead (as quoted in Kraft 2002: 178),

Reflective teaching has been justified on grounds ranging from moral responsibility to technical effectiveness, and reflection has been incorporated into teacher-education courses as divergent from those employing a behavioural skills approach in which reflection is viewed as a means to the achievement of certain prescribed practices, to those committed to a critical social science approach in which reflection is seen as a means toward emancipation and professional autonomy.

Reflection is an activity that enables people to capture their experiences, "to think about it, mull it over and evaluate it" (Boud, Keogh & Walker as quoted in Kraft 2002:179). However, reflection within critical social science requires more than merely thinking about one's experiences. For Dewey (as quoted in Kraft 2002: 179), it involves "assessing the grounds (justification) of one's beliefs." In other words, through the process of reflection, one needs to critically analyse the belief system and assumptions that underpin those

experiences. Only then does reflection have the potential to encourage transformative learning. As I have explained in chapter four (see page 131), this was an issue in the research process, as the learning approaches negotiated by the students did not always enable them to reflect on the assumptions underpinning their beliefs. Furthermore, I had to be careful not to silence the students' voices by being too critical of their opinions (see chapter four page 125).

2.4.3 Researcher and researched versus research participants

Reciprocity is seen as a valuable data gathering technique as it enables the researcher to move from outsider to participant and 'friend'. Reciprocity, which works at two levels in emancipatory research, between the researcher and researched and between data collected and theory, "implies give-and-take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather 1986:263). From the beginning of this research process, I hoped that the participants would play an active part in the research process, in this case, the design and implementation of the negotiated curriculum. The intention of this research was to view the participants as collaborators in the research. That is, I wanted the research participants to view themselves as being inextricably linked to the research, not only in terms of participating in the research, but also in the analysis and interpretation of the collected data.

While the participants were initially central in analysing the focus group interviews and group discussions after cycle one (see chapter three page 91) and two (see chapter three page 96), their enthusiasm to participate in the analysis of the research dwindled in the final term of their academic year. Perhaps I should have expected this, as exams and course assessments became the focus for the pre-service students. Lather (1986:265) stressed that "dialectical practices require an interactive approach to the research that invites reciprocal reflexivity and critique, both of which guard against the central dangers to praxis-orientated empirical work: imposition and reification on the part of the researcher." This dialectical relationship is essential if the research process and the researcher views the participants as active in the research process.

While Lather (1986:265) argued that there are not many research processes where the negotiation of meaning is taken beyond the descriptive level to data analysis and the construction of theory, this is a complex issue in a context where the participants themselves see themselves as 'subjects' of a research process. Despite my intentions to encourage the participants to view themselves as inextricably linked to the research process, there were

times when it became clear that the students viewed themselves as the researched rather than research participants. In the SGID (see chapter two page 55), which took place at the end of the academic year, and end of this research process, the SGID facilitator wrote that

*All [the students] felt that negotiating the curriculum was likely to run more smoothly in future years, since they “were the guineapigs”, suggesting that there is still a notion in the back of their minds that their own role in the process was that of recipient rather than active and equally responsible controllers of the development of the course.*³²

(SGID 2001: 2)

There were numerous constraints in terms of ‘complete’ involvement of the participants in this research process. These constraints are central to the analysis of the research and I have elaborated further on these issues in chapter three (see page 72), chapter four (see page 110-111,116) and chapter five (see page 142).

2.5 CRITICISMS OF THE CRITICAL PARADIGM

For Gore (as cited in Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997: 190), “critical theory has its own power-knowledge nexus which in particular contexts and in particular historical moments, will operate in ways that are oppressive and repressive to the people within and outside.” When emancipation is driven for it can become oppressive. As Foucault (as cited in Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997: 190) stated, **everything** is dangerous.

While critical theory attempts to uncover distortions and constraints, it can also provide a “partial and distorted view of human existence” (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997:190). Being founded on the modernist concept of reality, it “privileges the place of rationality in human experience and social interaction” and marginalises what is perceived as ‘irrational’ (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997: 190). For this reason, it should be noted here that this research is both context and time specific.

Within the context of research, there is the danger of the researcher imposing his/her meanings and understandings on the participants rather than negotiating them with the participants (Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997:196). Being both the lecturer and researcher,

³² As I have indicated later in this chapter (see page 64), I have chosen to use different fonts to represent the different voices in this thesis.

and the research participants, my students, the issue of power had to be exposed. Issues related to power and authority are developed in chapter four (see page 106). At the beginning of the curriculum negotiation process, we ‘unpacked’ my role as lecturer and participant in the research (see appendix two page 182). According to Usher, Bryant & Johnston (1997: 198), the researcher must try to make sense of the data

through a co-investigation and problematisation of the lived experience, self-understandings, identified problems and aspirations of research participants ... At the same time and just as important, researchers need also to expose to mutual exploration and interrogation their own theories and constructions of research.

In chapter four (see page 105) and chapter five (see page 136) I critiqued the assumptions and values underpinning this research process.

As this textual representation of the research argues, not all research underpinned by democratic values brings about social change. It is this issue that will be addressed in chapter four (see page 133) and chapter five (see page 151) in the analysis of the research findings, as this was a concern for me throughout this study.

2.6 ACTION RESEARCH

The resurgence of action research from the late seventies grew out of a number of reasons. One of the reasons which relates directly to this research is the “demand from within an increasingly professionalised teacher force for a research role, based on the notion of the extended professional investigating his or her own practice” (Kemmis 1993: 181). The “objects of action research for the professional teacher is neither ‘phenomena’ or ‘treatments’, but practice, which is defined as “informed, committed action: praxis” (Kemmis 1993: 182).

My interest in action research developed out of a personal need for professional self-development, to focus and engage with my own practice. One of my central concerns as a teacher educator was that pre-service teachers had little say in terms of what and how they wanted to learn. There appeared to be a history of lecturers imposing courses and modules on the students. The lecturers dictated all the content of the course, which included presentation, assignments and exams (chapter three page 94). My problem with this approach after working with students for three years was that the students did not take responsibility for their own

learning (see chapter one page 3). Rather, the students were dependent on the lecturer to motivate them (see chapter four page 122).

I decided to use action research as a methodology, concerned with researching practical, real-life problems in order to bring about change. It is a hands-on and small-scale research process that encourages the participants to collaborate in the research process. As will be explained in this chapters (see page 46-47) and in chapter four (see page 117), collaboration is crucial to initiating social change.

2.6.1 Definitions of action research

Lewin coined the term action research (Zuber-Skerrit 1992:89; Kemmis 1993:178). For Lewin (as cited in Zuber-Skerrit 1992:93),

the research needed for social practice can be best described as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.

In order to develop a definition of action research that informed this study, it was necessary for me to review present definitions and to locate them in research paradigms (see page 30).

Cohen and Manion (1994: 186; Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 227) described action research as a “small scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such an intervention.” Stenhouse (as quoted in Cohen and Manion 1994: 186) contextualises action research in terms of what it should offer. He argued, “action research should contribute not only to practice but to a ‘theory of education and teaching which is accessible to others.’” Ebbut (as cited in Scott & Usher 1999: 36) highlights the purpose of action research “to change and improve educational practice by groups of participants by means of their own practical actions and by means of their own reflections on the effects of their own actions.” These three definitions of action research are underpinned by an interpretive paradigm, a practical way of assessing a real-life situation. The purpose of research, in the context of the above definitions, is to bring about ‘change’ or improve practice. What I found limiting with these definitions for the purpose of this research process was that change was seen in the context of the action, and did not focus on change amongst the participants. In other words, action research remains at the level of

understanding ‘what is’ and does not necessarily encourage the participants to thinking about ‘what could be’, which is necessary to bring about social change.

Carr and Kemmis (as cited in Cohen and Manion 1994: 189 – 190; Cohen et al 2000: 227) viewed action research as a process of ‘self-reflective inquiry’. They argued that:

In practical action research³³, participants monitor their own educational practices with the immediate aim of developing their practical judgments as individuals. Thus, the facilitators role is Socratic: to provide a sounding-board against which practitioners may try out ideas and learn more about the reasons for their own action, as well as learning more about the process of self-reflection. Practical action research may be a stepping stone to emancipatory action research in which the participants themselves take responsibility for the Socratic role of assisting the group in its collaborative self-reflection.

In order to bring about social change, one has to realise the centrality of the participants in the research process. Grundy and Kemmis (1982: 84) described action research as

a term used to describe a family of activities in curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programmes and system planning and policy development. These activities have in common the identification of strategies and planned action which are implemented and then systematically submitted to observation, action and change. Participants in the action being considered are integrally involved in all of these activities.

Hence, action research that focuses solely on individual mobility, for example, the professional development of the researcher, is not sufficient in bringing about social change. The participants in the research are central to the process of facilitating change. This is explained further in chapter five (see pages 139,140).

2.6.2 Action research that is emancipatory

Not all action research has a critical and emancipatory element. While Lewin (as cited in Kemmis 1993: 179) argued that action research was “likely to endanger every aspect of democracy”, Kemmis (1993: 179) stated that:

Action research should not be seen as a recipe or technique for bringing about democracy, but rather as the embodiment of democratic principles in research, allowing participants to influence, if not determine, the

³³ Research informed by an interpretive paradigm (see page 32).

conditions of their own lives and work, and collaboratively to develop critiques of social conditions, which sustain dependence, inequality, or exploitation in the research enterprise in particular, or in social life in general.

Here action research is seen as embodying the principles of democracy and therefore is democratic action. This view forms a central tenet of critical social science (Cohen et al 2000: 231, Grundy 1987:142). However, Grundy (1987) placed more emphasis on the issue of power. She (Grundy 1987:142-143) argued that the

democratic aspect of action research does not arise merely out of a humanistic belief that participation is a 'good thing' or an instrumental view that if participants make their own decisions, change is more likely to result. Such views are at worst manipulative and deceitful. Believing in democratic research because it is either 'nice' or 'efficient' fails to confront and redress the power of the initiator and controller of the research. Such pseudo-democratic forms of research may result in change, but not in emancipation for the participants.

Carr and Kemmis (1986) have combined Lewin's ideas about action research with Habermas's critical theory to develop a critical social science. Although Lewin favours knowledge that is practical, Habermas maintains that knowledge should not simply be about understanding phenomena, but should include critique (Zuber-Skerrit 1992:109). It is this notion of critique that Carr and Kemmis (1986) have focused on in the process of action research.

For Carr and Kemmis (1986) and Kemmis (1993) action research is about praxis. The participants "come to understand themselves better, become better informed about their situation, and act collectively and responsibly to bring about change" (Scott & Usher 1999: 39). To do this requires consensual understandings of truth. 'Consensual theories of truth' are based on the principle of knowledge being socially constructed, and that truth pertains to that which the participants agree as being true (Grundy 1987:144). As Zygouris-Coe, Page, Malecki, and Weade (2001: 410) emphasized, collaborative action research is not easy, as it requires "co-labouring and a shared construction of social knowledge." For them (Zygouris-Coe et al 2001: 410), "both of these processes are fraught with personal and political difficulties" that are therefore inherent in all collaborative action research. "At its best, collaboration enables us to hear our own and our students' voices, and the echos of other voices" (Miller as cited in Zygouris-Coe et al 2001: 410). However, the implication of these

difficulties is that 'weaker voices' are often silenced by collaboration (Zygouris-Coe et al 2001: 410).

While some may question that ability of group discourse to result in genuine consensus as distinguished from false consensus, given the nature of human interests in communication and the fact that power structures are entangled with meanings (Cherryholmes 1988), the kind of critical discourse that occurs within collaborative inquiry at least has potential to assist teachers' reflective and transformational thinking.

(Kraft 2002:180)

In emancipatory action research, it is only those participating in the research that can bring about change. Two issues raised in the context of emancipatory research are the dilemmas of voice and power. Both of these have been highlighted in this chapter (see pages 37, 39) analysed in chapter four (see page 105).

2.6.3 The action research cycle

For Lewin (as cited in Zuber-Skerrit 1992), action research was cyclical in nature. It consisted of a process of planning, action and fact-finding based on the results of the aforementioned action.

Grundy and Kemmis (1982), Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) and Carr and Kemmis (1986) viewed action research as a spiral of cycles that consist of four steps or moments. These are:

- developing a *plan* to change what is currently happening;
- implementing the plan through *action*;
- *observing* the plan in action in specific contexts; and
- *reflecting* on the action and observations in order to plan subsequent action.

(Kemmis and Mc Taggart as cited in Zuber-Skerrit 1992:111)

For Grundy (1987: 145), the process of action research consists of 'moments' (namely, action and reflection) that enter into a reciprocal relationship. While these two moments relate to each other retrospectively and prospectively, they occur in different realms. Reflection and planning are inherent in the realm of discourse, while action and observation concern the realm of practice. Reflection provides an opportunity to reconstruct practice and plan for future action.

The action research process in this study consisted of three cycles (see chapter three page 90) each cycle informing the next. Figure 2.1 (see page 49) highlights, albeit in a limited³⁴ manner, the research process according to the four steps as defined above. The cycles of action research are described in more detail in chapter three (see page 90).

The issue I used in figure 2.1 to demonstrate the action research cycles within this research process, related to the following question: How can I encourage my students to take responsibility for and ownership of their own learning? To explore this issue, I have focused in this figure on the approach to learning negotiated with the research participants in each of the three cycles.

In order to encourage the students to take responsibility for and ownership of their own learning, the *plan*, in cycle one, was to negotiate with the students what and how they wanted to learn. One of the resulting *actions* was that the students would work collaboratively on the areas of mathematics education they had chosen to research (see appendix one page 179). Our (the students' and my) *observations* were that collaborative learning did not occur as the students chose to research their respective areas of mathematics education individually rather than collaboratively. During our *reflections* it emerged that the students found collaborative work frustrating and impractical, which led to the second cycle of the research process. This is explored more fully in chapter four (see page 117).

In the second cycle, our *plan* was that I, as the lecturer, would take a more 'interventionist' role. The *action* we decided on was that all the students would 'research' the same area related to mathematics education, and I would facilitate the discussion related to the chosen field of study. Our *observations* indicated that this approach was more conducive to student learning. During the *reflections*, it became apparent that while the students preferred the lecturer-led discussions, a number of them expressed that they had nothing to 'show'³⁵ for their learning (see chapter three page 98).

Cycle three occurred after the students had spent seven weeks in schools. They identified assessment of children's understanding of mathematics as problematic. Together with the 'problem' of the students not having formal notes on the chosen areas of study in cycle two,

³⁴ Given the amount of research data collected and the intricacies of the research process, it is not possible for me to represent the entire research process in a diagrammatic form. However, I have chosen to demonstrate, in a limited way, how this action research process reflects the Model of Action Research developed by McTaggart, Kemmis, Fitzpatrick, Henry, Dawkins and Kelly (as shown in McKernan 1996: 26).

³⁵ By this, the students meant that they had no notes on the areas of mathematics education focused on by us.

our *plan* which informed the *action* in this cycle was to enable the students to research an area of assessment that related to their time in school, and that they would each present a written report on their question relating to the assessment of children's mathematical understanding (see chapter three page 99).

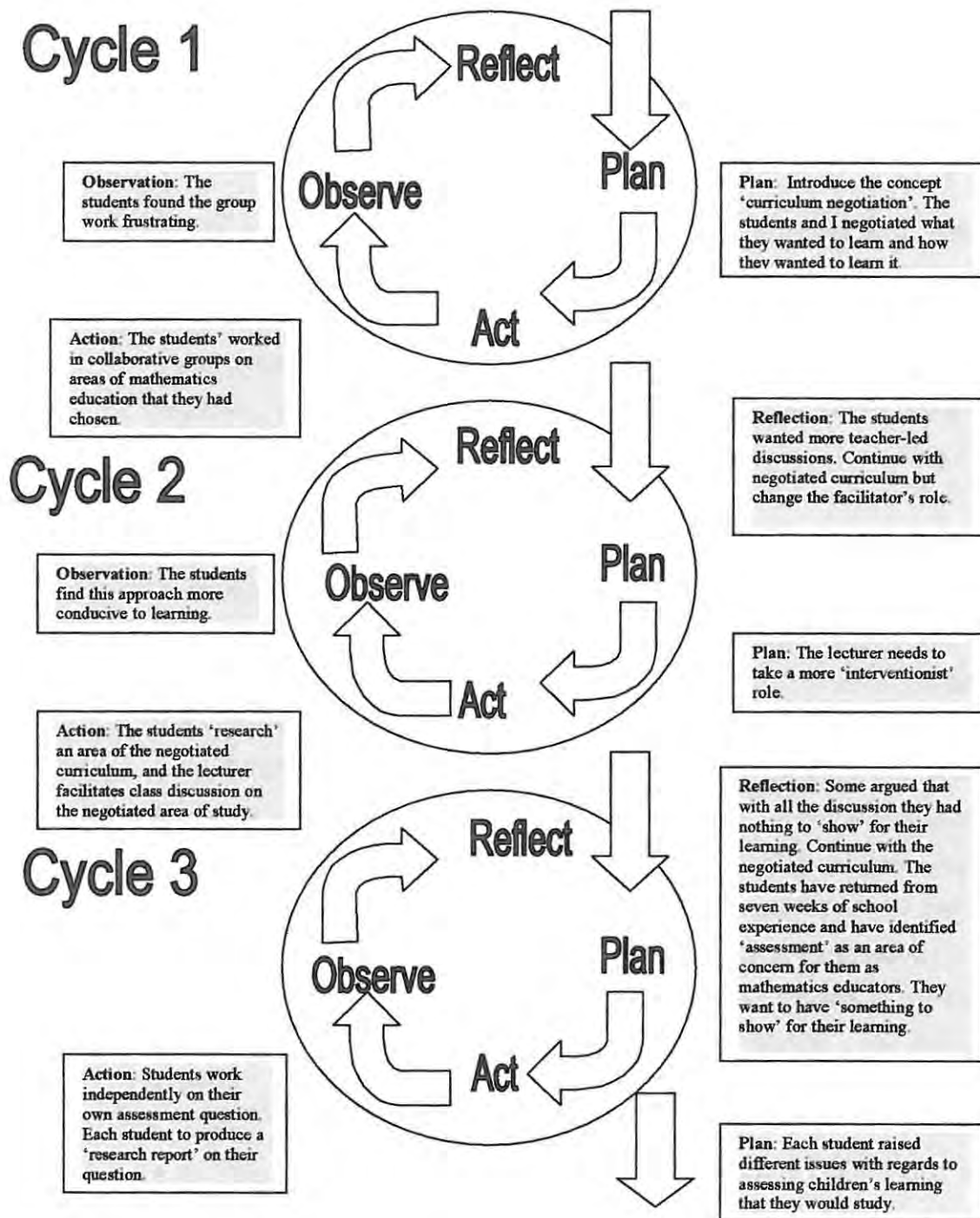


Figure 2.1 Action Research Model (adapted from McTaggart, Kemmis, Fitzpatrick, Henry, Dawkins & Kelly as shown in McKernan 1996: 26)

What makes action research different from other forms of research is the method. The method used in action research consists of cycles of reflection. In addition to the cyclical nature of action research, it is participatory in the sense that the researched are participants in the research and not mere objects; the focus is to improve (reconstruct) practice in order to bring about social change; and it is collaborative (Kemmis 1993: 185). These aspects of the research process are critiqued in chapter five (see page 136).

2.7 RESEARCH TOOLS USED IN THIS ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

Action research uses the same tools that are often associated with methods of research influenced by the interpretive paradigm, as opposed to the positivist paradigm (Kemmis 1993:184). While focused journals, notes of classroom interaction and discussions, and transcriptions of interviews are not unique to the process of action research, they are often employed, since the focus of the research is not merely behaviour, but actions³⁶, “and the viewpoints and historical circumstances that give these actions meaning and significance” (Kemmis 1993: 184).

A number of research tools were used in this action research process for data collection. Primarily, interviews with the research participants informed a large portion of this study. For the purpose of this section, I have chosen to distinguish between the different forms of interviews that were conducted, namely, focus group interviews (Green & Hart 1999; Michell 1999; Wilkinson 1999; Krueger & Casey 2000), group interviews (Denscombe 1998) and individual interviews (Michell 1999). The reason for the use of different interview techniques will become clearer in the course of this section. In addition to interviews, I participated in the research process, which meant that I was able to engage with the research process and observe the reactions of the participants. Reflections and observations on the process of curriculum negotiation were recorded as field notes. At the end of the research process a SGID was conducted by a colleague, and used to ‘validate’³⁷ the interpretations of the research.

2.7.1 Interviews

The purpose of interviews in this research study was to create discourse between the

³⁶ In other words, practices.

³⁷ I have chosen to place the term ‘validate’ in inverted commas as it is problematic for researchers working within a critical paradigm, because it implies ‘truth’.

interviewer (researcher) and the respondents (participants in the research). Interview questions in this context, were not based on the behavioural notion of stimulus – response, where the researcher asks a question which is designed to give an ‘objective’ response. The aim in the stimulus-response type interview is to ensure that the interviewer-respondent interaction is the same in all interviews (Mishler 1986: 14). Rather, “a question may more usefully be thought of as part of a circular process through which meaning and that of its answer are created in the discourse between interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of what they are saying to each other.” (Mishler 1986: 53-54) Interviews with a behavioural bias are based on three requirements. Firstly, the interview schedule needs to be standardised. Secondly, the interviewing techniques should not affect the response given by the respondent. Instead, the responses must be “contingent upon the questions alone” (Brenner as cited in Mishler 1986: 14). Lastly, the interview techniques “must be determined, and standardised, before the data collection commences” (Brenner as cited in Mishler 1986: 14).

It is important to note here that respondents are active participants who bring their own meaning to the questions asked. Through the interview process, respondents do learn how to respond to questions from the way in which the interviewer deals with their responses (Mishler 1986: 54). However, not all of the participants in this research are likely to “understand the questions in the same way, mean the same thing by their answers, and mean the same thing that the researchers would have meant” (Connell and Goot as quoted in Mishler 1986: 65). In order to develop “a more adequate understanding of what respondents mean and to develop stronger theories as well as more valid generalisations in interview research, we must attend to the discursive nature of the interview process” (Mishler 1986: 65).

While Denscombe (1998:110) emphasised that the interview agenda must be developed and set by the researcher, and thereby controlled by the researcher, the group interviews occurring after cycle one and two of the action research process were largely controlled by the research participants (see page 53). They determined the direction these interviews should take. Denscombe (1998) would argue that this type of dialogue is more representative of a conversation, rather than an interview. However, these ‘interviews’ fit the definition of what constitutes an interview as opposed to conversation, in the sense that the purpose was to “collect more detailed information” around a decision reached by the researcher and research participants, “for the purposes of a particular project in mind ... drawing on the information provided by fewer informants” (Denscombe 1998:110). After the first and second research cycle, I asked the students if I could interview them individually about the process of the



research. They articulated and agreed that it would be more beneficial to share their experiences of the negotiated curriculum process within the context of the group rather than individually. The reason for this was to learn from each other's experiences and ideas.

The focus group interviews (see chapter two page 52) conducted at the beginning of the research process and the individual interviews (see chapter two page 54) conducted at the end of the research process and academic year were both semi-structured. The reasons for the semi-structured nature of the interviews was that while I wanted the participants to respond to certain questions, I also wanted the 'freedom' to encourage the participants to develop their ideas further "and speak more widely" on issues that they believed to be important in the context of their own experiences (Denscombe 1998:113). "Allowing interviewees to 'speak their minds' is a better way of discovering things about complex issues and, generally, semi-structured and unstructured interviews have as their aim 'discovery' rather than 'checking'" (Denscombe 1998:113).

2.7.1.1 Focus group interviews

"A focus group is a special kind of group in terms of purpose, size, composition, and procedures" (Krueger & Casey 2000:4). The aim of the focus group is to gather information about how people "think about an issue" (Krueger & Casey 2000:4). The research participants are invited to share their ideas and beliefs in a non-threatening environment. The object of the focus group interview is not necessarily to reach consensus, but to share understandings.

Social scientists started investigating different methods of interviewing, as there was dissatisfaction with questionnaires and interviews (Krueger & Casey 2000). It was believed that the respondents were limited by choice (in the form of a questionnaire) and by the interviewers direction (during an interview). Rice (as cited in Krueger & Casey 2000: 5) stated that:

A defect in the interview for the purpose of fact-finding in scientific research, then, is that the questioner takes the lead. That is, the subject plays a more or less passive role. Information or points of view of the highest value may not be disclosed because the direction given in the interview by the questioner leads away from them. In short, data obtained from the interview are as likely to embody the preconceived ideas of the interviewer as the attitudes of the subject interviewed.

According to Krueger & Casey (2000:10), the focus group interview has five essential characteristics. It consists of:

- a group of people
- who have certain commonalities;
- who through the process of a focus discussion;
- will provide the interviewer with qualitative data
- about a topic of interest.

One of the advantages of using focus-group interviews instead of individual interviews is that I was able to analyse the interactions occurring between participants, who obtain immediate feedback on their personal views from others in the group (Green & Hart 1999:24). Focus group interviews are contextual and shared understandings are made through interaction and negotiating meaning (Wilkinson 1999: 64-65). According to Morgan (as cited in Wilkinson 1999: 67), “the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group.” According to Michell (1999:36), focus group interviews provide a “rich and productive way of gaining access to well rehearsed ‘public knowledge’ and highlighting the way in which social exchange reinforced such hierarchies.”

Despite the change in the relationships between researcher and researched, namely that the shift in the “balance of power [is] in favour of the participants” (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999:18; Wilkinson 1999:64), the focus group interview is still an artificial situation as they are for research purposes and dependent on the researcher (Green & Hart 1999:24).

Using focus group interviews in isolation could be problematic. Certain feelings or beliefs held by individual students may not be revealed in the focus group interview due to peer pressure. Because of the nature of this class working together for the whole year, and until the successful completion of their degree, the participants “cannot leave the research encounter behind for their separate lives” (Michell 1999:37).

2.7.1.2 Group interviews

As mentioned above, at the end of the first and second action research cycle, the participants decided that instead of the researcher conducting individual interviews with members of the group, they would prefer to be interviewed as a group. While these interviews could be

argued to reflect the principles of what constitutes a focus group interview in the sense that the group interviews included the five essential characteristics of a focus group interview as highlighted above by Krueger and Casey (2000:10), the essential difference was that these group interviews were 'conducted' primarily by the participants in an authentic context.

Two issues that concerned me about the group interviews were that some of the voices, particularly those of 'quieter' students would be silenced by the more dominant members of the group, and that the opinions offered by the participants would be those "perceived to be acceptable within the group" (Denscombe 1998:115). These issues are discussed in chapter four (see page 127).

2.7.1.3 Individual interviews

At the end of the research process, and end of the academic year, I conducted individual interviews with six of the twelve participants. Five of the participants volunteered to be interviewed. I asked one of the participants if I could interview her, because I knew she was sceptical about negotiating the curriculum. I believed that her opinion would be essential in presenting a 'fuller' story of the process and the implications of negotiating a curriculum for her. She agreed.

The individual interviews were semi-structured (McKernan 1996) to allow for the possibility that the interviewees share their understandings in more detail and to raise issues or questions that the interviewer may not have thought of; and to enable the interviewer to ensure that the meanings articulated by the interviewee were understood by the interviewer.

Conducting individual interviews and focus group interviews enables the researcher to gain access to the groups' shared understanding and to individual interpretations (Michell 1999:40). Through individual interviews, one can access the views of those that may be silenced in the focus group interviews.

2.7.2 Journals / Field notes

I asked the participants to keep a research journal about their experiences of the negotiated curriculum process. They were asked to write in these journals after the sessions and at any stage when they felt they would like to express their thoughts and feelings about the process.

As McTaggart (1996: 84) stated, “a curriculum can be understood in a more personal and humane way by keeping a personal diary or journal.” In action research, journals are used as a ‘narrative technique’ to record thoughts, actions and feelings of importance to the writer (McTaggart 1996). In addition to the students reflecting in their own journals, I used a journal to tell my own story about the process. From the onset, it was evident that the students were not enthusiastic about journal writing. In my journal (FN 13/02/02³⁸), I asked: Is expecting them to write journals fair? I didn’t negotiate this with them. I thought it would be useful for the research to get them to reflect on their thoughts thus far. ³⁹

After the first cycle of the action research process, I chose to discontinue the journal writing for the students as I realised that they were merely writing in the journals for what they thought was my benefit, and not for themselves (see chapter four pages 113-114). This was obvious to me when they would refer to the journals as **your journals**.⁴⁰

As a participant-observer in the research process, a journal was kept in the form of field notes to capture the discourses that occurred during the course of the year. The purpose of these field notes was to capture the conversations, questions and comments made during the process of the negotiated curriculum design and implementation. In addition, my own reflections and ideas based on my experiences and feelings were included in the field notes. However, my field notes included more than journal writing in the sense that they presented a holistic representation of the research process by including records of behaviour and group dynamics too (McTaggart 1996). Field notes, are subjective so it was necessary for me to extend the research tools and to triangulate the data (McKernan 1996). To do this, I included a SGID (see page 55) conducted by an ‘outsider’ to the research process. Triangulation will be elaborated on later in this chapter (see page 63).

2.7.3 Small Group Instructional Diagnosis

SGID is a “participative and consultative intervention” (Academic Development Centre 1998). The purpose of SGID is to obtain data from the students in order to inform learning and teaching. The SGID was conducted at the end of the negotiated curriculum process, and the process of the SGID was as follows:

³⁸ See page 64 with regards to the referencing format.

³⁹ In constructing a textual representation of the negotiated curriculum process, I have used different fonts to represent different speakers. This font, Century Gothic, is used to record any reflections from my field notes, which includes journal writing (see page 64).

⁴⁰ I have used the **Berlin Sans** font to represent the students voices in this thesis (see page 64).

- I had a pre-interview meeting with one of the SGID facilitators to decide on the questions that would be used to collect the data. The questions we developed concerned the strengths of the negotiated curriculum; the weaknesses of the negotiated curriculum, and suggestions the students had for the improvement of the negotiated curriculum process.
- Two facilitators, from the Academic Development Centre, conducted a forty-minute interview with the students. The students were divided into two groups of six. Questions were posed to the students and the facilitator wrote the responses on newsprint. The facilitators encouraged the students to discuss issues so that the data written down would be consensual. The focus of the SGID is to obtain consensus. After the groups had discussed the questions, one of the facilitators chaired a discussion with the whole class around each of the issues written on the newsprint. This was done to obtain whole class consensus and to enable the facilitator to clarify his/her understandings.
- The facilitator analysed the data and wrote a report for the lecturer (see appendix three page 183).
- A de-briefing meeting was held between the facilitator and the lecturer to discuss and analyse the data.

Once the lecturer and SGID facilitator had discussed and analysed the data, the lecturer and the students should have met to discuss the analysed data and to develop an action plan to inform future courses. As the SGID was conducted at the end of the year rather than during the course of our negotiated curriculum process, and at the end of the negotiated curriculum process, the students and I did not discuss the analysed data together. For me, the purpose of the SGID was to provide a space for the students to articulate their opinions of the negotiated process with an ‘outside’⁴¹ facilitator, and to ‘validate’ the research data.

2.8 DATA ANALYSIS

For Yin (as quoted in Krueger & Casey 2000: 125) “Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of a study.” In this research process, the data analysis focused on the aims of the research study (see chapter one page 3).

⁴¹ ‘Outside’ in the sense that the facilitator was not from the Education Department and not involved with the negotiated curriculum process.

I used transcript-based analysis⁴² for both the focus group interviews and individual interviews. As the focus group interviews were conducted at the beginning of the research process, this information had to be shared with the participants as it formed the basis of their opinions about learning and teaching, which were central to the course and research. The information gained from the focus group interviews was used to inform the negotiated curriculum process. This is discussed in chapter three (see pages 73-85).

2.8.1 Narratives

Mishler's (1986) concept of narrative analysis influenced my analysis of the various types of interviews (focus group, group and individual interviews) conducted during the course of the year. Mishler moved beyond the positivist notions of interviews⁴³ to a view that sees interviews as based on discourse between both the interviewer and interviewee and the search for shared understanding.

Analysis and interpretation of the interviews is based on the joint construction of meaning through discourse (Mishler 1986: 66). In analysing the research data, specifically the interviews, the interviewee responses were treated as narratives. As McIntyre (as quoted in Mishler 1986: 68) stated: "It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives we live out that the form of narratives is appropriate for understanding the actions of others". Standard interviews based on stimulus-response methods often suppress narratives because they are difficult to codify and analyse (Mishler 1986: 69).

Problems with narrative analysis relate to the difficulty in determining the boundaries of the 'story', and the different interpretations in relation to subplots and how these relate to the plot of the 'story' (Mishler 1986: 74). In attempting to address this problem, I have used dilemma analysis (Winter 1982) to interpret the narrative data in chapter four (see page 105).

2.8.2 Dilemma analysis

Dilemma analysis was developed by Winter (1982; Burroughs 1989; McKernan 1996), as a

⁴² By this I mean that I first transcribed all the interviews and then analysed the data from the transcripts.

⁴³ Positivist notions of interviews are based on 'stimulus-response methods (Mishler 1986). Interviews in this sense are structured and the interviewer "does not deviate from the wording of the [predetermined] questions" (McTaggart 1996: 129).

data analysis methodology, because he felt this was severely lacking in action research. The assumptions of the method of dilemma analysis are:

That social organisations ... are constellations of (actual and potential) conflict of interest ... that motives are mixed, purposes are contradictory, ... relations are ambiguous, and the formulation of practical actions is unendingly beset with dilemmas.

(Winter 1982: 168)

The significance of dilemma analysis as a method of data analysis within qualitative action research is rooted in its focus on self-reflection and reflexivity as a dynamic form of inquiry (McKernan 1996: 43). The perspectives of all the participants in the research process need to be represented. For this reason, dilemma analysis has been interpreted as a form of triangulation in that it represents the perspectives of all those involved in the action research process (McKernan 1996: 145).

There are three components of dilemma analysis for Winter (as cited in McKernan 1996: 141):

- The nature of the specific action research task;
- the theoretical basis of method; and
- the procedural sequence in doing dilemma analysis.

The *nature of the action research task* needs to “create an account of the teaching practice situation which would be faithful to the views of the students, teachers, ... and fellow supervisors”, that is regarded as “authentic and valid” (McKernan 1996: 141). The *method* is based on formal theory as opposed to substantive theory, and is guided by the “concept of contradictions”, ambiguities or problems that emerge through the research process (McKernan 1996: 142). The *data analysis* occurs through “*dilemmas, tensions, or contradictions* classified by Winter as *ambiguities, judgements and problems*” (McKernan 1996: 142).

Within chapter three (see page 67) and chapter four (see page 105), I have reconstructed a textual representation of the curriculum negotiation process. While my focus in chapter three was the construction of a narrative, in chapter four I classified and analysed contradictions within the research data in the form of dilemmas that emerged in the research process. These dilemmas concerned the extent to which the negotiated curriculum was informed by and promoted democratic values. Using the ‘critical knowledge values’ (Giroux 1997:103)

reflecting democratic principles⁴⁴ of both critical pedagogy and the negotiated curriculum, I explored the extent to which our critical pedagogy promoted ‘authoritarianism’ or ‘emancipatory authority’. These terms are elaborated on in chapter four (see page 106).

For Winter (1982: 169), the technique of dilemma analysis requires,

(a) formulating the dilemmas at roughly the same level of abstraction at which they are originally presented in the interview scripts, (b) choosing as a starting point the most elaborated formulation of any given dilemma from among the various statements in the scripts, (c) formulating each dilemma so that it balances non-controversially between the potentially opposed points of view, and (d) building up the perspectives for each role by adding together the various dilemmas thus formulated.

I used my initial list of contradictions to explore the broad dilemma of authority in chapter four (see page 105). In this way, the argument in chapter four has been constructed through the process of interweaving the initial contradictions together.

2.9 VALIDITY AND GENERALISATION

Action research, in the context of this study, is situation and time specific. The findings relate to specific situations and moments in time and are therefore not generalisable. One of the problems with this lack of generalisability is the issue of validity. This problem is not only related to researchers using action research, but for many researchers engaged with qualitative research methods⁴⁵, particularly those working within a critical paradigm.

For researchers influenced by the positivist paradigm (see page 31), validity of quantitative methodologies⁴⁶ is based on what Katz (as cited in (Mishler 1986: 108) refers to as the four R’s. These being: “Representativeness, Reactivity, Reliability, and Replicability”. What each of these means for quantitative research will differ significantly with what they may mean for qualitative research. Mishler (1986: 109 – 110) argued that it is not appropriate to try and ‘fit’ qualitative research into these four R’s as each assumes that:

⁴⁴ These ‘critical knowledge values’ include participation, collaboration, self-motivation, dialogue and situatedness.

⁴⁵ Qualitative research methods study behaviour from within. By that I mean that qualitative researchers are more concerned with “experience as it is ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Sherman & Webb as cited in Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 7).

⁴⁶ Quantitative research focuses on the “measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 8).

- All studies can be modelled on the experimental paradigm that is quantitative in that it relies on statistical analysis;
- qualitative methods are based on “imprecise methods, unrepeatable analyses, and vague and ungrounded inferences”; and
- that there is one ‘true’ interpretation of data which can be standardized and universally applied (Mishler 1986: 109 – 110).

According to Cronbach (as quoted in Lather 1991: 65):

The job of validation is not to support an interpretation, but to find out what might be wrong with it ... To call for value-free standards of validity is a contradiction in terms, a nostalgic longing for a world that never was.

The issue of validity is being re-conceptualised in the critical social sciences (Lather 1991: 66). However, in my readings of a number of texts on critical social science it is evident to me that this is an area largely absent in the various texts available, probably because the concept of validity implies truth. In qualitative research, the subjectivities of all the research participants “contribute to a degree of bias” (Cohen et al 2000: 105), which means that one cannot be completely objective.

Habermas (as cited in Usher, Bryant & Johnston 1997: 187-188) makes two arguments for how researchers within the critical paradigm can overcome “systematically distorted communication”. The first of these arguments centres on the notion of “validity claims” (Habermas as cited in Usher et al 1997: 187-188). In order to ensure that communication is not distorted, the researcher needs to ensure that the communication is meaningful, justified, true and sincere. In order to achieve this, Habermas introduced his second argument that focused on the meaning of ‘truth’. In order for a claim to be valid, an ‘ideal speech situation’ is required. An ‘ideal speech situation’ is described, as a context where everyone involved in the speech situation understands the technical issues involved, possesses the skills to act on what has been claimed, and are able to participate equally⁴⁷. This will enable the ‘best’ knowledge to emerge (Habermas as cited in Usher et al 1997). One of the many problems with Habermas’s validity claims is that he downplays the knowledge/power nexus that exists between the researcher and the participants.

⁴⁷ Equally in the sense that everyone has the same level of competence.

For Kemmis (1993: 185), “rigour derives from the logical empirical, and political coherence of interpretations in reconstructive moments of the self-reflective spiral (observing and reflecting) and the logical, empirical and political coherence of justifications of proposed action in the constructive and prospective moments.” Developing this idea further, Winter (as cited in Scott & Usher 1999: 37) suggested that different criteria from those used in positivist research should be used to judge the validity of action research from those that would be used to measure the validity of positivist research. He highlighted six criteria: reflexive critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resource, risk, plural structure and theory-practice transformation (Winter 1996: 13-14). These are explained below with reference to this particular action research.

Reflexive critique

This is the “process of becoming aware of our own perceptual biases”. Throughout the research process, we (the students and I) continually explored what informed our choices and how our ultimate decisions were informed. However, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the initial paradigmatic position of the researcher was not the paradigmatic choice of the students. For a number of reasons highlighted in chapter four (see pages 121, 126-128, 131) the students struggled to move beyond their own beliefs and values.

Dialectic critique

Dialectic critique involved “understanding the relationships between the elements that make up various phenomena in our context” (Winter 1996: 13). In the context of this research process, the opinions of the students were not always consensual. In chapter three (see page 67), where a narrative account of the research process was presented, I have indicated where opinions differed. In chapter four (see page 105), dialectic critique is explored through the representation dilemmas, which I have highlighted in this chapter (see page 57).

Collaboration

Negotiating the curriculum automatically assumes collaboration and ‘co-labouring’ (Reid 1992). In the context of the analysis of this research, the extent to which collaboration occurred was limited. After the focus group interviews (FGIa; FG Ib), the students and I analysed the data together. However, collaboration in terms of the ‘final’ research analysis, the writing of this thesis, was limited to the researcher, as the students (research participants) had completed their academic year. The extent to which research for a Master’s qualification can be collaborative is analysed in chapter five (see page 140).

Risking disturbance

One of the supplementary aims of this research was to empower the students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning (see chapter one page 3). Research that has emancipatory potential requires that the participants critique their own taken-for-granted processes and assumptions. As will be discussed in chapter four (see page 131) this was a limitation of this research, as the negotiated curriculum process did not necessarily encourage the students to reflect critically on their values and assumptions.

Creating plural structures

Creating plural structures involved “developing various accounts and critiques rather than a single authoritative interpretation” (Winter 1996: 14). Plural structures have been created in the analysis of this research by exploring the research through different paradigms. The narrative account of chapter three (see page 67) was interpretive (see page 32), while the dilemma analysis of chapter four (see page 105) was informed by a critical paradigm.

Theory and practice internalized

Throughout this thesis, theory and practice were viewed “as two interdependent yet complementary phases of the change process” (Winter 1996: 14). Theory is not distinct from practice, but rather, I have taken the view that the two inform each other. For this reason, the theory and practice appear in an integrated manner throughout the thesis.

Perhaps, within qualitative research, one needs to go beyond the notion of ‘proving’ that the data is reliable and valid, to exploring the ‘plausibility’ of the data. This can be done by addressing potential ‘threats’ to the data. By exploring the possible ‘threats’ to the data, one is able to identify the factors that may limit the plausibility of the data, and so the generalisability and reliability of the data (Mishler 1986: 114).

[A] critical assessment of the interpretations of life stories and interview narratives may be developed by focusing on the problems that are central to this mode of research rather than on abstract, standardised, technical and often inappropriate criteria and methods drawn from the research tradition. Systematic “threats to plausibility” in any one study provides guidelines for the investigators and helps to clarify the significant theoretical and empirical issues for further study.

(Mishler 1986: 115)

Mishler (1986: 118) stressed that in critical research which has as its central aim, the empowerment of the participants, the researcher needs to “shift attention away from the

investigator's 'problems', such as technical issues of reliability and validity, to respondents' problems, specifically their efforts to construct coherent and reasonable worlds of meaning and to make sense of their experiences." In other words, the researcher needs to "find ways to empower the respondents so that they have more control of the process through which their words are given meaning" (Mishler 1986: 118). One way in which this can be done is to encourage the respondents to "find and speak in their own 'voices'" (Mishler 1986: 118). For Mishler (1986: 119), the act of encouraging the participants to find their own voices, not only shifts the power imbalances, but also enables the participants to tell their own 'stories'. Through the process of telling their own 'stories', participants are empowered to move beyond merely understanding their own narratives, to thinking about the "possibilities of action" (Mishler 1986: 119). In chapter three (see page 67), a narrative of the negotiated curriculum process has been constructed and reconstructed using the students' voices from the interviews (focus group, group and individual), the student journals and my field notes. Chapter four (see page 105) explores the extent to which the participants were empowered to transformation for social action.

2.9.1 Triangulation⁴⁸

Cohen & Manion (1985:254) described triangulation as,

... the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some human behaviour... triangulation techniques in the social sciences attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Triangulation is particularly useful in educational research that focuses on action research where teaching and learning methodologies are to be evaluated, particularly if that methodology is controversial (Cohen & Manion as cited in Zuber-Skerritt 1992:139). In this research of a negotiated curriculum, multiple methods of data collection were used as indicated earlier in this chapter.

Triangulation, in the context of action research promoting collaboration of the research participants, required not only the use of multiple methods of data collection, but also the "confirmation and negotiation of meaning" in order to be validated (Zuber-Skerritt 1992: 138).

⁴⁸ Although the concept of 'triangulation' is rooted in positivistic notions of research, I have made reference to triangulation in this thesis as the intention of the interviews (focus group, group and individual) and the SGID were to negotiate understandings.

Zuber-Skerritt (1992:138) referred to this as 'respondent validation' and Guba and Lincoln (as cited in Lather 1991: 36) as 'member checks'. During the process of this research, and after the completion of cycle one and two of the action research cycles, the research participants were required to confirm and 'validate' the interpretations constructed. However, the final interviews occurred after the completion of the academic year, which meant that the final analysis was the focus of the researcher. The use of dilemma analysis in this context can be seen as a form of triangulation as it presents the perspectives of all the actors involved (McKernan 1996: 145).

2.10 REFERENCING

At this point, it is necessary to explain how the different voices are shown in the thesis, and how the different sources of data are referenced. As indicated in chapter one (see page 24) I have used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the students who participated in this research. In order to assist the reader in recognising the students' voices from the focus group, group and individual interviews, I have changed the font to 'Berlin Sans'. To distinguish between the different interviews, student journals and SGID, I have created a suitable referencing format.

Two focus group interviews were conducted at the beginning of the research process. I divided the students into two groups of six to make the groups more manageable. The first focus group interview is referenced FG1a, and the second as FG1b.

Group interviews were conducted with all twelve participants after the first and second cycles of the negotiated curriculum process. The group interview conducted on the 5th of April 2001 is referenced as G1a, and the second conducted on the 24th of July 2001 as G1b.

Individual interviews were conducted with six of the twelve participants. These I have referenced as I1 followed by the date of the interview. I have chosen to use the interview dates as these were conducted over a period of two weeks while the students were writing exams.

Student journals are referenced using the students name followed by J and the date of the entry. For example, (Gail J 17/04/01).

Field notes are indicated by a change in font. I have used 'Century Gothic' to indicate that the thoughts, events, feelings, behaviours and group dynamics referred to in this thesis, are recorded and reflected upon in my field notes. To reference the field notes, I have used the abbreviation FN followed by the date of entry.

The SGID report written by the facilitator is referenced as SGID, and the font used to represent her voice is '*Lucida Handwriting*'.

2.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to locate this research within the relevant paradigm. My intention was to locate the research process within the critical paradigm. However, I have realised that action research projects are not necessarily limited to one particular paradigm, and that my intended paradigmatic choice was not the paradigmatic position of the participants. This will be discussed further in chapter five (see page 136). As Grundy (1987) emphasised, some research projects may move between or encompass more than one paradigm.

The research is action research that has emancipation as its aim, particularly in relation to the students taking ownership and responsibility for their own learning. It is action research in the sense that it is cyclical and situation specific. The research 'tools' for data collection included three types of interviews namely, focus group interviews, group interviews and individual interviews; journals; field notes and a SGID, which was conducted by a member of the Academic Development Centre who was not part of the research process.

The data analysis techniques used in this research process include narrative analysis (Mishler 1986) in chapter three (see page 67) and dilemma analysis (Winter 1982) in chapter four (see page 105).

The guiding ethic of emancipatory action research, therefore, embodies the social and political ideals of freedom, equality and justice" (Grundy 1987:156). If these conditions are not met then it is unlikely that transformation and improvement for all will result. This will form the basis of my analysis in chapter four (see page 105) and chapter five (see page 136).

The focus of the next chapter (see page 67) is to explore the process of the curriculum negotiation and to situate curriculum negotiation within the context of a critical pedagogy. The research is presented as a narrative, with the purpose of developing a shared understanding of our negotiated curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE

NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM - THE PROCESS

To be a good liberating educator, you need above all to have faith in human beings. You need to love. You must be concerned that the effort of education is to help with the liberation of people, never their domestication. You must be convinced that when people reflect on their domination they begin a first step in changing their relationship to the world.

(Freire 1971 as quoted in Shor 1993:25)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Overcoming the culture of positivism (see chapter one page 10) prevalent in some schools requires that the teacher

... will have to do more than exchange one set of principles of social organization for another. They will have to construct alternative social formations and world views that affect both the consciousness as well as the deep vital structure of needs in their students.

(Heller as cited in Giroux 1997: 28)

The focus of this chapter is to explore the process of the negotiated curriculum and to situate this process within the context of a critical pedagogy. The purpose of negotiating the curriculum with my students was to provide an opportunity for them to engage with their own learning, beliefs and professional practices, and to enable them to take ownership of their own learning. The works of Freire (1972; 1994; 1997), Shor (1993; with Freire 1987), Grundy (1987), and Giroux (1983; 1988; 1997; with Aronowitz 1993) are of particular relevance in this chapter as it is through their work on critical theory (Giroux) and critical pedagogy (Freire, Shor & Grundy) that the negotiated curriculum is explored.

3.2 THE PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

As mentioned in chapter one (page 10) learning and teaching in higher education, particularly teacher education is often based on the behavioural model (Kliebard & Zeichner as cited in Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 36; Avalos as cited in Harber 1994; Al-Salmi as cited in Harber 1994). This model of learning can be linked to Freire's (1997) 'banking education'. Here the responsibility for teaching, thinking, talking, and organization of the course content rests with the lecturer. For Freire (1997:54):

The more students work at storing deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of the world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited on them.

While I believe that it is too simplistic to equate learning and teaching within higher education with the behavioural model (which is rooted in positivist assumptions of epistemology and ontology), it is my opinion that there are still elements of this model within the higher education institution where this research was conducted. Teacher education within the department where I work (from here on referred to as 'our department') is far more nuanced than described above and is more consistent with the liberal-humanist⁴⁹ tradition of progressive educators like Dewey (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 19). Dewey (1916) argued that experience should be at the centre of education. However, his belief in 'learning by doing' did not place more emphasis on the practical than the theoretical (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 20). Rather, he implied that the two (theory and practice) should be viewed as reciprocal. "To 'learn from experience' is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from its consequences" (Dewey 1916: 140). Dewey saw experience as action, action that is active and passive rather than cognitive. However, the 'value' of the experience is in the meaning the individual ascribes to that experience. The process of meaning-making (reflection⁵⁰) is cognitive (Dewey 1916:140).

While meaning-making, developing shared understanding, linking theory to practice through action and reflection, and critical thinking are valued in our institution, learning often remains at the level of the individual or group of students and is not brought into the context of society and institutional life. As with Dewey (as cited in Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 21) teacher education in our department promotes a view of what schools ought to be, rather than analysing socially and politically why schools are as they are (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 21). Apple (1990: 156) stated that while awareness of the "ideological character of aspects of education" has been realised, "there has been little or no awareness ... that the very form and content of classroom messages, of the day to day school life, embody ideological

⁴⁹ My use of the term liberal in this sense refers to an education that promotes liberal values (individual freedom, self-reliance and independence). It is my opinion that our department emphasises the importance of promoting "self-reliant individuals who take responsibility for their own lives" (Heywood 1998: 58) as opposed to a traditional understanding of 'liberal education' in higher education that focuses on what Ryan (1999: 142) calls the "classics, literature, and history" which he argued "enlarges the mind and refines the taste, and what prepares one for a vocation without providing 'vocational education'" (Ryan 1999: 36).

⁵⁰ For Dewey (1916) we make meaning or develop understanding through self-reflection. I would support Dewey's claim, but would add that we can develop shared meanings or understandings through reflection too.

transmissions.” As lecturers, I believe, we are often critical of practices underpinned by positivist assumptions and behaviourism, yet our own day-to-day practices often entrench these ideologies. The students in this study attest to this view (see chapter three page 84; 94).

The goal of ‘progressive’ education, which is rooted in liberal-humanist discourses, is to empower the individual to take their position in a democratic society⁵¹. The assumption here is that society is democratic. The focus of critical theorists and critical pedagogues however is the transformation of society “to meet the collective needs of individuals” (Giroux 1983: 24). In other words, the focus is establishing a society that is democratic, and that embodies “an ethic of solidarity, social transformation, and an imaginative vision of citizenship” (Giroux 1997: 95).

3.3 LEARNING AND TEACHING

Shor and Freire (1987:30) argued that learning in the classroom is reciprocal in the sense that, not only are teachers teaching and students learning, but that teachers become learners too. Teachers need to be open to learning from their students. “We as teachers must also be absolutely open to being their students, to learning by experience with them, in a relationship that is by itself informally educational” (Freire in Shor & Freire 1987:30). It was my belief that negotiating the curriculum (see chapter one page 16) would provide a space that would enable the students and I to learn and transform our current situation⁵² with each other.

According to Freire (1972: 53)

Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognisable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors – teachers on the one hand and students on the other.... The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn, while being taught also teach.... Men (sic) teach each other, mediated by the world, by cognisable objects which in banking education are ‘owned’ by the teacher.

⁵¹ Democracy, for Dewey (1916: 87) is “a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.” Dewey (1916: 87) explained that the barriers of class, race and gender can be broken down through the process of defining our own actions in relation to others, and using the actions of others to inform our future actions. A democratic society therefore refers to a society “where intercourse of man (sic) with all members of society is mutual, and ... where there is adequate provision for the reconstruction of social habits and institutions by means of wide stimulation arising from equitably distributed interests.”

⁵² By “current situation”, I am referring to a pedagogy that promotes the enactment of a curriculum that is determined by the lecturer for the students, and fails to encourage students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning (Levitan as cited in Rogers 1980). See chapter one page 1.

Creating a critical pedagogy (see chapter one page 12) however, goes beyond developing shared meanings and the view that teachers are learners and learners are also teachers. “The practice of teaching and learning in higher education is the practice of knowledge and communication or the exercise of self and language in specific academic social situations and institutions” (Light & Cox 2001: 20). Language is invariably linked with knowledge. Bruner (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 21) argued, “... meaning is not so much private and exchanged as publicly constructed within exchange; knowing and communicating are ‘virtually inseparable.’” This, Bruner (1996) referred to as ‘culturalism’. Meaning is not transmitted between people. Rather, “meaning is defined by social ‘dialogue’ and characterised by being addressed to someone ... in its very construction” (Light & Cox 2001: 24). For Bruner (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 26), the ‘self’ can never be separated from “one’s ‘cultural–historical existence.’” Personal and human identity is produced by and within our social experiences (Burgess 1984 as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 26). The ‘self’ is therefore not perceived to be bound by an “independent objective reality whose *monologue* must be ‘discovered’”, but rather characterised by ‘intersubjectivity’ which is developed through “social dialogue that is lived, shared and wholly subsumed ...” and therefore situated (Light & Cox 2001: 26). This view of learning and teaching reflects the view of critical pedagogy as expressed by Grundy (1987:103):

Critical pedagogy goes beyond situating the learning experience within the experience of the learner: it is a process which takes the experiences of both the learner and the teacher and, through dialogue and negotiation, recognizes that both are problematic.

3.3.1 Developing shared meanings

During the first two sessions of the Mathematics Education Course⁵³, the students and I attempted to grapple with the nature of action research and negotiating the curriculum. To facilitate the discussion, I provided each student with a copy of Cook’s (1992) chapter *Negotiating the Curriculum: Programming for Learning* in Boomer, Lester, Onore & Cook’s (1992) book. This chapter provides insight into what a negotiated curriculum may mean, and provides direction for the process of negotiating the curriculum. The students were required to read this chapter before the second session so that they could participate in the discussion with regards to action researching the process of curriculum negotiation. The second session

⁵³ The Mathematics Education course runs for three years in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) learning programme. It forms part of the credit, Foundation Phase Studies, which includes all eight learning areas, but emphasises Language and Mathematics in the sense that both of these are three year long courses.

focused on three areas all highlighted by Cook (1992). This I felt was an important part of the negotiated curriculum process as I thought that the students and I needed to construct an understanding of what both curriculum negotiation and action research may mean and how the two are related in the context of this study. In accordance with Freire's (1972; 1997) view on education, the students and teacher are engaged in the process of knowledge construction together. Freire (1972; 1997) furthered this view of education by arguing that through the process of actively constructing knowledge together (that is, the students and the teacher), learning becomes more meaningful. Freire (1972; 1997) regarded meaningful education as being that which is negotiated between the teacher and student.

For the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the programme content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition --- but rather the organized systematized and developed 'representation' to individuals of the things about which they want to know more.

(Freire 1972: 65)

The three areas we focused on during the initial discussion were: *The nature of negotiation*, the *negotiated curriculum process*, and *constraints* in curriculum negotiation. The class was divided into three groups with four students in each group (A, B & C), each exploring one of the areas in relation to Cook's chapter and incorporating their own ideas. In doing so, each group had to reach consensus or a shared understanding of the implications of each of these areas for our own research process. What emerged from each of these groups is as follows:

3.3.1.1 The nature of negotiation

Group A's understanding of negotiation was that:

Negotiation involves two or more parties involved in coming to a mutual agreement through compromise and adjusting ideas.

(FN 15/02/01)

They acknowledged that their beliefs about negotiation were similar to Cook (1992), but that he emphasised the need to bring about "the best possible learning for the learners." The group was particularly concerned about how Cook would judge this. What did 'the best possible learning' actually mean? Who decided? (FN 15/02/01) In order to establish what contexts need to be constructed to facilitate the students' learning, it became necessary to interview the students with regards to their perspectives of learning (see chapter two page 52; chapter three page 73).

3.3.1.2 The negotiated curriculum process

The students in Group B used the process as suggested by Cook (1992) to develop one that they felt would be more pertinent to our curriculum negotiation process. Group B thought that if the area of study was to be imposed on the learners that it would be necessary for the teacher to justify why s/he had chosen this particular learning area or area to explore (FN 15/02/01). This is not explicit in Cook's (1992) process. The negotiated curriculum that we developed in conjunction with Cook's (1992) curriculum negotiation process can be viewed in appendix one (see page 179).

3.3.1.3 Constraints

The constraints raised by Group C included:

- The teacher's role

How do we know that the teacher is sincere in relinquishing the power of deciding what should be learned and how it should be learned? Is this merely, "manipulation" that is being disguised under the pretext of curriculum negotiation? This constraint when presented to the group raised much debate. What should the teacher's role be in the context of curriculum negotiation? If the teacher shares his/her opinions will the process be manipulated to suit the teachers needs? It was decided by the group that the roles of the teacher and students would need to be negotiated too (FN 15/02/04). See appendix two (page 182) for the negotiated roles of the lecturer and students.

- Curriculum requirements

The students were concerned that in deciding what they wanted to learn, they may omit to recognise a 'body of knowledge' that they need to know (FN 15/02/04). As Heather (05/04/01: 1) articulated: **How do I know what I don't know if I don't know what I don't know?** The question prompted here was: What if we don't have the prior knowledge to decide what to learn? (FN 15/02/04)

- Time

The students were concerned that the process seemed time consuming, as everything has to be negotiated. This was an area of concern throughout the first four weeks of the curriculum negotiation process.

- Individual interests

What about individual interests during the negotiation process? Do we have to reach consensus or can someone do his or her own thing? Could this not result in conflict

between members of the class? What about those students who are not interested in the area of focus that the group chooses? Lucy (FN 15/02/01) argued that the negotiated curriculum would possibly not be suitable in an area of study where the teacher realises the students feel resentment, perhaps from negative experiences.

- Resources

We had limited resources available to us. How do we gain access to community members, specifically experienced teachers?

- Applicability

Is this process not limited to certain subject areas? Can it be applied to all areas of study? Will it be suited to the Mathematics Education course?

- 'Testing' our beliefs

How do we know that what we learn will be valid for mathematics education in South Africa? It was suggested that the Experiential Learning Programme (ELP)⁵⁴ would enable us to 'test' our ideas, and enable us to evaluate if all children learn in the same way (FN 15/02/01).

Once we had constructed a shared understanding of the 'nature' of the negotiated curriculum, I asked the students if I could interview them in order to ascertain their perceptions of how they learn. Since curriculum and curriculum negotiation centres around how we learn, it was necessary to explore the students' own views of learning with them. The concept of curriculum "is often interpreted as meaning a finely, specified, sequentially prescribed body of topics and learning outcomes that all students must address" (Grimmett 1995: 113). However, Grimmett (1995: 113) argued that we should move away from this perspective of curriculum as meaning "ground to be covered" or something to be 'delivered', to a broader concept of curriculum that begins with a focus on the learner." Learning is inseparable from curriculum theory, curriculum development and teaching.

3.3.2 Student perspectives on learning

I conducted two focus group interviews (see chapter two page 52) with the students in order to ascertain:

⁵⁴ The ELP forms part of the Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree. The second, third and fourth year students are expected to teach in local schools once a week for the first semester of the year. During the third year programme, the students are placed in schools where the Language of Learning and Teaching is an additional language for the vast majority (90%+) of the learners. The pre-service teachers are required to team-teach. The focus of the ELP is the implementation of innovative teaching and learning strategies in the areas of Language and Mathematics.

- their understanding of learning, and how they learn;
- what motivated them to learn;
- the contexts that teacher educators should provide to facilitate the ‘best possible learning’, both at university (in a mathematics method course) and in-the-field; and
- finally, what advice they would give teacher educators to assist them in constructing an understanding of what they need to know.

3.3.2.1 Approaches and conceptions of learning

For both groups (FGIa, FGIb)⁵⁵, the essence of learning is understanding, and in order to develop an understanding, one needs to be interested in the topic or area, and one needs to be able to apply one’s knowledge in an authentic context. The difference between transmission⁵⁶ modes of teaching and learning and those influenced by constructivism (see chapter three page 88) would be focused on how understanding, hence learning, occurs. Teacher-directed learning, which is still prevalent in many tertiary institutions today, promotes the Lockean view that knowledge is objective and needs to be given by the lecturer to the learners (Doll 1993; Russell 1993). In contrast to this, constructivism as a theory of coming to know, emphasizes the importance of the individual learner in constructing and reconstructing their own understanding through a process of organising and adapting new learnings into existing schema (Clements & Battista 1990:34). Two tenets consistent within the constructivist tradition are that “despite being born with cognitive potential, humans do not arrive with either pre-installed empirical knowledge or methodological rules”, and we do not “acquire knowledge ready-formed or pre-packaged by directly perceiving it” (Light & Cox 2001: 18). Knowledge and our ways of knowing are constructed.

The students stated during the focus group interviews (FGIa, FGIb) that their learning at school was primarily based on transmission and the rote memorization of facts (see chapter one page 21). Some of the students argued that they were more aware of how learning occurs, now that they are at university than when they were at school. **I think I’m more conscious of it (learning) now that I’m at [our institution] than when I was [at school] ...** (Kelly FGIb: 4). Megan (FGIb: 4) stated that her teachers **didn’t worry about how you learned, they just cared that you learned it**. Broadly-speaking, the students’ understandings of their learning at

⁵⁵ As explained in chapter two (see page 52), I conducted two focus group interviews with the participants in this study. I have chosen to refer to them as FGIa (the first focus group) and FGIb (the second focus group).

⁵⁶ Transmission modes of learning are based on rote memorisation of information.

school can be related to the concept of 'surface approaches to learning', and their initial⁵⁷ understanding of learning now at university can be linked to the concept of 'deep approaches to learning' (Entwistle 1998; Marton & Saljo as cited in Richardson 2000: 19-20).

3.3.2.1.1 'Surface' versus 'deep' approaches to learning

Marton and Saljo (as cited in Richardson 2000: 19-20) stated that:

We have found basically two different *levels of processing* that can be clearly distinguishable. These two different levels of processing, which we shall call *deep-level* and *surface-level processing*, correspond to the different aspects of learning material on which the learner focuses. In the case of *surface-level processing* the student directs his (sic) attention towards the learning of the text itself (*the sign*), i.e., he (sic) has a 'reproductive' conception of learning which means that he (sic) is more or less forced to keep to a rote learning strategy. In the case of *deep-level processing*, on the other hand, the student is directed towards the intentional content of the learning material (*what is signified*), i.e., he (sic) is directed towards comprehending what the author wants to say about, for instance, a certain scientific problem or principle.

Marton and Saljo's statement came under criticism for 'ignoring' the students' levels of motivation (Richardson 2000). Franson (as cited in Richardson 2000) found that their level of motivation influenced students' levels of processing. Both focus groups (FGIa: 6, FGIb: 6) agreed with Franson (as cited in Richardson 2000) that motivation was important. They emphasised that learning occurs anywhere, provided there was motivation to learn, and is not restricted to the classroom / lecture room context (Kelly FGIb: 2). For all the twelve students, motivation to learn was dependent on what was perceived of interest to the students. As Karen (FGIa: 1) explained: **I say it's like an interest in something. I mean I might have an understanding, but I may not be interested so I'm not involved in learning as much ... [learning is] more valuable ... if I'm more interested in it.** Richardson (2000) criticised the research for being conducted in relatively artificial contexts where there was no guarantee that the same results would apply to all academic studying. Svensson (as cited in Richardson 2000) found that there was a strong link between Marton and Saljo's levels of 'deep-level' and 'surface-level' processing and how students' approached their studying in everyday contexts. Ramsden confirmed this (as cited in Richardson 2000). What emerged in Ramsden's research (as cited in Richardson 2000) was that students' approaches to learning were dependent on a number of contextual factors, such as the relationship between teacher

⁵⁷ I have used the term 'initial' specifically as I will argue later that in both the focus group interviews (2001), it is apparent that their beliefs about learning are often in conflict with their approaches to learning.

and student; the nature of the task and the assessment requirements. Ramsden (as cited in Light & Cox 2001), therefore, included a third approach, 'strategic' approaches to learning.

Subsequent to Marton and Saljo's (as cited in Richardson 2000) research, research on approaches to learning from the perspective of students is drawn from the work of phenomenographic research⁵⁸, in particular Entwistle (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 49-50; 1998:187). Phenomenographic research distinguishes between what is now widely known as 'deep' and 'surface' approaches to learning. Entwistle (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 49) developed Ramsden's third approach, 'strategic learning', further.

'Surface approaches' refer to learning in which the intention of learning is merely the reproduction of content without much cognitive processing (Entwistle 1998: 187). The student uses this approach when the knowledge has little relation to their previous experiences or understandings. In order to meet the requirements 'learning' occurs through rote memorisation (Light & Cox 2001: 49). 'Deep approaches' to learning occur when the student is able to link the new knowledge to their previous knowledge structures in order to develop understanding or make sense of the material being presented (Entwistle 1998: 187). The aim of this approach is to make learning meaningful (Light & Cox 2001: 49). The students stressed that meaningful learning occurred when they related what they learned in lectures to school experience (FGIa: 14, FGIb: 4-5). As Gail (FGIb: 4) articulated, **being able to ... apply the theory into practice** resulted in meaningful learning. The process of making connections between the lectures and in-the-field experience encouraged them to learn more meaningfully and to develop understanding (FGIa: 14, FGIb: 2, 4-5).

While the students initially stated that they used 'deep approaches to learning' at university, it became apparent that this was not always the case. The focus of the discussion in both focus group interviews (FGIa, FGIb) with regards to learning shifted towards more 'surface approaches to learning' when the students started to focus on learning for exams. The students highlighted that the approaches to learning for exams **included taking the lectures and all the notes we made in lectures and putting them into my own words** (Sharon FGIa: 4), **summarise my lectures** (Melissa FGIa: 4), **and learn them off by heart** (Cathy FGIa: 4). Entwistle (1998) and Richardson (2000) argued that students are 'strategic' about the way

⁵⁸ Phenomenographers "do not make statements about the world as such, but about people's conceptions of the world" (Marton as quoted in Light & Cox 2001: 48). Key to this perspective is that "learning occurs with 'a change of conception' (Dahlgren 1997) – is that 'what' we experience and understand of our social reality is inseparable from 'how' we experience and understand it" (Light & Cox 2001:48).

they learn. They may choose to adapt their approach to learning depending on the assessment requirements (Entwistle 1998; Light & Cox 2001). “Strategic-orientated students are alert and responsive to the cues they pick up about the nature of the tasks and the demands made upon them” (Light & Cox 2001: 50). In the case of learning for exams, students were inclined to use ‘surface approaches to learning’. **I learn them (the notes) off by heart and forget them a few days later** (Cathy FGIa: 4).

Gibbs (as cited in Richardson 2000) argued that while the assessment system threatened deep approaches to learning, there were a number of factors that encouraged surface learning approaches.

A heavy workload, relatively high contact hours, an excessive amount of course material, a lack of opportunity to explore subjects in depth, a lack of choice over subjects and a lack of choice over the method of study, ...

Gibbs (as cited in Richardson 2000: 30)

3.2.2.1.2 Conceptions of learning

Saljo (as cited in Richardson 2000) developed the concept of ‘conceptions of learning’⁵⁹ from his research on learning approaches. Saljo (as cited in Richardson 2000) identified two broad conceptions of learning namely, reproductive and interpretive conceptions⁶⁰. Table 3.1 presents the two broad categories of learning that Saljo (as cited in Richardson 2000: 37) identified with five learning concepts.

⁵⁹ ‘Conceptions of learning’ are described by Marton and Saljo (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 50) to mean “perceptions or pre-conceived ideas of learning from past experiences”.

⁶⁰ Light and Cox (2001: 51) use the term ‘transforming’ conceptions of learning rather than ‘interpretive’, which appears in Richardson (2000:36). Furthermore, Light and Cox (2001) acknowledge both Marton and Saljo along with Marton, Beatty and Dall’Alba as introducing and developing further the ideas of ‘conceptions of learning’. In this thesis, I referred to Saljo (as cited in Light & Cox 2001; Richardson 2002) as the original source of the earliest record of research that focused on ‘conceptions of learning’.

Table 3.1 'Conceptions of learning'

1	Learning as the increase in knowledge	Reproductive
2	Learning as memorising	
3	Learning as the acquisition of facts, procedures, etc., which can be retained and / or utilised in practice	
4	Learning as the abstraction of meaning	Interpretive
5	Learning as an interpretive process aimed at understanding	

Source: Saljo (1979 as cited in Richardson 2000: 37)

Marton, Beatty and Dall' Alba (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 51) added a sixth conception of learning which refers to 'developing as a person'. They described the last three conceptions as 'transforming' instead of 'interpretive'. The sixth conception moves beyond merely focusing on the cognitive abilities or interests of an individual to include more personal characteristics. Entwistle (as cited in Light & Cox 2001: 51) viewed understanding not solely "as a cognitive process, but as an experience, characterised by feelings of 'satisfaction', 'confidence', 'significance'." Beth (FGIb: 6) mentioned that there are times that she may not be interested to learn something, but that there is a **drive within yourself, it's you know you want to do well ... you know you have to do it.**

While the focus of the research on approaches to learning and conceptions of learning is essentially about cognition, it is nevertheless useful in assisting teachers in creating contexts that encourage students to move beyond 'surface' approaches to learning to 'deep' approaches to learning.

Entwistle (1998: 187) emphasised that 'surface approaches' often originate from habitual ways of learning developed while at school. Many students enter higher education with 'reproducing' conceptions of learning, but are expected to develop 'transforming' conceptions of learning (Light & Cox 2001: 51). While higher education expects students to develop 'transforming' conceptions of learning, many students as indicated in the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb), depending on the purpose of the learning situation, still use 'surface approaches to learning' and hence 'reproducing' conceptions of learning.

In exploring motivation with the students further during the focus group interviews, what was particularly interesting was that the first group I interviewed (FGIa) focused on 'external'

forms of motivation, while the second group (FGIb) stressed the importance of 'intrinsic' motivation. First on the list of external factors influencing motivation was 'interest'⁶¹. Both groups expressed that they needed to be interested in the subject to learn (FGIa; FGIb). Further external factors motivating their learning included **not waste my parents money** (Melissa FGIa: 6), the **lecturer's enthusiasm** (Cathy FGIa: 6), interaction between lecturers and student (Karen FGIa: 7; Belinda FGIa: 7), having a choice in what we want to learn (Melissa FGIa: 7) and relevance of the subject (Heather FGIa: 7). The second focus group described motivation as the **drive within yourself, it's you know, you want to do well** (Mia FGIb: 6) and get **the degree** (Gail FGIb: 6). When confronted with subjects the students were not particularly interested in, Mia (FGIb: 7) stated, **it's the satisfaction of conquering ... this subject, but if I learn hard enough I'll prove to myself that I can do it anyway**. Kelly (FGIb: 7) explained that she would approach the subject as **a challenge**.

The pre-service teachers in both focus groups (FGIa; FGIb) emphasised the need for active engagement in order to learn. Experience, particularly in-the-field and during lectures seemed to have made students aware of how they learn. The students all agreed that making connections between what they learned in lectures and their experiences in-the-field, encouraged learning (FGIa; FGIb). This relates to the fifth conception, '*Learning as an interpretive process aimed at understanding*' as defined by Saljo (as cited in Richards 2000). The first focus group (FGIa: 9) stressed that trying ideas out in the classroom enabled them to make the links between what they were learning at university and what worked in-the-field. The process of reflecting on their experiences in-the-field was deemed important for Sharon (FGIa: 9). She stated: **if you have a problem, going back and asking for help; how should I handle this and what can I do next time? And so what you are actually doing, you are improving on your experience** (Sharon FGIa: 9). For the second group (FGIb: 8) **seeing it in action** was important. They felt that opportunities to watch teachers teaching in the classroom or on video enabled them to make links.

All, but one⁶² of the students argued that learning was a social process, and that it was important to share their ideas with their peers (FGIa; FGIb). Through dialogue one's ideas

⁶¹ 'Interest' could be both an internal and external form of motivation. I have referred to it as an external form of motivation in this context, as the students in the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb) implied that it was the responsibility of the lecturer to ensure that the students were interested in what they were learning, by articulating the relevance of the topic explicitly.

⁶² I have largely refrained from quantifying the number of students that agreed or disagreed with a particular issue or comment made during the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb). The reason being that not all of the students responded to each claim made. However, when all of the twelve students did comment about a particular issue or point, I have quantified it in this text.

are formed, challenged and clarified. Discussion, dialogue and interaction all contributed to their learning. I think what benefits me most in lectures is if we discuss something, ... you get different views from everyone. And, that does not just relate to your own experiences but everyone else's experience too ... (Heather FG1a: 5). This same student later added, I think if there is conflict, you learn more (Heather FG1a: 5). Bruner (as cited in Doll 1993:128)

... takes cognition and it's revolution out of the scientific, behaviourist, and computer-orientated mode ...back to its original human meaning-making through acts laden with and embedded in culture, language, intentionality and subjectivity.

For Bruner, as with Vygotsky, learning is a social process (Clements & Battista 1990: 34). Through active engagement and dialogue we continually construct and reconstruct our world in order to develop understanding. Bruner (as cited in Doll 1993: 128) believed that learning ('the art of meaning-making') is innate as humans have a "push to organize their experiences". As Sharon (FG1a: 5) explained interaction in lectures is important because it might spark off an idea ... or you might completely disagree with them and then try and put your point across ... You understand how much you actually know about what you're trying to say.

Melissa (FG1a) stated that she learned best individually. This particular student was an avid reader, and was completing Psychology 3 as an extra credit while doing her third year Bachelor of Education (Primary). This student commented during the second session of the course (FN 15/02/02) that although she preferred to work individually, she was prepared to work collaboratively with the class as she was interested in negotiating the curriculum and wanted to see how it worked. During the individual interviews (see chapter two page 54), I interviewed this student to ascertain, among other things, her perspective of learning given that the negotiated curriculum process focused on collaborative learning in cycles one and two. Melissa (II 27/11/01: 4) stated: **Well personally, I benefited from the fact that I could actually do group work.**

3.3.2.2 Conceptions of teacher education

With reference to teacher education, opportunities for practical experience in authentic classrooms (learning by experience) and reflection opportunities (discussions) during lecture times were seen as essential in promoting learning.

3.3.2.2.1 Learning in-the-field

Most of the students (FGIa; FGIb) indicated that they needed more time in-the-field. The students were adamant that they learned more from being in the classroom than attending lectures (FGIa; FGIb). Seeing something in action was deemed to be more meaningful than simply discussing it in class. For Melissa (FGIa: 16), **experience comes first**, and then **reading**. She emphasized that more time was needed in schools, and that lectures should be consolidation time, **a place to reflect and bring problems out, and, to discuss and find solutions to problems** (Sharon FGIa: 16). Only one student in this group disagreed with the idea of spending so much time in school. She argued that you needed to develop a theoretical base first (Heather FGIa: 17). What came out of this section of the interviews was that the students felt they needed more experience in the classroom on a consistent basis. The seven weeks of School Experience⁶³ in the third term was not seen to be adequate for putting the theory into practice, and to make the necessary links between the two.

Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting & Whitty (2000), as part of their Modes Of Teacher Education (MOTE) project, which was designed to monitor policy and political changes being introduced into Initial Teacher Education Programmes in the United Kingdom, developed questionnaires which were given to students who had completed their teacher education course and then again after their first year of teaching. In addition to this, the head teachers of the respondents were also asked to complete a questionnaire. Furlong et al (2000) compared the results from these questionnaires with previous studies conducted on teacher education by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in 1981, 1987 and 1991. The results, according to the students and head teachers, indicated that the teacher education programmes had improved significantly over the past ten years in that newly qualified teachers felt more prepared for teaching. Furlong et al (2000) argued that the reason for this improvement was the significant increase in time-in-schools, but that higher education institutions did contribute to student learning and confidence. However, despite the students valuing the contribution of higher education institutions, it was the time spent in schools that was viewed as "the heart of the course" (Furlong et al 2000: 130).

In the first focus group interview, the students decided that experience in-the-field was the most effective way of learning to teach. I decided to probe the students thinking further by

⁶³ School Experience is the term used in our department to describe the time that the students spend teaching and learning in schools during the second semester of their second, third and fourth years of their degree. The term is used in our department instead of 'teaching practice'.

asking whether teacher education in higher education institutions was necessary. The students were divided on this. Heather (FGIa: 9) argued that she **would probably just copy the teacher** and Sharon (FGIa: 9) commented that it would be a very time-consuming process and that at university you learn about potential problems before going to the classroom. Melissa (FGIa: 9) stated the case for learning in schools and on-the-job,

...if something didn't work in the classroom, you'd wander off to the staff room in tears and talk to everybody else about it and you would get suggestions ... you would get different inputs and then from there you'd have to think, sort through all that information you have now, and then try it out in a different way. So, in a way, it would still be an experience. You'd be more inclined to trust someone who has been teaching for ten years ... because they will have more experience than you do. So you'd adopt their experiences in your teaching and then once you started teaching in that way, you'd gather experience and make it your own.

As Stones (1992: 301) articulated, there is a view in teacher education “that on-the-job teacher training plus a modicum of theory is adequate to produce competent teachers”. Russell (1993) argued that some teacher education programmes are criticised for focusing on theory at the expense of the practical. The students in this research would concur with this viewpoint (FGIa; FGIb). However, Furlong et al (2000) demonstrated that initial teacher education has become far more practical. Even, the form of ‘theory’ that has been promoted in teacher education has changed from “explicit theoretical knowledge directly taken from the foundation disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy and history” to ‘theory’ that is far more practical and professionally focused (Furlong et al 2000: 132) This ‘theory’ focuses on issues of classroom management and organization. This view of ‘theory’ as practically-orientated changes the ‘nature’ and purpose of lectures. This was evident in the focus group interviews. Belinda (FGIa: 10) stated that university should provide the students with **lots of ideas that you can try and see if it works out**. Later during this focus group interview, the same student (Belinda FGIa: 17) argued: **Lectures could also provide an opportunity for us to learn new things, which we would be able to trial immediately**. When I asked the students what theory they thought was important, their interpretation of theory as practically-orientated was confirmed. Heather (FGIa: 11) mentioned **teaching theory**.

This view seems prevalent in many higher education institutions in South Africa. Samuel and Pillay (2003: 143) stated that seventy-nine percent of the students enrolled in their education department for the Bachelor of Pedagogics from 1998 to 2000 argued “for more / far more time to be spent on the practical components of the course.” They (Samuel and Pillay 2003:

143) explained that students “are more uncertain about the theoretical dimensions of the course.” Robinson, Vergnani and Sayed (2003: 174) confirmed this and expressed that their pre-service students felt that “the ‘practical’ parts of the course” were important and that “the ‘best’ part of the Theory course [were] those sections that prepared them directly for Teaching Practice.”

The problem for Russell (1993: 206) with this approach is that the experiences the students receive in-the-field fail to assist them in understanding the “role of theory in professional practice.” He furthered this viewpoint by stating that pre-service teachers “should understand the nature of their own professional development in relation to theory, research and their accumulated experience of teaching” (Russell 1993: 206). Teachers, Russell (1993: 207) argued, “work in a professional ‘culture’ that rejects detailed scrutiny of the events of teaching.” The approaches used by teachers, throughout all levels of education,

represent the playing out of models acquired in teachers’ own experiences of school, university and teacher education. It is a professional delusion to assume that our practices proceed from a set of deliberate, tested premises about how pupils or teachers learn, no matter how much ‘theory’ one has studied.

(Russell 1993: 207)

Professional practice is a form of ritual rather than principle. Dewey (1916: 339-340) distinguishes between habit and knowledge. For Dewey (1916: 339-340):

Habit means that an individual undergoes a modification through an experience, which forms a predisposition to easier and more effective action in a like direction in the future ... habit ... does not make allowance for change of conditions for novelty ... habit assumes the likeness of the new situation with the old. Consequently, it often leads astray or comes between a person and the successful performance of his (sic) task.

“Teachers show considerable uniformity and stability in their teaching methods, and in which the influence of theory and research on practice appears minimal” (Russell 1993: 208). While the students in both focus groups (FGIa; FGIb) argued for more experience in-the-field, Belinda, Cathy and Melissa (FGIa: 15) all recognised the ritualistic ‘nature’ of teaching. Cathy (FGIa: 15) commented: **I couldn’t do a lot of things because she (the host teacher during school experience) would say, ‘okay, I want you to do this and this, and tomorrow this is the worksheet you’ll hand out’.**

While I agree with Russell (1993), I believe that he does not take his argument, that increasing student time and experiences in-the-field is problematic, far enough. If teachers' practices are based on habit as opposed to principle (Russell 1993), then teaching and learning in-the-field, will continue to legitimate the dominant social order and dominant education discourses. It is my opinion that teacher education programmes that focus primarily on in-the-field experiences are unlikely to 'empower' the students to challenge this.

An antithesis of this view was articulated during the first focus group interview. The students (FGIa) agreed that an emphasis on theory was problematic because some theorists know little about the real-life situation. **I often wonder if some of these theorists have actually tried out their ideas before they are published** (Melissa FGIa: 17).

At the end of the interviews, I asked the students what advice about learning they would give teacher educators. It was interesting to me that many of the students⁶⁴ believed the lecturer should give focus and provide the outline so that they can research the area of focus (FGIa: 20). One of the groups even suggested that they were far too reliant on lecturers, and expressed the need to work on their own or in groups a lot more (FGIa: 21). Melissa (FGIa: 20) further argued that the lecturers encouraged this dependency. **She explained that even though the lecturers would say, 'grow up, you are in university now', [they] still slap the overhead projector on and put up notes for us to copy down.**

The focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb) were important to the negotiated curriculum process as they provided an opportunity for all the participants to learn from each other with regards to our conceptions of how we learn, and how learning should be facilitated within the context of teacher education. For Giroux (1997: 110) it is essential that the critical pedagogue understand

... how students' experience is both constructed and engaged, because it is through such experiences that students produce accounts of who they are and constitute themselves as particular individuals. Student experience is the stuff of culture, agency and self-productions and must play a definitive role in any emancipatory curriculum.

⁶⁴ I refer to both of the focus groups (FGIa; FGIb) here. Although the focus group interview observer noted in her report (see appendix four page 185) that the two groups expressed different views about the role of the lecturer, I disagree, and argue that the language used was different, but in the analysis and synthesis of the interviews, it becomes apparent that they had expressed a need to be more independent and to take more responsibility for learning.

The opinions expressed by the participants confirmed that negotiating the curriculum would provide a space for them to become more active in the learning process by conducting their own research on areas they felt pertinent to them and then sharing their ideas and new learnings with their peers. Furthermore, the process would allow them to take responsibility for their learning. The results of these interviews were shared with the pre-service teachers during the third week of the Mathematics Education Course, and formed the basis for our curriculum negotiation.

3.4 NEGOTIATING THE CURRICULUM

For Cook (1992:16), curriculum negotiation encourages active learning. Negotiating the curriculum is

... a process by which the teacher can help to develop students' confidence and self-direction ... the process is ongoing and is based on the developing relationship between teacher and student. This relationship must be based on honesty about confidence, ability and personality, and is therefore filled as often with confrontation and disillusionment as it is with warm feelings of cooperation and friendship.
(Hyde 1992a: 57)

For education to be meaningful the learning experience should be a process of negotiation between the teacher and the students; where "the content of the curriculum draws its meaning, not from its ends, but from its beginnings" (Grundy 1987: 102). Freire (1972: 65) argued that for

the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the programme content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition ... but rather the organised, systematised, and developed 'representation' to individuals of the things about which they want to know more.

However, learning that encourages active engagement through the process of negotiation, does not automatically imply that emancipatory interests (see chapter four page 109) are met (Grundy 1987:103). For education to be emancipatory, it needs to have a critical focus and be rooted in praxis (Freire 1997: 106).

3.4.1 Curriculum as praxis

Praxis is central to the work of Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986; as cited in

Grundy 1987) and Freire (1972; 1997). For Habermas (as quoted in Grundy 1987:113), praxis “is the act of reflectively constructing or reconstructing the social world.” In other words, praxis occurs within the acts of transformation (Quantz 1992: 464-465). While Freire (1972; 1997) shared this notion of praxis with Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986; as cited in Grundy 1987), he developed the concept of praxis further, and related it to education specifically.

Grundy (1987: 104-105) identified five key principles related to Freire’s concept of praxis. Within each of these five principles of praxis, I have highlighted how the process of negotiating the curriculum related to Freire’s understanding of praxis.

Firstly, according to Freire (as quoted in Grundy 1987:104; Freire 1997: 106), “... men’s (sic) activity consists of action and reflection: it is praxis ... and as praxis it requires theory to illuminate it. Men’s (sic) activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action.” If curriculum is viewed as praxis, then curriculum is “... an active process in which planning, acting and evaluating are all reciprocally related and integrated into the process” (Grundy 1987:115) rather than a set of ideas or plans that have to be implemented. As the negotiated curriculum process was new to all of us, we continually engaged with the extent to which the negotiated curriculum impacted on our learning. Group interviews (see chapter two page 53) were conducted at the end of cycles one and two to formalise our opinions about the negotiated curriculum process. The relationship between theory and practice was both dialectical and reciprocal.

Secondly, praxis is embedded in the ‘real’ world. Praxis requires a response “... not only at the intellectual level, but also at the level of action” (Freire as quoted in Grundy 1987: 105). Curriculum construction and reconstruction in this research process was a social process that occurred within a ‘real’ learning situation. The intent of the negotiated curriculum process was, through dialogue, to bring about change in the sense that the students take responsibility and ownership of their learning.

Thirdly, praxis occurs through dialogue. It requires acting with people as opposed to acting upon people (Grundy 1987: 105). “Teaching and learning are to be seen as a dialogical relationship between the teacher and learner, rather than an authoritative one” (Grundy 1987:115). Learning and the construction of the learning environment in the context of this

negotiated curriculum was a social process. Through dialogue, the students and I decided on the content and 'appropriate learning experiences' (Grundy 1987:123) of the curriculum.

Fourthly, "... praxis not only takes place in the constructed world (that is the world of 'culture'); it is the act of reflectively constructing or reconstructing the world" (Grundy 1987:105). Knowledge is socially constructed through active participation in the process of learning (Grundy 1987:115). However, the social construction of shared meaning is not sufficient. Participants are required to critique their knowledge. Creating opportunities for students to 'critique their own knowledge' was, for me, the most challenging aspect of creating a critical pedagogy and democratic learning environment. This I will explore in depth in chapter four (see page 131) and chapter five (see page 154).

Fifthly, meaning-making is identified as a socially constructed process and not absolute (Grundy 1987:105). Developing understanding or meaning-making implies that the curriculum process is inherently political as it involves conflictual meanings (Grundy 1987:116). When students and teachers claim "the right to determine meaning for themselves, the process of curriculum construction as meaning-making becomes a political act." (Grundy 1987:116) In chapter four (see page 105), I explore the politics of our negotiated curriculum through the presentation of dilemmas central to the research process.

3.4.2 Curriculum as political

Freire argued that education is inherently political, whether teachers know it or not. "This is a great discovery, education is politics ... The teacher works in favour of something or against something" (Shor and Freire 1987:46). Shor (1993:27) expanded on Freire's argument by identifying how politics works through education:

Politics is not one aspect of teaching and learning ... Politics is in the teacher-students relationship ... in the subjects chosen for the syllabus and in those left out ... in the method of choosing course content, whether it is shared or only the teacher's prerogative, whether there is a negotiated curriculum in the classroom or one imposed unilaterally. ... Politics also resides in the discourse of the classroom, in the way teachers and students talk to each other, ... in the freedom students feel when questioning the curriculum, in the silences ... in [the] grading and tracking policies, in the physical conditions of the classroom, ... in the punitive attitude ... towards everyday speech and non-standard English ... in the 'partnership' between local schools and businesses, ... and in the unelected bureaucracy running most institutions.

Aronowitz and Giroux (1993: 136) emphasised that curriculum is embedded in a set of social practices linked to particular ideologies. In essence, curriculum is political and not neutral. The critical pedagogue needs to educate his/her students to “become active and critical citizens, capable of intellectual skills and willing to exercise forms of civic courage needed to struggle for self-determined, thoughtful, and meaningful life” (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 137). Curriculum for Aronowitz and Giroux (1993: 137) should enable students to “interrogate all knowledge claims for the interests that structure both the questions they raise and the questions they exclude”; knowledge claims about institutions need to be interrogated for the legitimation and productions of particular oppressive ideologies; and knowledge needs to be viewed as a “collective learning process intimately connected to the dynamics of struggle and contestation” (Aronowitz and Giroux 1993: 137).

3.4.3 Curriculum as constructed

Learning, within the negotiated curriculum, was underpinned by praxis (as defined by Freire 1972; 1997; as cited in Grundy 1987) and the values of constructivism, namely collective learning (as articulated by Aronowitz and Giroux (1993: 137) above). In order to explain the link between learning as a process of construction and reconstruction, and to relate it to Aronowitz and Giroux’s notion of ‘collective learning’ (1993:137), I refer to the work of Philips (as cited in Light and Cox 2001).

Philips (as cited in Light and Cox 2001: 18) articulated the differences amongst constructivisms in the form of a three dimensional map which is illustrated in Figure 3.1.

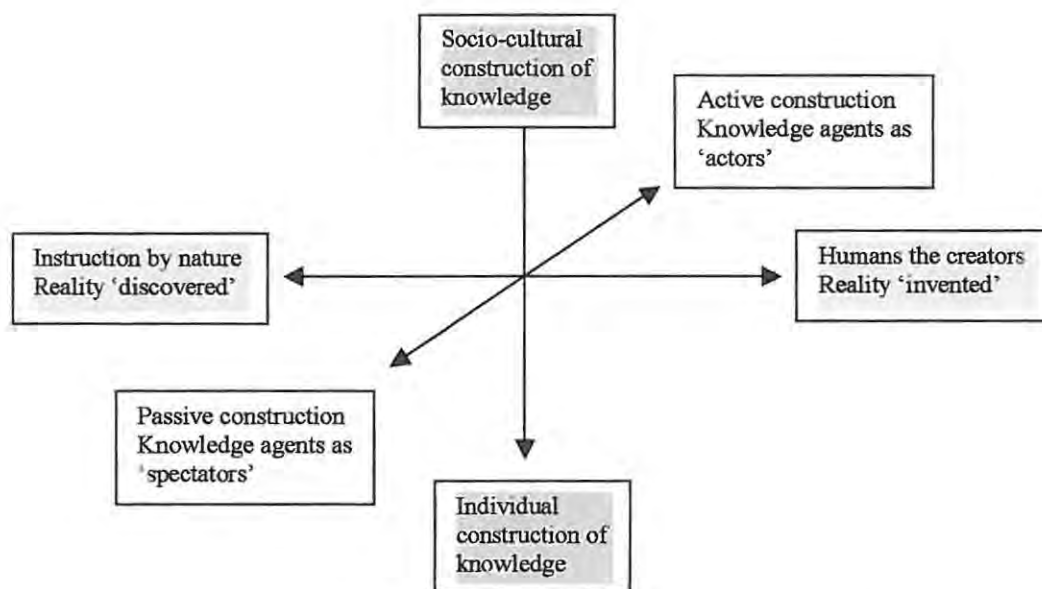


Figure 3.1 Constructivism: Three dimensions (Source: Philips as cited in Light and Cox 2001: 18)

The horizontal dimension reflects the continuum of reality from being 'discovered' or 'invented'. On the one side, knowledge is 'discovered' somewhat passively from nature. The opposite side of the continuum is based on the view that knowledge is relative and 'invented'. The vertical dimension focuses on how knowledge is constructed. On the one hand, knowledge is constructed individually through "internal cognitive processes" (Light & Cox 2001: 18) while on the other hand knowledge is constructed publicly. The third dimension reflects the extent to which knowledge is an 'active' or 'passive' process. This refers to the extent of human involvement in the construction of knowledge; whether learning and knowing requires active engagement or merely spectating (Light & Cox 2001: 18-19).

The differences in terms of what constructivism may mean is certainly more nuanced than the picture highlighted here. However, Philip's (as cited in Light & Cox 2001) explanation does provide a space for the research to be located within a broad theoretical framework. The understanding of constructivism that underpinned the research in this context was based on Kilpatrick's (as quoted in Von Glasersfeld 1987: 7) notion of constructivism, that being,

Knowledge is actively constructed by the cognizing subject, not passively received from the environment. Coming to know is an adaptive process that organizes one's experiential world, it does not discover an independent pre-existing world outside the mind of the knower.

In addition to Kilpatrick's two principles, a third tenet needs to be articulated in the light of Philip's map: that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed. This view does not ignore the inner cognitive constructed knowledge of individuals, but rather stresses that knowledge is essentially 'public' and therefore, historically and culturally situated. It is this form of constructivism that parallels with Giroux's (1997) 'collective learning'. For Giroux (1997: 23):

A more critical view of knowledge would define it as a social construction linked to human intentionality and behaviour. But if this view of knowledge is to be translated into a meaningful pedagogical principle, the concept of knowledge as a social construct will have to be linked to the notion of power.

"The practice of negotiation, however, has political consequences, for it confronts and challenges the very basis of power relationships upon which education traditionally depends". (Cosgrove as quoted in Grundy 1987:136) However, negotiation in the context of this research presented a number of dilemmas. These are analysed in chapter four (see page 105).

3.5 ENACTING THE CURRICULUM NEGOTIATION PROCESS

The negotiated curriculum evolved through three cycles of planning, action, evaluation and further planning (see chapter two page 47).

What distinguished this action research process from positivist and to some extent interpretive action research, is the dialectical view of rationality. A dialectical view of rationality recognises that the contributions of the positivist tradition, with its focus on 'objectivity', is deterministic, and the interpretive tradition, with its focus on 'subjectivity', is relativist (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 185).

The dialectical view does recognise, however, that there are 'objective' constraints on social thought and action which are beyond the control of particular individuals or groups. Equally it recognises that there are 'subjective' constraints which people could change if they knew more or understood the world differently.

(Carr & Kemmis 1986: 185)

Action research based on a dialectical view of rationality, explores the interrelationship between theory and practice (praxis), the individual and society, and the retrospective understanding (understanding that is historically-embedded) and prospective action (Carr &

Kemmis 1986: 185). The action research cycle, as described above, “links reconstruction of the past with construction of a concrete and immediate future through action. And it links the discourses of those involved in the action with their practice in a social context” (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 185).

3.5.1 The first action research cycle

Within the university context, Giroux (1997: 267) argued that the curriculum should reflect “the richness and diversity of the students”. In addition, the curriculum should actively encourage students to determine their own learning goals and selection of courses. Freire (as cited in Aronowitz 1993: 9) argued that for ‘real’ learning to take place, the students should be actively involved in the learning process “through praxis⁶⁵ in controlling their own education.” He emphasized:

... ‘reflection’, in which the student assimilates knowledge in accordance with his/her own needs, rather than rote learning and is dedicated, like some elements of the progressive tradition to helping the learner become the subject of his/her own education rather than the object of the system’s educational agenda.

(Aronowitz 1993: 9)

Developing a plan to improve the current situation and to prepare the students for the negotiated curriculum took far longer than initially anticipated. Coming to grips with what the negotiated curriculum entailed and developing an understanding of how the students and I should develop our process based on the discussions in class and focus group interviews on student learning, took three weeks.

The process of curriculum negotiation was based on Cook’s (1992) method of curriculum negotiation. This method focused on asking the following open-ended questions:

- What do we know already?
- What do we want, and need, to find out?
- How will we go about finding out?
- How will we know, and show, that we’ve found out when we’ve finished?

(Cook 1992: 21)

It was only in the fourth week that we started to implement our plan regarding what the students thought they needed to learn (see appendix one page 179), and how we would assess

⁶⁵ Freire’s understanding of praxis refers to “political practices informed by reflection” (Aronowitz 1993: 9).

their learning. We decided to focus on developing foundation phase learners' understanding of spatial sense in relation to geometry and measurement. The students divided themselves into groups according to the areas of spatial sense development that they were interested in. One of the groups, which consisted of two students, was interested in remedial education. They decided to explore the difficulties children have with developing spatial conceptual understanding. Together we decided that I would provide an introduction into spatial sense focusing on what it is, and how children develop spatial conceptual understanding. Thereafter, the groups would research their chosen areas. Each group would produce a document focusing on their area of research that could be reproduced for the class. In addition to this, the groups would facilitate a seminar on their topic (FN 06/03/01). While the groups would be researching their areas independently, the focus of the lecture times was to reflect on their research process, share ideas and new learnings and discuss possible problem areas.

By the end of the fourth week, a significant amount of the total 'lecture' time⁶⁶ had been spent preparing us for learning. In my field notes (06/03/01) I expressed a fear that I was losing some of the students as the initial process was taking too long. The students at the end of this lecture echoed this sentiment when a comment was made by one of the students: Finally we're getting somewhere (FN 06/03/01).

In week five, the students began researching their respective areas of interest relating to the development of spatial sense. While the initial intention of the group work was to provide a forum to share ideas and discuss issues and understandings, and critically reflect on the assumptions and values underpinning those ideas, the groups did not function in this way. What occurred in all of the groups was that the 'workload' was divided according to the number of people in each group with each student working independently from the rest of the group. During the twelfth 'lecture', I noted in my field notes (22/03/02) that one of the groups was now having trouble collating all the information they had collected as the group had decided to divided their topic into different subsections and then to share their sections with the rest of the group in order to produce a document that would be consistent and logical.

According to Hyde (1992a: 55), negotiating the curriculum "implies that the teacher has confidence in his/her students' ability to learn and make decisions about their learning". During the first four weeks, I was conscious of driving the process (FN 13/03/01). The

⁶⁶ By 'lecture' time, I refer to the number of contact sessions that is allocated to this course for the year. The mathematics method course was allocated 38 contact sessions for the year, two sessions a week with each session being 90 minutes in length.

students were dependent on me to provide direction. This is understandable, as I introduced them to the idea of curriculum negotiation and for all of us this was a new process. However, when the students in week five started working on their research interests, my role changed and I found it difficult to adjust to their independence. As I expressed in my field notes (13/03/01),

Now ... that the students are investigating their areas of interest, I feel that my role is limited. I was hoping to be more involved in the research process, but the students have indicated that they can do it themselves.

Later in this entry (FN 13/03/01) I stated that:

I feel as if I don't have a role to play in the process at this point. I think I'm worried about not being in control ... I'm confident of my students' abilities, but it is a terrible feeling superfluous.

While I met regularly⁶⁷ with the students during this first cycle of the negotiated curriculum, it became obvious that the students needed this time to do their research into their own respective areas. The third year Bachelor of Education (Primary) students have always had a demanding course load in our department and the students indicated they had little time to go to the library to find the necessary information.

Evaluation of teaching and learning in the negotiated curriculum is neither separated from the learning process nor is it the concern of evaluators outside the process. "Making judgments about the meaning of an act of learning and teaching will take place within the framework of the organization of enlightenment and action within groups" (Grundy 1987: 128). Consensus of meaning is an important part of emancipatory praxis as consensus leads to collaborative action. However, this consensus is not beyond critical scrutiny (Grundy 1987: 128). For Habermas (as cited in Grundy 1987: 128) consensus is dependent on

the comprehensibility⁶⁸ of utterances within the group; the truth of the propositional components of the group's discourse; the authenticity⁶⁹ of the speaking subjects and the correctness and appropriateness of actions in which the group engages.

⁶⁷ We decided that we would meet for each lecture to discuss progress and to share ideas and opinions of the students' research process.

⁶⁸ Comprehensibility is the ability to understand each other (Grundy 1987:128).

⁶⁹ Authenticity refers to the "quality of group members interaction with one another [which] can only be judged over time" (Grundy 1987:128). In other words, were the members of the group communicating 'truthfully and honestly' or was their communication purely strategic.

Evaluation in this context becomes open to the process of meaning-making which involves ideology critique. The process of self-reflection enables the participants to make judgements about the emancipatory potential of their action.

In hindsight, we realised that the first cycle of the negotiated curriculum process was too open-ended⁷⁰ and unstructured. These students had come through a schooling system where they were told what to learn, and to a lesser extent how to learn it. Within the context of the university they were exposed to teaching methods that promoted the view of the lecturer as the knower of all and where the lecturer decided on the course content. During the first focus group interview (FGIa: 7) Karen mentioned that some lecturers **walk in, they put down their books, [say] write this up**. Melissa (FGIa: 20) stated that **the lecturer often gives us the right track, right up to the exam and ... as long as you are on that track, then you will pass**. Sharon (FGIa: 21) argued that the students rely on lecture notes **because we were spoon-fed, and we are used to being spoon-fed**. The students found the research topics too broad, there was disagreement within the groups with regards to understandings of the topic area (Belinda GIa: 5), and they didn't have the necessary **grounding** (Kelly GIa: 1) or prior knowledge to make links with what they were learning.

The group interview at the end of each cycle was central to the negotiated curriculum and action research processes, as our reflections during the group interview informed our future action. Dewey (1971: 72) stressed the importance of process, which he thought was the epitome of change. While some progressive educators took Dewey to mean the 'the process is all that counts' (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993), for Dewey, "process was never really meant to be separated from product, any more than ends were to be separated from means" (Doll 1993: 138). Dewey believed that each end should rather signify a new means (Doll 1993: 138). This was to be done through the process of reflection. "Partial conclusions emerge... [These products] are temporary stopping places, landings of past thought that are also stations of departure for subsequent thought" (Dewey 1971: 71). While many of Dewey's ideas are still inherent in education curricula today, it is sadly, the notion of transformation through reflection that it missing (Doll 1993: 138).

Reflection is taking experience and looking at it critically; variously, publicly; that is, connecting our experiences with others' experiences, building a network of experiences wherein past, present and future are all

⁷⁰ By 'open-ended', I mean that too much responsibility was placed on the students too early in the negotiated curriculum process. The students' topics were very broad, and they were responsible for researching their areas of interest.

interrelated. Reflection steps back and examines past experiences in the light of other connections and alternatives. It is a reconstruction of actions taken; it is a re-look at meanings made.

(Doll 1993: 141)

Thinking for Dewey enables one to reconstruct experiences in order to move forward. Reflection needs to be recursive in that it examines the past in order to continually guide further practice. In other words, the past and present continually inform practice in the future (Doll 1993: 141).

“In such a reflective and transformative frame, a student’s present experiences are seen in terms both of themselves and of future possibilities. These possibilities will emerge only if the process of reflection is critical, public and communal” (Doll 1993: 142). For Dewey (as cited in Doll 1993: 142),

classrooms could be communal, places where ‘had’ experiences could be openly analysed and transformed; not a competitive environment where right is pitted against wrong, but one where through mutual cooperation, students and teachers explore alternatives, consequences and assumptions.

It was evident during the first cycle and from the group interview (GIa) with the students that too much responsibility for learning was placed on them too soon. Heather (GIa: 1) felt that it **was too open-ended** and Gail (GIa: 1) was concerned that **we didn’t know the boundaries**. In effect they were **thrown in at the deep end** (Kelly GIb: 2). Not only did they negotiate what they wanted to learn, but also we were ambitious in how the topics of interest were going to be researched. The students worked in groups, but instead of cooperating on the group topics, they allocated sections to each member in the group. In effect, each member of the group worked individually. When they had to coordinate each member’s contribution, they found this extremely difficult. As Beth (GIa: 3) noted: **In our group we decided what each person should do and then we worked on our individual sections. We didn’t really discuss it. I think pairs are better**. The group articulated that they found this experience overwhelming and frustrating, as they didn’t have the necessary experience, particularly research experience, to work independently of the lecturer. It was my opinion that some of the students were not confident in their own ability to learn without direct input from the lecturer. According to Hyde (1992a: 55), in the context of curriculum negotiation, “students have to be confident in their own ability to learn.” Nevertheless, they agreed to continue with the negotiated curriculum because they found it exciting and expressed that **it’s good not to sit in**

a lecture [because] we're learning so much more (Lucy GIa: 2). Suggestions were made about how we should progress with the negotiated curriculum process.

3.5.2 The second action research cycle

Both Freire and Habermas (as cited in Grundy 1987:106), made links between the notion of freedom and speech. For them "emancipation becomes the act of finding one's voice. And that can occur only in conditions of justice and equality" (Freire as cited in Grundy 1987:106). For Freire, the role of the teacher is important. "The teacher-student has an equal right, given the dialogical character of the pedagogical situation, to introduce his/her own themes into the discourse" (Freire 1972 as cited in Grundy 1987:107). For Habermas, the idea of bringing emancipation to others through their 'enlightenment' is problematic as communication can be 'systematically distorted' to either suit the interests of the dominant group (Grundy 1987:105) or through hegemony. Hegemony occurs when certain ideas "deeply saturate the consciousness of society" (Williams as quoted in Grundy 1987:109). This does not imply the necessary imposition of one group's ideas over another. Our "commonsense understandings of 'reality' may involve some unrecognized forms of domination" (Grundy 1987:109).

Culturally constructed ideas are always open to contestation, for they embody contradictions. But when a particular set of meanings which masks the contradictions is unreflectively accepted, and when these meanings are congruent with the interests of the dominant class or group, ideology is in operation.

(Grundy 1987:111)

Reflection on action that fails to go beyond critiquing our assumptions and beliefs will not suffice. For Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986; as cited in Grundy 1987), reflection that leads towards emancipation should involve 'ideology critique'. The students articulated that their experiences of learning, both in school and to some extent at university had not encouraged independent learning (FGIa; FGIb). Having to research an area on their own was too daunting as many of them did not possess the necessary research skills.

According to McTaggart and Singh (as quoted in Grundy 1987: 124-125), critical reflection is possible within a 'critical community'⁷¹.

⁷¹ A 'critical community' is seen as a group of people "with mutual concerns, interacting with one another (rather than having interaction mediated through representatives) whose relationships are characterized by solidarity and mutual concern" (Grundy 1987: 124).

Critical reflection involves more than knowledge of one's values and understanding of one's practice. It involves a dialectical criticism of ones' own values in a social and historical context in which the values of others are crucial. Criticism itself is, therefore, a relational concept; criticism can only be conducted in a community where there is determination to learn rationally from each other. The nature of relationships in terms of power, solidarity, reciprocity and symmetry will be significant issues for critical communities.

During the second cycle a far more structured approach was implemented, based on our reflections of the first cycle. It was evident in the first cycle and from our reflections of that cycle (G1a) that while the students worked in groups, little interaction actually occurred because they worked separately. For Rorty (as cited in Doll 1993: 130), we make sense of our world through our conversations with other humans. Atkins (as cited in Doll 1993: 130) builds on Rorty's view by stating that "dialogue is not a disguised form of inquiry" that tries to identify the 'truth', but rather an "activity that enables participants to make reasoned choices." These "reasoned choices" are framed within a context, history and system (Doll 1993: 130). Meaning is therefore made through the process of "transformative transactions" with others, texts and ourselves (Doll 1993: 136).

This perspective "where we engage ourselves in conversation with our histories provides us with a concept where curriculum is not just a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, but is a vehicle for creating and re-creating ourselves and our culture" (Doll 1993: 131). To develop our understanding during these "transformative transactions", we need to ensure that we continually question our assumptions and prejudices (Doll 1993: 136).

In the second cycle, the students' researched areas related to mathematics education that we had negotiated (see appendix one page 179), but everyone was required to research the same area simultaneously. By that I mean that we would all research the chosen mathematical concept, for example data handling. Everyone would bring their understanding of what data handling was, how it related to mathematics, how children learned to handle data, what experiences and contexts we would need to create in order for children to develop their abilities to handle data etc., to the lectures. The lectures became seminar sessions⁷² where we

⁷² A space where "instructors and a group of students consider a topic, issue or problem and exchange information, experiences, ideas, opinions, reactions and conclusions with one another" (Smith & MacGregor 1992:18).

shared our knowledge with each other. The focus of these sessions was on collaborative learning as opposed to cooperative learning⁷³.

During this cycle, I was more active in the learning process as it was my responsibility to facilitate the seminar sessions. The idea was for me to encourage “a mutually created dialogue” through the process of problem posing, and develop a ‘co-intentionality’⁷⁴ so that ownership of learning is mutual. Learning is active rather than “lecturing students into sleepy silence” (Shor 1993:25).

The students found the structure of the second cycle more conducive to learning. Gail (GIb: 1) mentioned: **It was more organised than the first term. We knew what it was all about and what to do.** Kelly (GIb: 1) stated **we were also able to apply it straight away. We were able to implement our ideas discussed ... on Fridays**⁷⁵. The benefits of working collaboratively were also apparent as the students felt they learned more through group interaction (Beth GIb: 1), **we became focused as a class** (Gail GIb: 1) **and it enabled us to share our ideas with each other.** (Mia GIb: 1) The seminar sessions did provide an opportunity for me to encourage the students to be more critical of their learning and its implications as we were able to reflect on the ideas researched and discussed, and their experiences in-the-field, during the seminar sessions.

The students found the second cycle more motivating. As Heather (GIb: 3) reflected: **If you do it for each other, it motivates you ... I know what you guys (referring to the rest of the class) want and expect.** However, one student expressed that **as the focus was all on discussion, ... [and] I feel that I have nothing to show for it** (Sharon GIb: 2). Three of the students seemed to equate their learning with the number of pages of notes they had. I found this idea of ‘measuring’ the extent to which learning occurred with the notes they had, interesting. In this instance, it appeared that the view of learning was linked first and foremost to concrete evidence⁷⁶ as opposed to understanding. Within education contexts underpinned

⁷³ The distinction between collaborative and cooperative learning is that the former is broader term, which is not restricted to small groups (as with cooperative learning). As Smith & MacGregor (1992:10) state, “collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together”. Thus, one could facilitate a collaborative learning experience with the whole class, without putting the students into smaller groups.

⁷⁴ Freire uses the term ‘co-intentionality’ to describe actions that are mutually owned by both the teacher and students.

⁷⁵ This student was referring to the ELP which involved them ‘teaching’ mathematics to Foundation Phase Learners on Fridays.

⁷⁶ By ‘concrete evidence’ I’m referring specifically to notes, whether they be in the form of handouts or the students own notes.

by positivist discourses, rote learning and memorisation is promoted. One could argue that in such contexts, students would need notes to assist them in memorising the given material. However, I found these comments confusing in an environment where understanding was promoted through the exchange of ideas and beliefs. It appeared, to me, that the students possibly felt insecure about their own learning (Hyde 1992a), or viewed the 'written word' as 'truth' and 'fact'.

While I tried to encourage the students to take more responsibility in terms of facilitating these sessions, by asking different students to plan the seminar sessions, they were reluctant and once again became more dependent on the lecturer. The seminars were useful for a number of reasons:

- The students were more active in the learning process. During the seminar sessions all the students contributed and ensured that their voices were heard.
- They gained confidence in their own abilities as learners. As Kelly (G1b: 2) stated: **It's more confidence building. You become more 'brave' to learn something on your own.**
- They began to realise that they were not solely dependent on the lecturer for providing knowledge, and began to take responsibility for the learning process. Kelly (G1b: 3) stated **I realized it's all up to me. You have to pull your weight and** Mia (G1b: 3) said **you're accountable to the class.**
- They started trusting the opinions of their peers and realised that they could learn much from engaging with each other.

3.5.3 The third action research cycle

The third, and final cycle took the form of individual projects based on assessing children's learning. After their School Experience in the third term, the group expressed the need to look at assessment of mathematical learning (see appendix one page 179). While the group felt they had a theoretical understanding of assessment, they found it difficult to put their theoretical knowledge into practice. With the focus on using authentic methods of assessment in schools, the students decided on their own topics and researched their areas individually. The group decided they would need time to share their findings with the rest of their peers, which we did in the last week of our Mathematics Education Course.

Final interviews were conducted with six students at the end of the year to reflect on the process of negotiating the curriculum. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an understanding of:

- The impact the curriculum had on their understanding of how children learn mathematics;
- the relevance of the negotiated curriculum to their own education;
- whether the negotiated curriculum enabled pre-service teachers to take more responsibility for their own learning; and
- whether they felt there was a place for negotiating the curriculum with Foundation Phase Learners.

Five of the six students interviewed felt that the negotiated curriculum had impacted on their understanding of how children learn mathematics, because they were given a choice regarding what they wanted to learn, which they found motivating. Furthermore, the negotiated curriculum provided an opportunity for them to practise their ideas within authentic contexts as they requested to experiment with their new knowledge on Fridays in two local schools. Melissa (II 27/11/01) realised through the negotiated curriculum that her peers learned in different ways and that this had impacted on her understanding of how children learn mathematics, namely, that they learn in different ways. Gail (II 11/12/01) stated that the negotiated curriculum entrenched her opinion that **interest** is important for learning. **We were so excited about what we were going to learn ... so I think if children are interested in what they are learning ... then they want to learn it.** For Mia (II 07/12/01) the curriculum negotiation process provided her with a positive experience of an approach rooted in the principles of socio-constructivism, which has made her realise that this could work with children too.

All six students agreed that the negotiated curriculum provided an opportunity for them to take responsibility for and ownership of their own learning. Negotiation according to Cook (1992:16) offers educators the “best chance of maximizing the learning productivity of the classroom”. He (Cook 1992:16) argued that when learners become “educational decision-makers”, they learn better because learning is more meaningful to them and they work harder to answer the questions they have posed. For Cook (1992) the success of negotiation lies in the principle of ownership. People “tend to strive hardest for things they wish to own, or to keep and enhance things they already own” (Cook 1992: 15). The students were more

motivated because they choose what they wanted to do, and because they felt accountable to the group (everyone was dependent on each other).

In terms of the relevance of the negotiated curriculum to their own education, the opinions differed. One student was adamant that she preferred lectures, as it was far easier to be told what to do (Cathy II 05/12/01). Beth (II 12/12/01) argued that, they still want everything given to them because that was what they were used to. However, she stated that she gained more from maths this year than from any other subject. The rest of the interviewees agreed that it was relevant because they learned much from their peers, and thought the research was better than sitting in lectures and taking notes off the overhead projector, because they were actively involved in the learning process. Megan (II 06/12/01) confirmed this by **stating we couldn't rely on you for notes, because we had to make our own notes, and find out our own information and work together as a group.** Melissa (II 27/11/01) concluded

maths became the highlight of my year ... a lot of responsibility was on me to do my own work instead of sitting there and being given something and learning by rote ... to actually get up and go and look for books or go onto the internet and search for stuff or talk to other people.

This same student stated in the initial focus group interviews (FGIa) that she could not work in a group. However, after the curriculum negotiated process, she stated that one of the main benefits of this process for her was that she **could actually do group work. I never actually thought I could ... I spent most of school and varsity doing what I wanted to** (Melissa II 27/11/01). Mia (II 07/12/01) stated that she **learned so much from it (negotiating the curriculum process) and I've been telling everybody about it.** She (Mia II 01/12/01: 6) later added, **... some of the Intermediate Phase people⁷⁷ who are very strong, felt that they are missing out, because they didn't have the same experience that we had.**

When asked if they would be prepared to negotiate the curriculum in future courses, all the interviewees except one stated they definitely would. Interestingly, the student who responded 'no' emphasized that while the negotiated curriculum was more beneficial to her learning, she felt that she needed more structure in her final year of her degree (Beth II 12/12/01). Gail (II 11/12/01) stated that she implemented the negotiated curriculum with her grade three class while on school experience. The class was involved with a theme on pets.

⁷⁷ The Foundation and Intermediate Phase pre-service teachers attended separate classes for Mathematics Education in their third year. These classes were coordinated and 'taught' by different lecturers.

We talked about what they wanted to know about pets ... I typed it up and while they were doing their projects, they had this piece of paper to refer to and then they could see, do I have that in my project, do I have that ...

(Gail II 11/12/01: 8)

The Academic Development Centre conducted a SGID (see chapter 2 page 55) with ten⁷⁸ of the students that participated in the negotiated curriculum. The SGID was conducted in the last lecture session of the academic year. The purpose of the SGID was to ascertain the students' opinions about the curriculum negotiation process. What distinguishes the SGID from the discussions and interviews that I had with the students is that the SGID is conducted by an 'outside'⁷⁹ facilitator, and only the students are present. The 'outside' facilitator conducted a report that is included in the appendices (see appendix three page 183). The opinions expressed in the SGID concurred with the views expressed in this chapter. Despite the SGID being conducted by two independent facilitators (both facilitators were from the Academic Development Centre, which is not attached to our department), the opinions reflected in the report do not differ from the opinions shared by the students during the course of the negotiated curriculum. The students did express during the SGID that they wondered why the lecturer had stopped the journal writing process. This I have reflected on in chapter two (page 54), and will highlight again in chapter four (see pages 113-114).

3.6 ASSESSMENT

While assessment is inextricably linked to curriculum, I have decided to separate assessment from the three action research cycles that have been shared in this chapter. My choosing to separate this area of curriculum is not a result of any attempt to ignore or over-look assessment, as Hyde (1992b: 69) suggests is often the case in curriculum negotiation, but rather, to emphasise the students' comments. Hyde (1992b: 69) emphasised that teachers need to negotiate what is to be learned and how it will be assessed otherwise "the ultimate power, the power of judging success and failure, remains the hidden controller." During the first few weeks of the negotiated curriculum process, we negotiated what the students needed to learn in relation to mathematics education, how they would demonstrate what they had learned, and how we would assess their learning. Together with the students we negotiated the procedures and criteria for assessment for the first cycle. During the first cycle, the students assessed their

⁷⁸ This Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) took place during the last 'lecture' of the term and was attended by 10 of the 12 students.

⁷⁹ The 'outside' facilitator was from the Academic Skills Development Centre. Although she has worked with our department on numerous occasions, particularly for the purpose of developing students' academic literacy, and for evaluating courses, she was not part of the negotiated curriculum process.

own work, and the work of their peers during the report back lectures. However, the students were not prepared to assess the documents each group had produced. The students stated that assessment was the lecturers' responsibility. I did not want to alienate them completely from the idea of getting them involved in the assessment procedures, so I used their assessment of the presentations with my assessments of the presentations and documents.

When we re-visited assessment for the second and third cycles, the students were once again not open to the idea of assessment. Their response was that I would be a better 'judge' of what they had produced as I knew what was expected. Also, the students felt they would not be able to be 'objective' in their assessments as their loyalties lay with their friends. What is interesting for me about this comment is that the students assume that as I am their lecturer, my assessments of them would automatically be 'objective'. Here it is possible that the notion of 'objective truth' is one the students still hold dear.

While the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) promotes a competence-based approach (see chapter one page 7), the pervasive performance-based approach with its focus on norm-referenced and examinations-based learning is still entrenched in higher education institutions in South Africa. These students thus, were examined in both June and December. The December examinations had to take the form of written exams, as these were sent to an external moderator. However, we did have more flexibility in terms of how we structured the examination in June. Together we negotiated that the students would each focus on a different area of mathematics for the Foundation Phase. Each student was required to produce a document focusing on the concepts that required development, how children learn those concepts, practical activities, and assessment guidelines. The students presented their work to the class as the examination. Until exam-based structures are changed, I believe the students will continue to demonstrate their reluctance in participating whole-heartedly in assessment processes. The students realised that ultimately I would be assessing their performance in the November examinations. The issue of assessment will be explored further in chapter four (see page 115).

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have constructed a narrative of the negotiated curriculum process. The purpose of this narrative is interpretive (see chapter two page 57) in order to inform the reader of this thesis of the process with which we (the students and I) were engaged. I have

highlighted the context of our negotiated curriculum. Firstly, by focusing on students' conceptions of learning and teacher education. Secondly, by presenting our process which included developing our understanding of curriculum negotiation, negotiating the curriculum and enacting the negotiated curriculum process. The process is situated, using Giroux (1983; 1997; Aronowitz & Giroux 1993), Freire (1972; 1997), Shor (1993) and Grundy (1987), within the context of critical theory and critical pedagogy.

This narrative of the process has been supported by the opinions of the students during the focus group interviews, classroom interactions, group interviews and individual interviews, my field notes and the report from the SGID.

In the following chapter (see page 105), I have explored the extent to which the emancipatory intent of a critical pedagogy was realised through the analysis of dilemmas (Winter 1982; Burroughs 1989; McKernan 1996) that emerged during the negotiated curriculum process. These dilemmas concern the promotion of democratic values in the context of curriculum negotiation.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM - DILEMMAS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In my opinion, some of the negotiated curriculum stalwarts fail to problematise the curriculum that has been negotiated in terms of the historical, social and cultural lenses through which the curriculum has been explored.

Problematizing the organized bodies of knowledge called subject matter means questioning ways in which subject matter is a reflection of the world seen through a particular cultural lens; connecting these bodies of knowledge to who the learners are and how we act in the world, through our studies, allows us to attend to the social order so that we can, in seeking to understand it also simultaneously change it.

(Schon 1983 as cited in Onore & Lubestky 1992: 256)

Chapter 3 (see page 67) provided the reader with insights into the curriculum negotiation process that formed the focus of this study. This chapter attempts to address the extent to which the curriculum negotiation process reflected the principles of critical pedagogy. This is done through the process of presenting dilemmas that surfaced during the research. Using Winter's (1982; as cited in Burroughs 1989; as cited in McKernan 1996) notion of 'dilemma analysis' (see chapter two page 57), which is based on the "concept of contradictions" (McKernan 1996: 142) occurring within the action research process, I will attempt to show the extent to which the negotiated curriculum process was rooted in a critical pedagogy.

I mentioned in chapter two (see page 30) that the initial paradigmatic choice of the researcher was not the paradigmatic position of the participants. Because this research was underpinned by a critical paradigm (see chapter two page 32) I will analyse the extent to which the emancipatory intent (Grundy 1987:103) was realised. In order to do this, it is necessary to relate the concepts of authority and power to the curriculum negotiation process, as these are crucial concepts to a pedagogy that has emancipatory potential. In doing so, I have chosen to frame both authority and power within critical pedagogy as 'sites of struggle'. The reason why I have done this is because the 'emancipatory authority' that Giroux (1988) refers to, or the 'liberating authority' of Freire (as cited in Shor & Freire 1987), presupposes a number of conditions not automatically achieved in a classroom where students have previously been exposed to 'authoritarianism' (Giroux 1988) or 'domesticating authority' (Freire as cited in

Shor & Freire 1987). Furthermore, the praxis of curriculum negotiation renders these concepts problematic.

4.2 AUTHORITY AND POWER AS 'SITES OF STRUGGLE'

In this section, authority and power are both seen as 'sites of struggle'. The reason for this is that there are varying discourses of both authority and power (Gore 1993), and the discourses of power and authority within critical pedagogy are not automatic, but need to be 'fought' for within the learning environment.

4.3 'EMANCIPATORY AUTHORITY' VERSUS 'AUTHORITARIANISM'

Viewing authority as emancipatory, was difficult for both the students and myself, as our previous experiences had encouraged our authority-dependence, particularly on the part of the students. For Giroux (1997: 95) traditional (meaning, conservative and neo-conservative) and some critical notions of authority fail to make explicit the link between authority and freedom.

To link the issue of authority to the rhetoric of freedom and democracy ... what is missing ... is any attempt to reinvent a view of self-constituted authority that expresses a democratic conception of collective life, one that is embodied in an ethic of solidarity, social transformation, and an imaginative vision of citizenship.

(Giroux 1997: 95)

For Giroux (1997: 96), what is needed is a dialectical view of authority, where the teacher / lecturer challenges the conservative notions of authority through creating a language of critique, and "constructs a language of possibility that provides the theoretical scaffolding for a politics of practical learning." Within this view of authority, teachers / lecturers work towards creating democratic spaces within the classroom.

The substantive nature of this task takes as its starting point the ethical intent of initiating students into a discourse and a set of pedagogical practices that advances the role of democracy within the schools while simultaneously addressing those instances of suffering and inequality that structure the lives of millions of people ... in ... the world.

(Giroux 1997: 96)

Freire (as quoted in Shor & Freire 1987: 91) concurred with this dialectical view of authority and argued: "Freedom needs authority to become free". It was my understanding that the

negotiated curriculum would create democratic spaces that would empower the students to challenge forms of authority based on the liberal-humanist positions (see chapter 3 page 68), that although dialectical, do not enable students to understand their own power within higher education.

Authority within liberal discourses is seen as

a function of concrete human situations in which a person or group, fulfilling some purpose, project, or need, requires guidance or direction from a source outside himself or itself ... Any such operating relationship – a triadic relationship between subject(s), bearer(s), and field(s) – is an authority relationship.

(Benne as quoted in Giroux 1997: 98-99)

The problem with the liberal notions of authority is that it “exhibits an inadequate understanding of how power is asymmetrically distributed within and between different communities” (Giroux 1997: 99).

In this view, the ‘dynamics of domination and freedom’ are not interrogated in terms of the asymmetrical distribution of power in education. Within the context of the negotiated curriculum, the students were expected to negotiate what and how they wanted to learn. Hyde (1992b: 64, 67) argued that through the negotiated curriculum, the teacher is sharing power with the students. Hyde’s understanding of power is problematic. Firstly, Hyde’s notion of power, like my own⁸⁰, represented a liberal-humanist position of authority as she failed to acknowledge the asymmetrical relationship of authority. Secondly, she viewed power as property; something that could be ‘owned’ (Gore 1993: 95) as she stressed that the amount of control that students have is dependent on the teacher (Hyde 1992b: 64). The term, empower, does imply something that can be ‘handed over’. However, McLaren (as quoted in Gore 1993: 95) took this notion of power further. He stated that,

... we can consider dominant discourses (those produced by dominant culture) as ‘regimes of truth’, as general economies of power/knowledge, or as multiple forms of constraint ... A critical discourse ... deconstructs dominant discourses the moment they are ready to achieve hegemony.

Power “is something that defines in a profound way the very relations themselves, and the actual relationships that create the powerful and the disempowered” (Quantz 1992: 480).

⁸⁰ In retrospect I realised that my first aim (see chapter 1 page 3) is rooted in a belief that the negotiated curriculum could give the students power to take responsibility for their own learning.

Michel Foucault's thoughts on power have begun to have a significant influence on critical theory (Quantz 1992; Gore 1993). Critical theory has made power "the central focus of social analysis through the development of reproduction/resistance theory", but it needs to "take the next step to place power/knowledge (and power/desire) at the centre of our understanding of culture" (Quantz 1992: 481). For Foucault (as cited in McLaren 1991: 16) power "is historically rooted, socially constructed, participates in cultural politics, and serves interests which are structured into society". Power is **everywhere**.

Power creates knowledge and that knowledge also induces effects of power ... Power produces certain forms of knowledge and such knowledge is used to legitimate and extend the interests of those served by the effects of such power ... Power therefore *subjectivizes* (permits us to speak and desire) and also *subjugates* (by empowering certain discourses over others).

(McLaren 1991: 16-17)

For Foucault (as cited in Popkewitz 1999: 5), power, is both, repressive and productive. The productive elements of power move focus from the 'controlling actors' to

identifying the systems of ideas that normalise and construct the rules through which intent and purpose are constructed in action. What is central to this productive concept of power is its link to the governing principles that organise individual action and participation.

(Popkewitz 1999: 6)

In this chapter, using Winter's dilemma analysis (1982; as cited in Burroughs 1989; as cited in McKernan 1996), I analysed a number of dilemmas that emerged during the negotiated curriculum process and argued that the 'governing principles' of our negotiated curriculum and the 'regimes of truth' espoused in teacher education limited the possibility for social action. The negotiated curriculum, as enacted in this research, although based on democratic principles, further entrenched dominant ideologies.

In trying to develop an 'emancipatory authority', I tried to establish 'critical knowledge rules and values'⁸¹ (Giroux 1997:103) that reflected the democratic principles of my⁸² critical pedagogy and the negotiated curriculum. These 'critical knowledge values' include participation, collaboration, self-motivation, dialogue and situatedness. Although all of these

⁸¹ These 'critical knowledge values' were the 'governing principles' (Popkewitz 1999: 6) of our negotiated curriculum process.

⁸² I use the term 'my' here because it was my intention to develop a critical pedagogy in the classroom and not the students. There are various different critical pedagogies, and the one that I articulate in this chapter is based on my understandings of the works of Giroux, Freire, Grundy and Shor, and to a lesser extent McLaren.

'critical knowledge values' are integrated, I have chosen to separate them in this chapter in order to draw on specific dilemmas relating to each. Using these 'critical knowledge values' I explore the extent to which the negotiated curriculum promoted an emancipatory view of authority as opposed to authoritarianism.

4.3.1 Participation

Authority within a critical pedagogy needs to "be rooted in a view of community life in which the moral quality of everyday existence is linked to the essence of democracy" (Dewey 1916 as cited in Giroux 1997: 101).

Teachers who embrace the concept of 'emancipatory authority',

... are concerned in their teaching with linking empowerment – the ability to think and act critically – to the concept of social transformation ... educating students to take risks and to struggle for ongoing relations of power in order to be able to alter the grounds on which life is lived.

(Giroux 1997: 103)

Onore and Lubetsky (1992) argued that in using a negotiated curriculum as a vehicle for emancipatory pedagogy, they needed to establish a 'classroom community' that embodied democratic principles. They based this assertion on the view that in order to bring about social change, one needs to focus firstly on bringing about change in the classroom. "In order for relationships in the classroom not to mirror those of the larger society they cannot reproduce the contours of dominance and submission, hierarchy and power which exist outside the classroom" (Onore & Lubetsky 1992: 256). Boomer (1992c: 96) argued that curriculum negotiation is about challenging and changing dominant educational discourses. For Onore & Lubetsky (1992: 256), developing discourses based on "caring, concern and trust" will assist students who are divided between their individual needs and those of the group, in developing a community classroom. The implication of this is that pedagogy, within the context of curriculum negotiation, is a participatory process between the lecturer and his/her students. However, within the context of our negotiated curriculum process, participation was fraught with dilemmas. I have chosen to focus on the 'critical knowledge value', participation, as this value is central to both curriculum negotiation and to the development of a democratic learning environment. In analysing the value participation, I have explored one of the key assumptions in curriculum negotiation namely, choice.

4.3.1.1 Choice

One of the critical aspects of curriculum negotiation is that students have a choice in terms of what they want to learn and how they want to learn. Three dilemmas surfaced during our negotiated curriculum regarding choice:

- a. I was inviting the students to choose what and how they wanted to learn, but I knew there would be institutional and research constraints that would limit the extent of their choice.
- b. I was inviting the students to choose what and how they wanted to learn, but their choices were limited by what they knew, national curricula policy and dominant education discourses.
- c. I was inviting the students to choose what and how they wanted to learn, but that choice had to be based on consensus.

Rather than exploring each of these dilemmas separately, I will deal with them holistically as each of them impacts on the other.

Simply negotiating the curriculum with the students does not imply an equal-sharing relationship. While the negotiated curriculum may provide the students with a choice of course content and pedagogy, choices are ultimately; social and historical constructions, and teachers and students need to be able to distinguish between liberating choices and oppressive choices (McLaren 1991). Within the choices there exists power relations, which “must be seen as existing asymmetrically and hierarchically in relation to other choices” (McLaren 1991: 19).

Within the context of our negotiated curriculum process, there were clear boundaries within which the students and I were able to negotiate. These boundaries related to the course that they were taking, which was Mathematics Education and formed part of their Foundation Phase Studies (see chapter one page 17). The focus of this course was on learning and teaching mathematics, and so our choices were restricted to this area. As stated in chapter three (see page 72), the group (Group B) (FN 15/02/01) who explored the process of curriculum negotiation during our initial sessions, stated that the area of negotiation,

... should not be too open-ended. [Melissa] made suggestions that the boundaries would be maths (this was a maths course),

foundation phase maths (we are all foundation phase pre-service teachers), and concerned about how children learn mathematics.

The students realised from the start of our research process that there were a number of constraints that would impact on our negotiating the curriculum (see chapter three page 72). Boomer (1992d: 281) argued that there are certain non-negotiables imposed on the teacher. While he did not state explicitly what these non-negotiables were, it is implied that he was referring to issues that the institution or state imposes on teachers. I would argue that there are certain non-negotiables and constraints also imposed on the students. In this research process, these “instruments of power” (Winograd 2002: 344) included governmental policies, dominant education discourses, my research agenda, and our higher education institution’s policies and procedures.

When negotiating what they wanted to learn, the students chose to refer to the C2005 (DoE 1997b) to ascertain on which areas of mathematics they needed to focus (FN 27/02/01). Despite time spent in classrooms teaching mathematics, the students referred to the content guidelines of the C2005 (DoE 1997b) for what they ‘needed to know’ and the choices they made. As I stated in my field notes (FN 01/03/01):

The students seem fixated on the National Curriculum. When they got into their groups to ascertain what they needed to know, one of the groups immediately reached for the curriculum guideline.

Despite spatial sense development being an integral component of the C2005 (DoE 1997b), the students did not even mention this as an area that they needed to explore. I had to ‘convince’ the students that this was an area of mathematics we needed to focus on, as it was an aspect that from my experience, was often ignored by teachers. Rather, the students chose to research areas we had already explored in year one and two of their Mathematics Education Course.

Further ideas were added to the list – mathematical language, patterns, assessment, number operations and problem-solving. Many of these had been covered before (in their previous mathematics education course) ... I was somewhat shocked when Melissa started making suggestions about mathematical language and number operations as these had been done fairly extensively last year.

(FN 01/03/01)

What concerned me with regards to the students' choice was that they were restricted in terms of what they knew. As Heather (05/04/03: 1) expressed: **How do you know what you want to know if you don't know what you don't know?** Despite numerous experiences teaching in schools, it appeared that the students had a limited understanding of the areas related to developing children's mathematical abilities, or they accepted the national curriculum wholeheartedly as the authority⁸³ for what they had to teach, or that their previous courses had promoted dependence on the lecturer for defining what they needed to know and learn. The students' understanding of learning and teaching mathematics was based on their previous Mathematics Education Courses and the C2005 (DoE 1997b). As Brown and Jones (2001: 14) argued, teacher training is often shaped by government policies, and that this in turn can result in students defining themselves and what they need to know in terms of the government requirements. The influence of competence-based curricula with its emphasis on the measurement of discrete and observable outcomes promotes the view of teaching as a technical activity (Brown & Jones 2001: 13). Zeichner (1983: 4) argued that the teacher is viewed as "an executor of laws and principles of effective teaching". Within this scientific model, the teacher is not viewed as an intellectual, who can critically engage with educational policies and practices, but one that obediently implements and delivers what others dictate.

Grundy (1987: 136) argued that simply allowing students to choose what and how they want to learn "will not generate praxis" unless their practice is informed by theory (Grundy 1987: 136). For Grundy (1987: 123)

... the concern was not simply to provide a wider range of choices for learning, but to share control of the development of learning through sharing theories of learning and curriculum construction with students ... students were emancipated from dependence on the teachers' ability to diagnose appropriate learning experiences.

Within this curriculum negotiation process, the students and I engaged in the processes Grundy reflected on in the above quote (see chapter three pages 90-103). As stated in chapter three (see page 93), the students chose to work independently of the lecturer in cooperative groups in cycle one of the curriculum negotiation process. However, they reflected after this cycle that their selected approach to learning was not suited or conducive to their learning and articulated the need for a more interventionist approach (one where the lecturer would

⁸³ This is understandable given that the methodological components of the Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree are focused on C2005.

facilitate the learning process more directly) in cycle two⁸⁴ (GIa). While the students chose how they wanted to learn, in the second cycle, they became more dependent on the lecturer, not to choose the 'appropriate learning experience', but to facilitate it. Shor (1993) argued that despite attempts to model democratic practices in the classroom, students do not necessarily respond to these practices. For Shor (1993) many students do not respond to democratic changes in the classroom because of the twelve years of authorisation at schools and to some extent in higher education too. As I have argued later in this chapter (see page 115), the students still viewed the lecturer as the 'expert' (GIa), and their experiences in higher education have done very little to challenge this perspective. During the first focus group interview (FGIa: 7) the students mentioned that the lecturers determine what they have to learn, and that there is very little interaction between the lecturer and students. Some of the students recognised their dependency on the lecturer during the focus group interviews. Sharon (FGIa: 21) stated that **we are so used to being spoon-fed that ... it's security**. For Gail (FGIb: 14) their dependency was rooted in the fact that the lecturers are experienced; **...they have been teaching, they know what works and ... what method will help the children the most**.

While I wanted to challenge the students' dependency on the lecturer, by offering them the opportunity to choose how and what they wanted to learn, I also wanted to use journals as a data collection tool in this research (see chapter two page 54). I knew the students would not choose journals, as their previous experiences with using journals on school experience had been problematic⁸⁵. However, I asked the students to keep research journals of their experiences during the negotiated curriculum process. During the research process, it became apparent that the students were not enthusiastic about journal writing. As I wrote in my field notes (17/04/01)

While I realised initially that the students were not particularly excited about keeping journals on their ideas and feelings about the curriculum process, they accepted my argument that it would be useful for recording their reflections about the curriculum negotiation process. I should have realised that the journals were not working as expected when the students asked for an extension on the date that they were due to be handed in. When they handed their journals in today, they kept referring to them as "your journals". At this point I realised that the journals weren't serving the purpose that they should. The students were really writing in their

⁸⁴ The reasons for this choice will be reflected on later in this chapter (see pages 119-120).

⁸⁵ Journal writing is a requirement for our school experience modules. Students are required, as part of their school experience assessment process, to reflect on the relationship between theory and practice. Many students find this very difficult to do and as a result, find journal writing abhorrent.

journals for what they thought was my benefit. To what extent will the thoughts and feelings be based on what they think I want to read?

My reaction was to stop the journal writing, as I was concerned about the ‘authenticity’ of this research tool. During the SGID (see appendix three page 183), one group of students,

...wondered what had happened to the journals they were required to keep initially. They explained that they were wondering not because they had liked the journals - because they had not and were glad to be free of them - but because the lecturer had liked them.

(SGID 2001: 2)

The problem with the journals was that I had not negotiated nor ‘convinced’ the students of their use as a tool for self-reflection. The students therefore viewed the journals as being for my benefit rather than their own. In view of this, the question for me was ‘How do I encourage the students to say things they think I may not want to read or hear?’ Gore (1993: 151) argued that: “No matter the form of the journal, given the authority of the teacher who requires, or even requests, that a journal be kept, it is important to be attuned to the likelihood that our students, in part, will write what they think we want to hear.” As Melissa (II 27/11/07: 6) stated with reference to the journals, **Oh, I had a stage where I like said ‘oh lord, now what!’ ...I’m not good at putting anything [in my journal] that is admissible in court!**

Furthermore, while we had agreed that what and how we learned had to be based on consensus at the beginning of the curriculum negotiation process (see the agreed definition of negotiation in chapter three page 71), my initial insistence that the students keep journals was based entirely on my interests. In this case my advocating that the students kept journals entrenched the discourse of the ‘teacher as authority’, which was contrary to the values I was trying to promote through the negotiated curriculum.

The students’ choices were further curtailed by the policies and procedures of the higher education institution in which they were registered. These limited the extent to which the negotiated curriculum participants were ‘free’ to choose what and how they learn. For example, assessment practices within the university are still performance-based and exam-orientated (see chapter one page 8). In order to pass the exams, the students stated in the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb), and reiterated this during the group interview after the second cycle (GIb), that they give the lecturers exactly what they (the lecturers) want. **In exams we**

write what we think the lecturer wants to hear (Mia GIb: 3). As mentioned in both chapter one (see page 1) and chapter three (see pages 84, 94) students' experiences of learning in schools and university have entrenched the perception that 'what counts' is based on the beliefs of the lecturer and / or institution.

In our negotiated curriculum, the students had to be examined in June and December. Although the December examinations had to be written papers as they were sent for external moderation, we had flexibility in terms of how we constituted the June examinations. The students and I negotiated how to construct the June examination, and what topics they would research for the June exam. We decided that the students would each focus on a different area relating to mathematics learning and teaching; they would produce a document on their topic for their peers, and they would present their topic to the class during the examinations period. In chapter three (see page 103) the details of how the June exam was developed have been discussed. The examination topics chosen by the students are listed in appendix one (see page 179).

As stated in chapter three (see page 102) the students' decided they did not want to assess their peers in cycles two and three of the negotiated curriculum process, and that I should be tasked with assessing learning. They argued that they would not be able to assess their peers' work objectively and that I would be better able to determine their progress. Interestingly, the students, as I mentioned in chapter three (see page 102) still believed that assessment could be an 'objective' process. Throughout the curriculum negotiation process and the discussion sessions, which I led during the lecture sessions in cycle two (see chapter three page 96), I was conscious of my assessments of the students' learning. Furthermore, as with Fox (2002: 200), I was concerned that both my comments and facilitation style would, albeit unintentionally, guide the students to the 'right' answer and 'right' viewpoints. This was of particular concern to me, as I knew, from their articulations during the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb) and the first group interview (GIa), many of the students saw me as the 'expert'.

For some students, the ideal of consensus or 'mutual understanding' (Calhoun 1995: 51) was not a choice, but a constraint in the negotiated curriculum. Melissa (FGIa: 5-6) explained that she vacillated between learning being a social process, because it required trust, and an individual process. During the individual interviews, Melissa (II 27/11/01: 3) explained **I had to do some things that weren't ... really interesting for me. I mean some of the things that**

other people had elected to do I kind of had to go along with it because of the class and not just me. While consensus is not a pre-requisite in curriculum negotiation, critical theory, from the perspective of Habermas (as cited in Calhoun 1995: 50) and Grundy (1987: 128) see *consensus* as its goal. In chapter three (see page 93), I stated that the students and I tended towards reaching consensus as opposed to expressing meanings that were inherently conflictual.

[If] one grants that people are constituted by tensions within themselves, as well as by definitely held views or propensities – then one cannot quite imagine the perfect consensus as a desirable goal. Certainly we do seek consensus about various matters of truth and practical action.

(Calhoun 1995: 50)

Habermas's assumption (as cited in Calhoun 1995: 51) was that "human beings naturally inhabit a single horizon of experience, a single social world, at a time". But, according to Calhoun (1995: 51) we inhabit "multiple and internally differentiated social worlds" so what we seek, and indeed often achieve - is not consensus as such - but adequate mutual understanding for the pursuit of various practical tasks in which we are jointly engaged". For Melissa (II 27/11/01: 4), consensus however, ultimately limits choice. She expressed that ideally [the negotiated curriculum] would be me choosing my curriculum entirely just for me, but you can't really do that in class. You can't really just make it one person's idea because then it's not really negotiated with everyone else. She (Melissa II 27/11/01: 4) further suggested that negotiating the curriculum should encourage forum groups so that the only negotiating part of it is the boundaries that you have to stay within ... then you can go off in your own direction.

Negotiating the curriculum with one's students provided an opportunity for students to be active in the learning process, and to take control of their learning. However, the constraints, both implicit and explicit in our curriculum negotiation process placed severe limitations on student 'freedom' and authority, and to a certain extent, as I argued in chapter five (see pages 142), reduced the possibility of them taking ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Choices were limited by what the students knew from their previous experiences and courses, national and institutional policies, my own research agenda (this is explored further in chapter five page 139), and the education discourses that promote authority-dependence as well as the belief that the lecturer is the expert. With hindsight, I would argue

that within the context of curriculum negotiation, the lecturer's role is central⁸⁶ in assisting the students to critique their *choices* and their reasons for making those choices. Likewise, as lecturers, we need to critique the 'choices' we promote, particularly those that are institutionalised⁸⁷ in our pedagogies.

4.3.2 Collaboration

Some of the teachers / lecturers that have written about curriculum negotiation (Hyde 1992a) viewed collaboration as a pre-requisite only in the initial stages of curriculum negotiation. Thereafter, students can decide, within the initial confines, what and how they want to learn. Boomer (1992a; 1992b; 1992c; 1992d) however, for reasons articulated later in the chapter (see page 118) viewed collaboration as important. My strong orientation towards social constructivism (see chapter three pages 88-89), and the goal of critical pedagogy, namely, transformation for social action, meant that collaboration was essential. In addition to this, most of the students (FGIa; FGIb) as I have mentioned in chapter three (see page 79) agreed that learning is a social process. Collaboration, however, proved difficult within the context of our curriculum negotiation. The dilemma here concerned a conflict between:

- | |
|---|
| a. The students' theoretical understanding of how learning occurs versus their experiences as learners. |
|---|

In other words, while all of the students except one articulated that learning was a social process in the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb), their previous learning experiences promoted individual learning processes.

In developing a curriculum that promoted democratic empowerment one needs to critically analyse the "conditions of knowledge and how such knowledge distorts reality" (Giroux 1997: 108). In so doing, one needed to examine not only how knowledge distorts reality, but also how it produces particular life forms (Giroux 1997). The problems and needs of the students should be seen as the starting point for curriculum development (Giroux 1997). Such a curriculum should promote subordinate forms of knowledge. For example, rather than privileging the individualistic and competitive forms of knowledge that are endemic in

⁸⁶ I have articulated my understanding of the role of the lecturer / teacher within the context of curriculum negotiation and critical pedagogy in chapter five (see page 139).

⁸⁷ I use the term 'institutionalised' to describe specific pedagogical practices that we use in teacher education; practices that have become entrenched.

western education, we decided in cycle one, that the students would work in cooperative groups on their areas of interest. This was important to me for reasons stated above and because research situated within the critical paradigm is both participative and collaborative (Carr & Kemmis 1986:172). Furthermore, based on the students' discussions in the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb), I believed the students valued collaboration too. Boomer (1992c: 94) emphasised the importance of collaboration in curriculum negotiation for two reasons. Firstly, he argued that "individualised learning techniques" are over-emphasised, and secondly, "... the whole community is more important than any one individual" (Boomer 1992c: 94).

Given that my students were all white, middle-class females, it was necessary for me to create opportunities, through negotiation, that would enable them to engage with alternative discourses (e.g. cooperative learning versus individualised learning) in order to push their horizons and enable them to critically engage with their own experiences in terms of how they legitimate certain forms of social and historical life; "... it is through such experiences that students produce accounts of who they are and constitute themselves as particular individuals" (Giroux 1997: 110).

However, collaboration and participation were not processes that occurred automatically in the negotiated curriculum process. Negotiating the curriculum meant that the students were involved in the decision making. Despite seeing the benefits of participation and collaboration (they stated in the focus group interviews (FGIa, FGIb) that learning was a social process, and that they learned through discussions with their peers), they ultimately decided that working individually was easier; easier, because this is what they are used to. It was my experience from working with students that while they may work in groups during lectures, most of their learning outside of lecture times is done individually. Even if the students are asked to complete collaborative projects out of lecture hours, they tend to divide the work between themselves and complete their sections individually. As highlighted in chapter three (see page 91), this is what happened in the first cycle despite *our* decision that the students would work in groups.

During the second group interview (GIb) and individual interviews (Cathy II 05/12/01; Megan II 06/12/01; Gail II 11/12/02), it became apparent that most of the students found the second cycle to be more beneficial to their learning. The notions of sharing ideas and learning with each other were stressed as being important to their learning. Below is an excerpt from

the group interview (GIb) where the students reflected on the second cycle of the action research.

It was great. We focused on one thing in particular instead of researching different areas in groups.

(Melissa GIb: 1)

I learned more in the group discussions and you could still focus on the area you wanted to.

(Beth GIb: 1)

... [W]e were more focused as a class, instead of a small group.

(Gail GIb: 1)

It enabled us to share our ideas with each other.

(Mia GIb: 1)

During the second cycle, the students were not working independently, but rather became interdependent, collaborators of learning. As Reid (1992: 134) emphasised the students and I were “learning as we teach, yet significantly, teaching as we learn”. One of the students in the individual interviews (Mia II 07/12/01: 5) stated that the negotiated curriculum process had taught the class so much about themselves in terms of their relationships with other class members. **I think our group bonded well, there was bonding and we could actually interact with each other ... I think it's (the negotiated curriculum process) got a lot to with the way we were learning, in the end I definitely saw how we had been physically there with each other, and teaching each other, so we had that basis to form. So I felt much closer [to the rest of my class]** (Mia II 07/12/01: 5).

Collaborative learning in this context, however, only seemed possible when the lecturer was facilitating the learning process. By that I mean that when the students elected to cooperate in groups, independently from me, during cycle one, they resorted to learning individually. Reasons given for this related to the difficulty of meeting as a group after lectures, and that they wanted to work in friendship groups (GIa). As Beth (GIa: 4) said, **it makes it easier to get together after hours if you're friends**. In cycle two however, where I was more actively involved in facilitating the students' learning, collaboration occurred. The students previous experiences in the classroom have been dominated by the teacher / lecturer being in ‘control’

of the learning process so they were dependent on their lecturers / teachers to facilitate the learning process.

While I tried to engage the students on their reliance on the lecturer during the second cycle of the action research process in exploring the limitations and problems with this reliance, they expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities to learn without lecturer input. As Kelly (Gib: 2) stated, having the lecturer present is **more confidence building. You become more 'brave' to learn something on your own.** In my reflections (FN 17/04/01) after the 'lecture' session during the second cycle, I wrote,

... personally, I am disappointed with the 'new' approach. I don't think that it is new because my lectures [in the past] usually centre around discussion and active involvement. I suppose that the key difference is that the students have negotiated what they want to learn and how, but it is evident that they are still dependent on me to provide direction.

As stated in chapter three (page 93), I tried to encourage the students to facilitate the various lecture sessions, but they 'chose' not to. In the first cycle as I articulated in chapter three (see page 93), I struggled with my students independence and at times felt superfluous (FN 13/03/01). However, during the second cycle when my role was to facilitate the learning process, which the students did not want to facilitate, I was concerned that I was driving the process (FN 17/04/01) and that the students were too dependent on me to provide direction.

Despite our problems with collaborative learning, one of the students in this study, who was opposed to working in groups for various reasons that she explained during the focus group interviews (FGIa) and that I have described in chapter three (see page 80), stated in the individual interview at the end of the research process, that she learned that she could work in a collaborative group. **I benefited from the fact that I could actually do group work. I never really thought that I could** (Melissa II 27/11/01: 4). Within the context of the negotiated curriculum, with the focus on collaborative learning, this student managed to engage with her previous experiences of learning, which were essentially individual, and realised that she could learn with and from other members of the group. Not only did she realise that she could learn with her peers, but she also realised that people learn and think in different ways. **There is always the assumption that people learn like you do and I never realised that there were so many different ways [of learning]** (Melissa II 27/11/01: 2).

Through the process of curriculum negotiation, I had hoped the students would experience ways of learning that challenged dominant forms of knowledge in western education, particularly liberal forms of education. However, their previous experiences as learners in both schools and higher education institutions have so entrenched individual notions of learning that despite their theorising that learning was a social process, learning individually came 'naturally'. A further emerging dilemma was how could I provide an opportunity for students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning without promoting and reifying the individual?

4.3.3 Self-motivation

The 'critical knowledge value' of self-motivation is dependent on students' ability to self-manage their learning. I started the curriculum negotiation process with a number of assumptions about motivation. Firstly, I believed that because the students had negotiated what and how they wanted to learn that they would be motivated to learn. This assumption underpins much of the work done on curriculum negotiation (Boomer, Lester, Onore, Cook 1992; MacDonald & Brooker 2000 as cited in Tinning 2002). In both focus groups (FGIa; FGIb), the students emphasised the importance of being interested in what they were learning (see chapter 3 pages 75, 78-79). Secondly, as they had decided what they wanted to learn, I thought they would be interested in what they were learning because they had chosen areas relevant to themselves. However, this was to some extent undermined, as I argued earlier in this chapter (see page 116), as the students' choices were defined by what they already knew, my understandings of what was important and the national curriculum. Furthermore, negotiating the curriculum in this research focused on consensus and shared interests (in terms of areas to be researched and learned). This proved problematic for one of the students in particular, as I have explained earlier in this chapter (see pages 115-116)

The dilemma that emerged during the negotiated curriculum process was that:

a. I expected the students to be self-motivated, but they still wanted me to motivate them.

Having negotiated the curriculum with my students, I now question the extent to which a negotiated curriculum fosters self-motivation and interest?

What I believe the authors of curriculum negotiation (Boomer, Lester, Onore, Cook 1992; MacDonald & Brooker 2000 as cited in Tinning 2002) overlooked is that many students lives at school and higher education institutions are so structured and controlled⁸⁸ that they learn to depend on authority. Opportunities to use lecture times for independent research work are often not used to the full (see chapter 3 page 92). Furthermore, during the focus group interviews (FGIa; FG Ib), many of the students articulated that it was the responsibility of the lecturer to motivate them. As Karen (FGIa: 7) stated: **What motivates me in the lectures is the lecturers themselves. If they make it fun and interesting and they are enthusiastic about it, then I can be more enthusiastic.** Kelly (FG Ib 7) also argued that the lecturer's enthusiasm was important. **If they (the lecturers) are enthusiastic and excited about it (the subject being learned / taught), then maybe you will also think, maybe there is some excitement in this thing.** The discourse focused on the teacher, and the role of the lecturer as 'entertainer'. If the lecturer / teacher makes learning fun and interesting, the students will be motivated to learn.

During the individual interviews, all six students (Melissa (II 27/11/01); Beth (II 12/12/01); Megan (II 06/12/01); Mia (II 07/12/01); Gail (II 11/12/01); Cathy (II 05/12/01)) interviewed stated that negotiating the curriculum had motivated them, but I think the students were only self-motivated at isolated moments in the negotiated curriculum process. An example of this was during the time they worked on their June Examination. During the second group interview (GIb) the students articulated that they found the work they were doing for the June Examination relevant, interesting and motivating. They provided a number of reasons to support their claims. Both Gail (GIa: 2) and Megan (GIb: 3) placed importance on having something to show for their learning As Gail (GIb: 2) articulated; **usually exams are just a mark. Now we have documents too. You usually forget the mark, but we still have the documents.** The exam for Megan (GIb: 3) was certainly more motivating. **During the term we did all the work ourselves – doing and finding the information. Presentations are more motivating. With exams we learn and forget the next afternoon. Now we have our own documents.** For Heather (GIb: 3), knowing that her peers would be reading her examination document proved motivating. She explained **if you do it for each other, it motivates you. You become choosy about what you want to add in the document. I know what you guys want and expect.** Melissa (GIb: 3) stated: **In the exams, we write what we think the lecturer wants to hear. With this you write what *you* think and believe (*my italics*).**

⁸⁸ Within our own institution, I believe that the students' lives are structured and controlled. The students participating in this research attend 'lectures' or work in schools from 08h00 to 6h00 five days a week. The departmental policy has been 100% attendance at 'lectures', and leave of absence is granted only for exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the curriculum (which includes the content and how it is taught), is determined by the lecturers.

While the students felt that the June Examination was motivating and beneficial, there are dangers with learning individually. As Young (1995: 14) argued

suspicion of the liberal model [of critique] centres on the adequacy of the notion of the autonomous judgement with which learners already possessed of a worldview, however limited, are supposed to evaluate incoming claims and reasons for their validity. There is no doubt why Foucault makes the otherwise surprising statement that in the issue of pedagogy and power he was ‘... not certain that self-management is what produces the best results. Nothing proves’, he went on to say, ‘... on the contrary, that this approach isn’t a hindrance.’

In cycles one and three (see chapter three page 91; 99), the negotiated curriculum placed more emphasis on students managing their own learning as opposed to the lecturer managing their learning. Thus, students need to be self-motivated rather than simply relying on the teacher to motivate them. In the context of this study, the students, particularly in cycles one and three were required to manage their own learning. In cycle one, the students chose to work in cooperative groups on their own⁸⁹, and in cycle three they opted to research their areas of interest individually. The students had been in schools for a consecutive period of seven weeks, and all of them identified ‘assessment’ as a problem area, and asked that we explore this further. Because the students all had different questions (see appendix one page 179), we decided as a group, that they would focus on their own areas of interest related to their specific problems. At this point the students worked predominantly on their own, but in consultation with their peers and myself. In this cycle it was evident to me that students began to take responsibility for their own learning, but what remained problematic was that we reverted back to individual learning approaches.

Both curriculum negotiation and critical discourses make assumptions about student self-discipline. For Shor (as quoted in Gore 1993: 115), the goal of critical pedagogy is “self-regulation of the students”. Giroux (1988: 69) argued “the democratic imperative [is] that students learn to make choices, organise and act on their own beliefs”. Through the negotiated curriculum, which makes the same assumptions about student self-discipline as Shor (1993) and Giroux (1988) made, I found that a few of the students saw this as an opportunity to ‘relax’, and not to engage with their own learning.

⁸⁹ With little input from me, the lecturer.

With regard to the issue of self-management, those students, who had previously displayed abilities to manage their own learning, coped well in this context, but there were a number of students that did not use the allocated research time⁹⁰ effectively. As Cathy (II 05/12/01) stated, the time that they were given to do their readings and research was not used to the full.

It's not that there wasn't enough time; it was not enough continual work. It's like 'okay, you can go to the library and research,' and we all went bye and went home, and we are all like that. I mean, I'll probably be the only one that will admit it, but you know.

(CC II 05/12/01)

When teachers emphasise self-discipline, students often interpret this to mean that there is no discipline, giving them license to do the work or not to do it. During the first cycle of the negotiated curriculum, where the students were required to use the designated 'lecture times' to do their own research into their areas of *interest* in collaborative groups, it was evident that while some of the students responded positively to this challenge, a number of students saw this time as 'free time'. In my reflections after the lecture (FN 28/03/01) I wrote,

I am concerned about individual students. Belinda has missed two lecture sessions. Her group needed her yesterday to discuss their progress and she wasn't there. Neither was Heather. I happened to find her in the library ... She wasn't anywhere near the maths section.

The students' interest in the research process dwindled towards the end of the academic year. During the third cycle of the action research process, a student that had initially taken ownership of the negotiated curriculum and described the process as **our research** (Sharon J 13/02/01), commented (when I met her in the library) that: **I am working on *your* assignment** (my italics). For Freire (as cited in Aronowitz & Giroux 1993:14), "... the oppressed have an investment in their own oppression because it represents the already-known..." In the education environment, this is demonstrated when students who want to contribute stop themselves and tell the lecturer to carry on talking as s/he is the expert (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993:15).

The dilemma that emerged through the process of constructing this narrative of the curriculum negotiation process, was: To what extent did the students need or want to be self-

⁹⁰ By 'research time', I mean the time allocated during their lecture sessions.

motivated and self-managed, and what limited their self-motivation. These are crucial issues because they impact greatly on my initial aims of this research, and on critical pedagogy.

4.3.4 Dialogue

Learning from our students' voices enables us to know who our students are as learners, "and, because we have that knowledge, to expand and enrich our sense of what it means to teach" (Dahl 1995: 130). However, "how teachers and students read the world is inextricably linked to forms of pedagogy that can function either to silence or marginalise students or to legitimate their voices in an effort to empower them as critical and active citizens" (Giroux 1988: 165). For McLaren (1991:21), central to creating a critical pedagogy, is the affirmation of student voices and experiences contributing to the democracy. The difficulty with this was that while I had to affirm their voices, I needed to be constantly questioning the assumptions and values informing them.

The conversation model for interpretation and mutual understanding also has other limits. Notably, accounts like Habermas's and Gadamer's tend to posit participation in conversation as a given and recognize inequalities and power only as distortions and intrusions. It is hard to relate such model discourses to those settings in actual social life where conversation itself is imposed by force and maintained as unequal power.

(Calhoun 1999: 51)

My students' voices were deeply embedded in the values of the past, which meant that as a lecturer, I needed to create an environment that was "sufficiently politically conscious and critical ... [and] resist the temptation to glamourise student voices." (Shor as cited in O'Loughlin 1995: 112) My concern with the use of curriculum negotiation as a vehicle for the implementation of a critical pedagogy was that:

- a. On the one hand, I was asking the students to voice their opinions and ideas in the classroom, but on the other hand, I had to ensure that we challenged our own values and assumptions.

For the critical pedagogue, although it is necessary to understand how the students' view and construct their own practices and situations, merely developing an understanding of our theories and practices is not sufficient, and does not automatically imply or lead to transformation of social realities. The tension here for the critical pedagogue is to affirm

student experiences and knowledge, while at the same time creating a space for them to critique their experiences.

As Giroux (1997: 110) stated: "Knowledge has first of all to be made meaningful to students before it can be made critical". In this research process, we remained at the level of understanding, understanding our practices and 'theories'⁹¹. One could argue that this is possibly a result of the limited time we had to enact the negotiated curriculum, or that curriculum negotiation occurred in only one course throughout their four year Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree, and that given more time we would have been able to move beyond the level of understanding to being critical. However, it is my opinion that our negotiated curriculum promoted the values of western individualism at the expense of the social good. Students who were benefactors of the dominant ideology for so long are unlikely to question the values and assumptions informing that ideology.

Cook (1992: 163) stated that once her students were familiar with her teaching style, and willing to negotiate, "they were less inclined to allow me to dominate". My experiences are more ambiguous. While some of the students were keen to share their ideas and opinions with the rest of the group, others still wanted me to be 'in control' of the learning context and to affirm their voices. In some instances, these students would even actively try to encourage me to 'take over' the learning context, particularly in cycle two.

In trying to promote an 'emancipatory' view of authority it was necessary to negotiate the roles of the lecturer and the students in the context of curriculum negotiation. The students voiced that the lecturers' role was merely to guide and facilitate the learning process (see appendix two page 182). They argued that lecturers should share their experiences and provide non-dominating opinions (FN 27/02/01). However, student reflections in their journals during the first cycle of the action research process indicated that they wanted me to provide more of an interventionist role. As Kelly (J 05/04/01) wrote: **Sometimes I did miss the 'teacher led' classes, as I like to have someone leading, so that I know if I'm on the right track or not ... I'm very insecure when it comes to things like this, I think that I'm going to do or say the wrong things (my italics)**. Gail (J 17/04/01) reiterated this need; **...today's lecture was good because I felt more positive. I like what we are going to do ... [Learning] as a class with lecturer input ... so we have a good grounding and guidance (my italics)**. What both of these viewpoints stress is that the students were still dependent on me, because they did not

⁹¹ I have deliberately put the term 'theories' in single inverted commas, because as I have argued in chapter three (see pages 81-85), these theories relate to *methods* of learning and teaching.

have confidence in their abilities to 'do the right thing' on their own. This view is linked to the positivist traditions, where the teacher is the authority in the classroom, which have dominated, to a large extent, schooling and teacher education (see chapter one page 1). Dewey (1916: 339) argued that: "Men (sic) still want the crutch of dogma, of beliefs fixed by authority, to relieve them of the responsibility of directing their activity by thought." As Beth (G1a: 1) explained during the group interview after cycle one, **we still want to rely on Lise because you have experience and you know all the theory**. In the individual interviews, it became apparent that the students still wanted my 'approval'. **In a discussion, we can say, well this is what we think, and then you [Lise] can say ... 'oh, this is good idea'** (Mia II 07/12/01: 3). The students clearly still regarded me as the 'expert', and while I had chosen to negotiate the curriculum to encourage them to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, it was clear they still wanted my approval and for me to have the 'final' voice.

Grundy (1987:122) argued that one needs to constantly examine the discussion and whether the "power to initiate speech and to ask questions ... is equally distributed amongst the participants". Power was asymmetrically distributed amongst the participants in this study. Not only were there hierarchical power relationships between the students and myself, but also, these relationships existed within the group of students. I had to be constantly mindful not to allow certain participants to dominate, but rather to encourage everyone to participate. Furthermore, I had to ensure that students who were 'reluctant' participants in the negotiated curriculum process were able to express their opinions too. During the group interviews, for example, I always tried to extricate Cathy's opinion as she indicated that she was **a bit negative about the whole thing** (Cathy G1a: 3). As stated in chapter two (see page 54), I specifically interviewed Cathy individually at the end of the negotiated curriculum process in order to ensure that her voice would be represented in this thesis.

Democratic dialogue in the classroom often faces resistance from students who tend to defend more traditional classroom practices for a number of complex reasons (Shor 1993: 28). Many students have come through an education system that is similar to Freire's notion of 'banking education' where they are not encouraged to question critically, but rather to accept as 'true' what the teacher tells them to do and what things mean. This develops a dependence on authority in students. As Cathy (II 05/12/01) emphasised: **It's much easier being told**.

Negotiating the curriculum offered the students an opportunity to discuss what and how they wanted to learn. While spaces were regularly created for us, during lectures and the group

interviews (GIa; GIb), to reflect on the curriculum negotiation process, this reflection focused on developing shared understandings. Throughout the curriculum negotiation process, I was aware that the reflection that occurred enabled the students to “assimilate knowledge in accordance with his/her own needs”, which Aronowitz (1993: 9) viewed as positive because it runs contrary to rote learning methodologies and assists “the learner [to] become the subject of his/her own education rather than the object of the system’s educational agenda”. For me, the problem with this was that we remained at the level of shared understanding and did not interrogate the assumptions and positions inherent in our reflections.

4.3.5 Situated

This ‘critical knowledge value’ relates to the extent to which the research related to the lives of the participants. During the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb), the students argued that lecturers should ensure that students understand the relevance of the courses and course content. In a discussion based on student dissatisfaction at having to learn, during their Education Theory Course, about *Schools as Total Institutions*, one of the students said **we have no idea what we are going to use it for** (Karen FGIa: 21). Negotiating the curriculum with one’s students implies that what the student’s choose to learn will be relevant to them because it is based on their own experiences and beliefs about what they want to know. The dilemmas that emerged with regards to situatedness, were that:

- a. Relevant knowledge for the students comprised of technical knowledge as opposed to critical knowledge; and
- b. The students focused their learning on practical aspects of teaching as opposed to theory.

Habermas (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986: 134) argued that knowledge is not a “‘pure’ intellectual act”, but that it is rooted in the interests of the individual or group concerned. In other words, knowledge is the “outcome of human activity that is motivated by natural needs and interests”. ‘Natural’ in the sense that they are historically, culturally and socially constructed.

During the focus group interviews, I asked the students the following question: What contexts need to be provided for you at university to learn about teaching?

I think our understanding of how children learn. We wouldn't have learned as much if we hadn't come to university and be guided as to what we should look at and use.

(Melissa FG1a: 10)

I'm saying what you learn here is not necessarily what you are going to use in the classroom. It's just nice to have a whole lot of different views that you can like discuss and debate and what works for you, you can take to the classroom and try out there.

(Karen FG1a: 10)

Just to get lots of ideas that you can try them and see if it works out ...

(Belinda FG1a: 10)

We need to have theory and practice at the same time. Because if you just get the theory, and never put it into practice, to see if any of these ideas work then you're never going to learn.

(Mia FG1b: 9)

From the above transcripts the students vary in their opinions about the importance and relationship between theory and practice. Melissa (FG1a) and Mia (FG1b) both emphasised the importance of theory, while Belinda (FG1a) and Karen (FG1a) focused on the need for practical ideas. While the students acknowledged the importance of learning about 'how children learn' in the focus group interviews (FG1a; FG1b), it became evident during the curriculum negotiation process, from the students conversations in class and from their journals, that what they were really interested in was "lesson ideas". Furthermore, once the students had negotiated the content of the curriculum, the discourse used by the students placed the teacher at the centre of the learning process. They asked for more lesson ideas, ideas for teaching concepts (e.g. time), and a focus on practice as opposed to theory (see appendix two page 182). As Gail (J 01/03/01) noted **I just feel so excited about getting lesson ideas that I want to get everyone else to feel the same way**. Later this student commented in her journal (01/03/01) that they wanted to structure the assignments in the form of lesson plans **because it would benefit us. That's the main thing, that we feel confident and the best teachers we can be to give the learners a wonderful experience**. What interests me is the notion that having a collection of lesson ideas equates with being the 'best teachers they can be'. The focus here is on 'how I teach', the technical aspects of teaching as opposed to 'how children learn' or the 'assumptions and values that underpin my teaching' or the 'effects of my teaching on student learning'.

One student in the individual interview (Megan II 06/11/01: 3) spoke of theory as **fluffy stuff**, in other words work that is not **hands-on** and practical. Cathy (II05/12/01: 4) stated that: **I'm not big on the research thing ... I just had to force myself into doing that ... I'm not a big reader**. In justifying why 'theory'⁹² was not particularly important to her, Cathy (II 05/12/01) articulated **I'll rather go [and] look up activities and how I can do that, but like theory it's not, ... it's like, obviously I will like do pre-school, so how much theory do you actually need for that**. The relationship between theory and practice is reciprocal and dialectical in the sense that practice informs theory and theory informs practice (McLaren 1991: 19). McLaren argued that simply because people do not question the theories informing their practice, does not mean that they do not understand them. With regards to the students in this study, it was evident to me, during the negotiated curriculum process, that even if they understood the theories informing their practices as McLaren (1991) suggested, the students did not understand the importance of theory and its reciprocal and dialectical relationship with practice nor its relevance.

Belinda (J 13/02/01) wrote in her journal: **With what we have done in MLMMS [Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics, and Mathematical Sciences]⁹³ this far (theory) I don't feel very equipped at all to teach maths. I really hope that we will be able to focus on the more practical side of teaching maths**. In response, during the individual interviews, to a question on what Cathy (II 05/12/01) had learned during the course of the curriculum negotiation, she commented, **I've got lots of ideas. I've got three files of activities**.

The problem with this over-emphasis on lesson ideas is that teachers become 'operatives' who are there to 'implement' as opposed to 'create' (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 47). In this instance teachers are not seen as intellectuals, but rather technicians. Underlying this notion of teachers as operatives and technicians is the view of teaching as an 'applied science, where teachers are mere executors of the laws and procedures of that science (Zeichner as cited in Aronowitz & Giroux 1985: 26). This view is rooted in a positivist approach to teaching and learning. Furthermore, the assumption is that all children irrespective of their social and cultural context are inherently the same. "It assumes that there is no longer any antagonism between interests, that everything is more or less the same, and that all that matters is solely

⁹² I have placed the term 'theory' in single inverted commas as the students' understanding of theory is often focused on more practical concerns, for example discipline. Robinson, Vergnani & Sayed (2003) articulated that their students have the same perspective.

⁹³ The Mathematics Education Course was termed MLMMS as this was the term used in the initial C2005 policy documents (DoE 1997b).

technical training, standardisation of content, and the transfer of well-behaved knowledge of results” (Freire 1998: 98).

For McLaren (1991: 16) the focus on practice is not surprising as the approach to curriculum design and implementation in both schools and higher education is based on knowledge that is both control-orientated and technical. In hindsight, it was my naive understanding at the onset of this research process that due to the importance curriculum negotiation places on the democratic values of dialogue, collaboration and participation, the students would be encouraged to engage beyond the technical aspects of teaching and learning. However, when the issues or ‘problems’ of the participants centre on issues of control, a technical view of knowledge is easily entrenched. Inherent in this view is a technical rationality⁹⁴ that promotes practical work over critical intellectual work (Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 36).

“When teacher education programs emphasise methods and marginalise reflection, critique and teachers’ roles as ‘transformative intellectuals’, then the outcomes cannot be otherwise – the process and goals remain one and the same” (Stokes 1997: 203). Stokes (1997: 203) argued that teacher education or rather what he terms ‘teacher training’ does not encourage students to think critically or reflexively because the focus of these programmes is often based on the development of skills and methods as opposed to “intellectual inquiry”. As a result, students become more concerned with issues of discipline, managing children’s behaviour and teaching skills. Negotiating the curriculum with one’s students can further entrench this view that teaching is about the development of skills and the transfer of knowledge, and classroom management and organisation. This technicist view of education promotes an instrumental rationality that is prevalent in the banking model of education (Freire 1972, 1998), which ultimately de-skills teachers (Kanpol 1999). Chomsky (2000: 3) defined the emphasis on technical training as “a sophisticated colonial model of education” that devalues the intellectual activity. “The major objective of colonial education is to further de-skill teachers and students to walk unreflectively through a labyrinth of procedures and techniques” (Chomsky 2000: 3). Negotiating the curriculum with one’s students, although based on democratic ideals, can easily entrench the “instrumental skills-banking approach” if students are not encouraged to “analyse the social and political structures that inform their realities” (Chomsky 2000: 4).

⁹⁴ ‘Technical rationality’ is a positivist-orientated discourse that places emphasis on ‘techniques’, which become increasingly ‘value-free’ as opposed to critical thought.

MacDonald & and Brooker (2000 as quoted in Tinning 2002: 230) in communicating about their pre-service teachers stated that they

... continued to be disappointed with the extent that technical knowledge dominated the subject matter. As each semester progressed our will to labour with critical questions diminished as our students' enthusiasm grew for the technical knowledge that characterised their other subjects.

As this enthusiasm for technical knowledge seems so pervasive within teaching and teacher education, giving the students the opportunity to decide how they want to learn, if not critiqued, will merely entrench the status quo. If students choose to work individually as occurred in cycle one and cycle three (see chapter three pages 91; 99), there is little possibility that they will critically evaluate their own practices and the values and assumptions inherent in those practices.

While I believe that there are certain dangers in negotiating the curriculum with one's students, especially if the students all represent a 'privileged'⁹⁵ homogenous group, I am not proposing that the technical aspects of teaching are not important. Rather, that it should not be the focus of teacher education and that the lecturer / teacher needs to play a central role in critiquing the pedagogies the students may choose. As Freire (1998:41) argued, both a technical and political understanding are central to learning. "In reality, education requires technical scientific, and professional training as much as it does dreams and utopia" (Freire 1998: 43).

In the context of this curriculum negotiation, it would be simplistic to argue that knowledge remained at the level of the technical interest; we were constantly guided in our process through our interactions with each other. Communicative action focuses on constructing a dialogical learning environment in order to develop understanding, particularly shared understandings. Here, the practical interest with its focus on interpretive understanding, informed and guided our curriculum negotiation process. During the individual interviews, Mia (07/12/01: 9-10) explained that the negotiated curriculum provided an opportunity to explore more than one perspective.

[It's] not just the lecturer's [viewpoint] ... I think that discussion is important to learn more about other approaches ... there's one or two (referring to students in our group) that you can see aren't interested in constructivism ... then they can share with us.

⁹⁵ When I use the term 'privilege', I refer to the "comforts of privilege that were 'normal'" (Steyn 2001: 88) for white South Africans pre-1994. I have explained this further in chapter five (see page 150).

She further emphasized this point when she stated: **We know what you believe ... but now [we are able to say] this is what we believe.**

Megan (II 06/12/01: 2) emphasised the relationships between the research participants. She said **we actually get on, we get on well together and we like to get ideas from each other and we like chatting to each other in class and we just like spark off ideas when we just chatted.** While Megan (II 06/12/01) thought that discussing things in class was beneficial, Melissa (II 27/11/01: 5) felt that **some of the people could jabble on more than I thought necessary.** However she stated that **I still learn[ed] in terms of how they went about gathering their information. I can still learn from that and what they thought was the most important aspect. I mean they felt differently about some things.**

For the students, sharing ideas with each other was deemed to be important and useful in developing their methodological understandings. However, the learning that occurred was primarily focused on lesson plans and ideas for teaching. In this sense, what was relevant for the students was the development of a shared understanding of technical knowledge as opposed to critical knowledge.

4.4 CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE VALUES AND AUTHORITY

In negotiating the curriculum, I had hoped that through the promotion of ‘critical knowledge rules and values’ within our pedagogy that we would develop an ‘emancipatory authority’ (Giroux 1988) or ‘liberating authority’ (Freire as cited in Shor & Freire 1987). Having written this textual representation of our curriculum negotiation process, it is evident that the praxis of curriculum negotiation renders these values problematic.

As I have argued in this chapter, each of the ‘critical knowledge values’, that is participation, collaboration, self-motivation, dialogue and situatedness, that formed part of both curriculum negotiation and critical pedagogy, were fraught with dilemmas. These dilemmas focused on the influence of dominant education discourses, particularly authority-dependence and the western liberal notion of individualism, national and institutional policies and my own beliefs about education. Sharing decision-making with one’s students, encouraging dialogue and negotiating the curriculum did not automatically reduce authority dependence or the “transfer of official knowledge and skills” (Shor 1993: 29) as implied by some of the negotiated curriculum writers (Boomer, Lester, Onore, & Cook 1992). Each of these above-mentioned

values presented the participants with a number of dilemmas that needed to be confronted and exposed.

A curriculum that focuses on the positive productive concept of power, must give students an “active and critical voice, ... [and encourage] active participation ... [which means] that students learn some real skills and knowledge which allows them to take part in adding to the general social good” (White as quoted in Aronowitz & Giroux 1993: 151). While curriculum negotiation required that the students be agents in the learning process (Reid 1992: 116), there were instances during our curriculum-negotiated process where the students actively opposed and resisted being agents in their own learning (for example, deciding not to participate in the assessment of their own learning and expecting me to facilitate the learning experience). Furthermore, it is my contention that being an active participant in the learning process does not imply that students will work towards the ‘general social good’.

4.5 CONCLUSION

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (see page 105), the focus of this chapter was to analyse the extent to which the emancipatory intent was realised. To do this, I framed authority and power as ‘sites of struggle’. From my previous experiences with the students that participated in this study, I believed that they had been exposed to pedagogical practices rooted in ‘authoritarianism’ (Giroux 1988) or ‘domesticating authority’ (Freire as cited in Shor & Freire 1987).

In order to evaluate the extent to which the intended emancipation was realised and an emancipatory view of authority promoted, I explored a number of dilemmas that emerged during the research process. These dilemmas impacted on the ‘critical knowledge values’ that informed our pedagogy and negotiated curriculum process. These ‘critical knowledge values’ included participation, collaboration, dialogue, motivation and situatedness. It was my assumption that creating democratic spaces in the classroom would promote an emancipatory view of authority. However, the dilemmas that emerged throughout the negotiated curriculum process rendered these values, and the notions of authority and power as problematic.

What emerged was that the negotiated curriculum, rather than enabling us to deconstruct the dominant education discourses and to challenge notions of authoritarianism, further

entrenched the discourses of authority dependence, technical rationality and western liberalism.

In the next chapter (see page 136), I reflect on the initial aims of the study, and the extent to which the negotiated curriculum is a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy within teacher education.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM - CRITIQUE

Why doesn't this feel empowering?
(Ellsworth 1989)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Eleanor Ellsworth (1989) developed an argument criticising critical pedagogy for its “highly abstract and utopian line” (Ellsworth 1989:297). Having constructed and reconstructed a textual representation of the process of curriculum negotiation for this thesis, I am left echoing Ellsworth’s (1989) statement: ‘Why doesn’t this feel empowering?’

In this chapter, I refer back to the initial aims (see chapter one page 3) of this research. In my analysis of the aims, I reflect on the methodology of action research, explore the extent to which curriculum negotiation was a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy in teacher education, and the degree to which students through the process of curriculum negotiation were encouraged and enabled to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning. Throughout this reflection, the limitations we encountered in the research process are highlighted. Finally, I considered some of the problems with critical pedagogy and critical theory in the context of this research.

5.2 THE RESEARCH AIMS

In order to examine the aims in terms of this research process, it is necessary to repeat the aims as articulated in chapter one (see page 3). The aims of this research were to:

- Gain an understanding of the relevance of curriculum negotiation within teacher education by:
 - Critically investigating the process of negotiating a curriculum with pre-service teachers; and
 - Analysing the influence of a negotiated curriculum on pre-service teachers’ learning, particularly in relation to pre-service teachers taking ownership and responsibility for their own learning.
- Enhance my own professional development in teacher education

- Evaluating whether curriculum negotiation is a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy based on democratic principles and values.

In the following section of this chapter, I critique the manner in which the first aim (with the two supplementary aims) was constructed and the problems with this research aim in terms of creating a critical pedagogy that had transformation for social action as its goal.

5.2.1 Understanding the relevance of curriculum negotiation

In order to understand the relevance of curriculum negotiation in teacher education, I have critiqued the first two supplementary aims, which focused on the negotiated curriculum process and the extent to which this process enabled the students to take responsibility for their own learning. In exploring the extent to which the first supplementary aim was realised, I have chosen to critique the action research process. The reason for this was that the relationship between the negotiated curriculum as we enacted it and action research was reciprocal in the sense that they informed and developed from each other. Thereafter, I analysed the extent to which the students were encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

5.2.1.1 The negotiated curriculum process

In order to ascertain the link between emancipatory action research and this study, it is necessary to explore the links between critical pedagogy and our action research process.

I mentioned in chapter two (see page 30) that the initial paradigmatic choice of the researcher was not the paradigmatic position of the participants. While this research was initially framed in my proposal by a critical paradigm, the reflections in this chapter serve to demonstrate the extent to which the emancipatory intent was curtailed. Certainly, this research was practical in the sense that it involved the participants (the students and lecturer/researcher) in changing our practice through the process of reflection (in groups and individually). For the students, the negotiated curriculum provided them with an opportunity to reflect on their own learning and the contexts promoting their learning. For me, as the lecturer and researcher, the negotiated curriculum provided an opportunity to reflect on the value of such a curriculum in creating a democratic learning environment; and to assess the extent to which this research developed a critical pedagogy.

The focus, during the negotiated curriculum process, was on meaning-making and shared understandings rather than transformation that had emancipation as its goal. In other words, interpretive (see chapter 2 page 32), where the inquirer tries to understand “social affairs” (Popkewitz 1984: 41). The interpretive paradigm relates to Habermas’s (as cited in Carr & Kemmis 1986: 135) practical knowledge interest. The practical interest “generates knowledge in the form of interpretive understanding which can inform and guide practical judgement” (Carr & Kemmis 1986: 135). In terms of this action research, the experiences and opinions of all the participants in the research process were used to inform further action. The focus was on interpreting our previous experiences in order to bring about change, although as I argue, not necessarily change in an emancipatory sense.

Tinning (2002: 231) argued that practical reflection would not result in emancipatory change as the values and assumptions underpinning critical pedagogy differ from those that influence a more ‘mainstream’ pedagogy. However, I would argue, that while pedagogy influenced by the practical interest is not emancipatory, practical reflection is often a necessary step for the students before they become reflexive. Carr and Kemmis (1986: 170 –174) described a negotiated curriculum process conducted by Reid (1992) as “provoking an emancipatory intent”, and through participation and collaboration with her students, “was fulfilling the conditions ... characteristic of critical social science.” However, in reviewing the levels of reflection in Reid’s study (as with Hyde (1992a; 1992b) and Bertola (as cited in Grundy 1987)), I have realised that the transformation that occurred was at an individual level, namely Reid’s (1992), and not at the level of social action. While the students were involved in the process of self-reflection, their reflections were based on *their* “insights about what they found out”. As with my own students, their insights were limited by their socio-historical positions.

Carr and Kemmis (as cited in Cohen and Manion 1994: 189 – 190) argued that:

In practical action research, participants monitor their own educational practices with the immediate aim of developing their practical judgments as individuals. Thus, the facilitators role is Socratic: to provide a sounding-board against which practitioners may try out ideas and learn more about the reasons for their own action, as well as learning more about the process of self-reflection. Practical action research may be a stepping stone to emancipatory action research in which the participants themselves take responsibility for the Socratic role of assisting the group in its collaborative self-reflection.

The danger of practical action research is that it does not necessarily encourage the participants to move beyond their already constructed notions of self, and or their constructed notions of learning and teaching. While the students engaged with their own learning through dialogue, they still wanted me to facilitate the learning process (see chapter four page 120). In this sense, they did not take responsibility for the 'Socratic role'. Having completed the negotiated curriculum process, I now realise that even if the students had taken on the 'Socratic role' by facilitating the learning process, it is unlikely that the emancipatory intent of a critical action research would have been realised. As I argue later in this chapter (see page 153), because of the homogenous 'nature' of the group, the lecturer's role should be central in the learning process. It was my experience that students of a homogenous grouping in terms of culture, class and gender, and who occupied positions of privilege in the past, are less likely to challenge their positions and those of their peers, and it is therefore the responsibility, and I would add role of the lecturer to critically engage the students about their assumptions and values, and the interests they serve. In other words, as I argue later in this chapter (see page 150), a critical pedagogy would enable students to problematise their 'positions of privilege'⁹⁶.

As stated in chapter two (see page 45), one of the principles of emancipatory action research is that of collaboration. Social transformation can only be realised through collaboration. As Scott & Usher (1999: 39) stated social change is dependent on the participants of the research acting collectively. In both chapters three (see page 92) and four (see page 117), collaboration within the context of this negotiated curriculum were problematic. Our experiences within this research process were that the students found it 'easier' to work individually, and when collaborative learning did occur (as in cycle two), it was facilitated by me, the lecturer. What is crucial to me, in the context of research for a qualification, is the extent to which this action research process / project was collaborative, and the possibility of a 'truly' collaborative action research process within the context of an academic research project⁹⁷.

I initiated this research in order to obtain a Masters in Education qualification. It was my belief that our pre-service teachers needed to take more responsibility and ownership of their

⁹⁶ As Steyn (2001: 85) argued, that while the privileged position of white South Africans may have remained largely unchanged in the economic sense, politically, the "privileged status has been removed", and culturally, weakened. In order for white South Africans to "make sense of their new positioning" and to relativise "'whiteness' in relation to other social groupings within our country" (Steyn 2001: 85), I argued in this chapter that we need to critically engage with our previous positions of privilege. When I use the term 'positions of privilege', I refer to the "comforts of privilege that were 'normal'" (Steyn 2001: 88).

⁹⁷ I use the term academic research project to define a particular form of research. That is, research for degree purposes.

own learning. In order to initiate the negotiated curriculum, it was necessary for me to obtain the permission and interest of the students that would participate in the research process. As mentioned in chapter one (see page 23), the students accepted my proposal and were willing to negotiate the curriculum. However, it became evident during the curriculum negotiation process, that the students saw the negotiated curriculum process as *my* project and they were the 'guinea pigs' (see appendix three page 183). What emerged in essence was a situation in which the research participants saw themselves as the researched rather than as collaborative participants. I was the researcher in this process for two reasons; firstly, a personal agenda, which was to use this research process to produce a master's thesis; and secondly, although the students participated in the negotiated curriculum process, the textual narrative of this process was conducted after the students had completed their degree. For this reason, it was not possible to organise 'member checks' (Guba and Lincoln 1981 as cited in Lather 1991: 36) of the thesis (see chapter two page 59).

My understanding now, is that collaborative action research requires more than merely bringing research participants 'on board'. For research to be collaborative, it needs to be initiated by groups (Carr and Kemmis 1986). If the students had recognised that they needed to take ownership and responsibility for their learning, rather than me, their lecturer, the research may have been more collaborative as the students would have had a personal interest in the research. Alternatively, had the writing of this research process been more collaborative in the sense that the students have been involved in reviewing my understanding and critique of the process through 'respondent validation' (Zuber-Skerritt 1992:138,) or 'member checks' (Guba and Lincoln as cited in Lather 1991: 36) and further dialogue, a possibility for more critical reflection and active critique of our previous privileged positions and our pedagogies, may have existed.

While Kemmis (as cited in Kemmis and McTaggart 1992: 152) later retracted his initial perspective that emancipatory action research should "consist of a group process", as it "undermines the significance of the individual teacher-as-researcher in favour of self-critical communities" (Cohen & Manion 2000: 233), it is my opinion that transformation for social action is dependent on collaboration and the development of 'self-critical communities'. Furthermore, bringing the students 'on board' is not sufficient if their agreement to participate in the research process is made on an intellectual level rather than an emotional one. Social transformation requires an emotional commitment from the members of the group. Cassidy (as quoted in Tinning 2002: 233) cites Giddens, who stated, "cognitive frames of meaning ...

it seems will not provide the sense of security in the coherence of day-to-day life unless there is a 'corresponding level of emotional commitment'." In other words, those students that came to this course with a corresponding emotional commitment may be more likely to make a connection. However, those that did not share the emotional commitment were dependent on an intellectual rationale for such a curriculum and pedagogy. When the students were invited to reflect on their thoughts about negotiating the curriculum after the first lecture, there were a variety of responses. Many of the students were committed to the idea of curriculum negotiation although some felt confused and anxious about the process. Two students embraced the idea of negotiating the curriculum whole-heartedly. I want to focus on the comment made during the reflection after this lecture. SB (J 13/02/01) stated: "Wow! It's very interesting to be involved in the process rather than being dictated to. I feel we all have valuable input. ... I really hope this works and that everyone participates and does not let *our* research down." The acknowledgement of the research process by the participants as 'ours' was important in the context of this research. Since research that is participatory needs to include the research participants not only in the collection of data, but also in the analysis of the data and construction of theory (Lather 1986:265). However, as the curriculum process progressed it became evident that the students were less enthralled about the research than I had anticipated. If the students had realised of their own accord that they needed to take responsibility for their own learning, they would possibly have had more of an emotional commitment to the research, and possibly would have been more involved in the research process.

The dilemma here is that critical theory, and hence critical pedagogy privileges rationality. For Kohli (1998: 515), the search for a 'perfect solution' in critical pedagogy, involves "the separating out of the emotional, the sensuous, the imaginative" from what is rational and cognitive. The implication of this is that "rationality is *the* way to emancipation" (Tinning 2002:235). Scott and Usher (as quoted in Brown & Jones 2001: 100) take this argument further and explain

that in critical action research emancipation has to be constructed in terms of an economy of sameness, where emancipation becomes the same for all regardless of difference and can only be brought about by processes of rational consensus which converge to the same.

Scott and Usher (1999), and many poststructuralists (Calhoun 1995: 193) would further critique my usage of the term 'homogenous' to describe the students and myself as this reflects the modernist notion of 'self-sameness'. However, I argued in chapter one (see page

21) that there were sufficient similarities (characteristics and values) that were common to us as a group, particularly within the South African context to justify this classification.

At this point it is necessary to reflect on the second supplementary aim and the concept of taking ownership and responsibility for one's own learning.

5.2.1.2 Taking ownership and responsibility for learning

For Apple (1990: 7):

There exists in curriculum development, and in teaching, something of a failure of nerve. We are willing to prepare students to assume 'some responsibility for their own learning.' Whether these goals are ever actually reached, given ... the behavioural regularities of the institution, is interesting ...

The question Apple (1990: 7) raised in this quote is whether it is possible, given the numerous institutional constraints, for students to take responsibility for their learning. Using Winter's (1982) concept of dilemma analysis, I argued in chapter four (see page 110) that there are many more non-negotiables in curriculum negotiation than I had initially anticipated. Despite institutional constraints, for example the focus on performance-based examinations, the students were constrained by their own discourses of learning and teaching. Given that the students were able to choose the 'appropriate learning experience' (Grundy 1987) through negotiation, it was my experience from this research that they chose situations that placed the lecturer at the centre of the learning process (see chapter three page 120). While I argue later in this chapter (see page 153), given the context of our institution and the background of the students that we attract to our institution, it is necessary for the lecturer to place him/herself centrally in the learning process. The question that I address here is: To what extent, given the students' placement of me in the negotiated curriculum, were they encouraged to take ownership of their learning? And furthermore, to what extent was this aim useful in the context of creating a critical pedagogy?

One of the central themes in Boomer, Lester, Onore, and Cook (1992) is the link between curriculum negotiation and ownership. Numerous authors (Cook 1992, Boomer 1992b, & Lester 1992) have argued that there is a direct link between the two. Cook (1992:163) stated that "[kids] want ownership." It is an assumption that premises their writing, yet there is no evidence provided in the text to support this claim.

Constructing a textual analysis of the curriculum negotiation process made me realise that my initial aim to encourage the students to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning, was based on 'privileged' assumptions about learning and teaching. The notion of taking ownership and responsibility for one's learning rests heavily on access, access to resources and a community of inquirers, mainly teachers in-the-field. Fortunately, the students had access to a well resourced library and resource centre, and they were required, as part of their degree, to teach in schools once a week for the duration of the first semester, and for a period of seven weeks in the second semester in their third year of study. Despite the resources available, many students encountered difficulties in finding information when they chose areas to research not available in the library and resource centre. Mia (II 07/12/01: 2) explained that when they chose their individual areas to research during the third cycle (see appendix one 179), she found it difficult researching her topic, as there was little information available. Despite access to resources, there were instances where students had negotiated a topic of interest, but were unable to find the necessary information.

Using teachers in-the-field as a resource is also problematic. As I argued in chapter three (see pages 81-85), many teachers currently teaching in-the-field "show considerable uniformity and stability in their teaching methods" and there is very little evidence of theory informing their practices (Russell 1993: 208), and that professional practice is often based on ritual and habit (Dewey 1916: 339-340). While it is not the purpose of this research to articulate why there is little evidence of the link between theory and practice in schools, it is important to note that these are the experiences many of our students are exposed to when learning in-the-field. It is unlikely that the students in working with these teachers would be given the opportunity to critically engage with the practices of the teachers as well as their own.

It was my assumption that creating democratic spaces through curriculum negotiation would 'empower' the students to take responsibility for their own learning. While I still maintain that students need to take responsibility and ownership for their learning in order to become lifelong learners, I realise that this was my utopian vision at the time and not that of my students. For many students, there are still 'comforts' in having learning presented. As Cathy, during the individual interviews (II 05/12/01: 3) stated:

You can hide [in lectures] ... I suppose its also like I'm lazy you know. [With the negotiated curriculum] you have to go and read up before hand and research and I hate the library ... [sometimes] it's just easier being told.

Students have an interest in depending on the lecturer to disseminate information (Delvin 2002).

During the individual interviews, all six of the students interviewed stated that the negotiated curriculum had enabled them to take ownership and responsibility for their learning. Their reasons given to support this claim were interesting to me. Melissa (II 27/11/01: 3) used the metaphor of a buffet to describe curriculum negotiation because you get to choose what you want to learn, which she argued was important.

It's almost like the difference between a dinner party and a buffet. A dinner party you get dished up stuff and you eat it and at a buffet, you can choose from a range of stuff. I mean, think about it, when you go to a dinner party, they always dish up something you don't like and you don't want to eat it anyway, and it is the same, if you have a lecturer in front that just dishes out what you're going to learn and you learn it. But in terms of the curriculum negotiating process, I've got to choose what I wanted to learn.

However, she (Melissa II 27/11/01: 3) explained that **I kind of chosen it, so I was stuck with it. I couldn't like back out or get bored or anything because I had decided that it was what I wanted to do, so it was very me focused even though we had some group work stuff it's still all about me.**

There are two aspects that I find interesting about Melissa's comment, Firstly, the notion that because she had chosen what and how she wanted to learn she *had* to take responsibility. Likewise, Beth's (II 12/12/01) argued that she *had* to motivate herself. She stated that the negotiated curriculum **gave you more responsibility in what you had to do. It was up to you, you know what I mean ... you had to like motivate yourself ... and in turn it motivated you too.** Secondly, Melissa's use of the pronoun 'me', which places her at the centre (the individual) above the group. For Megan (II 06/12/01: 3), the negotiated curriculum also 'forced' her to take ownership for her learning **because you weren't standing up at the front of the class and giving us notes and lecturing to us, so we definitely had to take ownership ... if we didn't work, you know, then we wouldn't get anything.**

Mia (II 07/12/01: 4) and Gail (II 11/12/01) articulated the extent to which they had taken ownership and responsibility for their learning in a different way. Mia (II 07/12/01: 4) emphasised the development of her research skills. **You go and find out more, and as you find more you actually think: "Oh, okay I can actually find out more." You're not restricted**

by this assignment that you have to do and so you actually learn more. (Mia 07/12/01: 3)
Gail (II 11/12/01) focused on the development of important life skills.

Cathy, however, (II 05/12/01) was more ambivalent about the extent to which the negotiated curriculum encouraged her to take ownership of her own learning. While she agreed that she did take responsibility for her learning, she argued that she did not necessarily want to. During the individual interview (05/12/01: 4) she said **Um, no, I did, but it took a while, and so like, maybe the first one that we did (meaning the first cycle) ... we were in shock ... that's how it kind of worked out and I'm not big on the research thing. I like to do it last minute. I'm giving away my secrets.**

While five of the six students (including Cathy) stated that they would negotiate the curriculum again if given the opportunity, Beth (II 12/12/01: 7) said **I don't think so. I want to say yes, because I know it's a better way to learn things but ... I want more structure. It's just what I'm used to. You know what I mean.**

Despite the students agreeing that the negotiated curriculum had encouraged them to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, it was my opinion that this occurred at a very superficial level. Although there was a transformation of consciousness⁹⁸ to the extent that the students believed they could identify what and how they wanted to learn, this belief did not lead to social action in the sense that they did not urge other lecturers in their third and fourth year courses to negotiate the content of those courses with them.

While Boomer, Lester, Onore and Cook (1992) argued that only when students feel they are involved in managing their own learning would they be able to take responsibility for it, it is my opinion that there are too many institutional and ideological constraints preventing students from taking responsibility for their learning, and that negotiating the curriculum does not automatically imply ownership as many of the negotiated curriculum stalwarts (Cook 1992; Boomer 1992b; & Lester 1992) would have us believe. Given the histories of the students in this research, I question the extent to which they, given the opportunity to manage their own learning, through the process of curriculum negotiation, were inclined or interested in taking responsibility for their own learning. As expressed during the focus group interviews (FGIa; FGIb) and in chapter four (see page 121) many of these students still believe that it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that they are interested and

⁹⁸ Although I credit this phrase to Carr & Kemmis (1986) and Grundy (1987), I have used it extensively in this chapter and have chosen not to reference it repeatedly.

motivated to learn. Initially I assumed that the negotiated curriculum might change this perception, but I am not convinced that it actually did.

One of the problems with the research in this context was that it was isolated⁹⁹ and time-specific, and hence the research 'project' had an end. For this reason, it is not possible to make any claim that the negotiated curriculum encouraged the students to take ownership and responsibility for their learning. Rather, what has arisen out of this research of interest to me is whether the aims as articulated in this study could encourage a transformation for social action. For Brown (as cited in Brown and Jones 2001: 35), changes in practice, should not be viewed as "a project with an end but rather [as] a process that always moves forward, built around a dialectic of action and description of it."

Throughout this thesis, I have implied that taking responsibility and ownership for one's own learning is a 'good' thing. However, I'm left wondering whose interests this serves, and is this notion consistent with a critical pedagogy that promotes democratic principles and transformation for social action. Firstly, the notion as enacted in our research process, was based on individualistic assumptions. Taking responsibility for learning, in the way that I have phrased this aim, is not a collective social ideal, but rather a reiteration of the individualistic notions of freedom representative of a western liberal democracy discourses. As Gutek (1997: 180) argued: "Foremost among Liberalism's propositions was that the individual person is prior to society". While Dewey (as cited in Gutek 1997: 181) stressed the importance of collaboration and group participation, the "group, composed of separate individuals, depended for its existence on individual members." Likewise, my aims depended on the individual members of the group.

I have realised, in writing this thesis, that I assumed that implementing and being guided by a set of pedagogical practices (namely critical pedagogy) would certainly lead to the initially stated aims and emancipation of my students. The negotiated curriculum was my choice as a vehicle for implementing a pedagogy with emancipatory aims. This was not open to negotiation, but rather justified on my previous experiences in working with these students. As Fox (2002: 208) claimed, "simply explaining and justifying these choices would reify our authority and power to run things." While the students participated in the designing of the

⁹⁹ I use the term 'isolated' to explain that the negotiated curriculum process occurred in only one of the course that the third year students were required to complete.

course and reflecting on the consequences of our actions, they were not part of the initial conceptualisation, which brings me to the second aim of this research.

5.2.2 My professional development

The second aim of this research concerned my own professional development. It was my belief at the beginning of this research process that the negotiated curriculum would enable me to develop a critical pedagogy that promoted the principles of democracy. In chapter one (see page 15), I explained that my understanding of critical pedagogy had changed from the time I initiated the negotiated curriculum and conducted the research to constructing this textual analysis. I would argue now that I did not in fact develop a critical pedagogy that had social transformation as its goal. However, the reflexive process in writing this thesis has enabled me to critique my own position and to explore critically the problems with curriculum negotiation as we enacted it.

In constructing my argument, I have chosen to explore other attempts at curriculum negotiation, namely that of Hyde (1992b) and Bertola (as cited in Grundy 1987), and then to highlight the limitations of curriculum negotiation in the context of this study.

Hyde (1992b: 68) argued that the curriculum negotiation process had enabled her to become more 'critical self-reflective'. Her teaching practices provided a space for her to learn about "how society is formed and transformed". In order to 'empower' her students, she chose to model the appropriate 'critical self-behaviour' that challenged notions of power and authority. Like Hyde (1992b), I too attempted to model 'appropriate' behaviour (negotiating the curriculum, encouraging the students to become agents in their own learning, promoting collaborative learning, offering them the opportunity to assess their own learning) in order to encourage my students to take ownership of their learning. In hindsight, I have realised that these strategies were not sufficient in achieving the aims of this research process, and in developing a critical pedagogy. While negotiating the curriculum and negotiating meaning during collaborative interaction did give some of the students more opportunities to take responsibility for their learning, there were other issues, that limited the extent to which students had 'control' over their own learning (see chapter 4 page 105), and the extent to which they wanted to take responsibility for learning.

Grundy (1987: 136-137) cites Bertola's practices as reflecting emancipatory interests. She quotes an interview with Bertola in which he stated:

Some of the readings I've done have given me more hope [about the negotiated curriculum] ... that there's a possibility of ethically engineering the classroom, working constructively on small things, which are counter-hegemonic in a sense that they attack that ideology, that concretised history, and perhaps make the children reflect on their own history.

Interestingly for me, both Hyde (1992b) and Bertola (as cited in Grundy 1987) have emphasised that they learned extensively from the process of negotiating the curriculum with their students. Both of these teachers have experienced a transformation of consciousness in the sense that they have developed and evolved their own practices based on their experiences and the relevant readings they read. As I have argued throughout this chapter, the negotiated curriculum, but more significantly, the process of reading, writing and reflecting on the process of curriculum negotiation in this thesis has had a significant impact on my learning, particularly in relation to pedagogy. I would agree with Shor (as quoted in Shor & Freire 1987: 176) that:

I find myself more changed by the students than I've been able to change them!

5.2.2.1 Curriculum negotiation: a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy?

In this section, I argue that curriculum negotiation as implemented in this research process was problematic in that it promoted a pedagogy that encouraged the development of the democratic values rooted in western liberalism. At most, as I have stated earlier (see page 145), it can be argued that these democratic values inherent in this research process encouraged a transformation of consciousness rather than a transformation for social action. And so, I argue, that the emancipatory intent of critical pedagogy, as enacted in this research process, was not realised.

Harber (1994: 5) argued that if democracy is an aim to which governments aspire, education needs to promote the "development of democratic values and human rights via greater discussion and participation." In offering a way forward for democratic education, Harber (1994) highlighted accounts of initial teacher education courses that have in his view promoted participatory and democratic practices. This includes, working "cooperatively in

planning the course syllabus, allocating tasks and discussing and sharing ideas and materials for teaching methods ... a division of labour with either individuals or small groups of two or three doing the work involved.” (Harber 1994: 3) For Harber (1994: 4), students involved in these courses have emerged with

the skills necessary for survival and coping with the status quo (researching materials, formal instruction, discussion techniques and course planning and evaluation) but they also have a vision of possible alternative approaches based on their own experience. They have gained some of the qualities of professionals: they have learned to work independently and as a team of cooperating equals, gained experience of decision-making and the review of outcomes and they have developed personal confidence as well as the open-mindedness to assess the ideas and contributions of others in a constructive way.

Likewise, Wraga (2002: 18) argued that

curriculum enactment (in which teachers and students collaborate on the conception and realisation of educational purposes) as an approach to curriculum implementation is consistent with democratic ideals and is the approach most strongly associated with the improvement of students learning, [that] curriculum developers should strive toward its realisation in educational settings.

While opportunities to negotiate the curriculum may improve student learning in the sense that they provided a space for the students to develop the skills and competencies that Harber (1994) articulated above, I would argue that they do not necessarily encourage students to take responsibility or ownership of their own learning. Furthermore, I hesitate to assume that such education, although based on democratic values, would assist in the development of democracy for the social good. For me, the problem with the courses Harber (1994) described, Wraga’s (2002:18) position, and with the curriculum as we negotiated and developed it, is that the focus was on methods and approaches for ‘effective’ teaching, rather than a critical education as proposed by Freire (1972; 1994; 1997; 1998), Giroux (1983; 1988; 1997) and Chomsky (2000). I concur with Grundy (1987: 103) that, “active teacher-student engagement through negotiation in the learning situation is not sufficient evidence of an emancipatory intent.” Cook-Sather (2002: 6) argued, “student-centred pedagogical approaches [do not] necessarily empower all students”. For me, the question is dependent on the social, historical and cultural experiences of students. To what extent would student-

centred pedagogies enable my students, who have ‘benefited’¹⁰⁰ from apartheid education, to critique their ‘positions of privilege’.

In exploring the role of the teacher / lecturer in “student-centred pedagogical approaches” (Cook-Sather 2002: 6), it is necessary for me to mention the differences between Giroux and Freire’s view of critical pedagogy here. For Giroux, critical pedagogy places the student at the centre of the learning process. Students’ experiences are important, as it is through the processes of such experiences that students are able to “produce accounts of who they are and constitute themselves as particular individuals. Student experience is the stuff of culture, agency, and self-production and must play a definitive role in any emancipatory curriculum.” (Giroux 1997: 110) For Freire (as cited in Grundy 1987:103),

Critical pedagogy goes beyond situating the learning experience within the experience of the learner: it is a process which takes the experiences of both the learner and the teacher and, through dialogue and negotiation, recognizes that both are problematic.

In writing this thesis and reflecting on the process of curriculum negotiation in creating a critical pedagogy, I have realised that placing the students at the centre of the learning process is problematic because students do not automatically problematise their positions of privilege. In addition to this, the discourses of teaching as a practical activity and the instrumental rationality that promotes the ‘authority of the method’ were entrenched through curriculum negotiation precisely because it placed the students at the centre of the learning process. I now argue why student-centred pedagogies in this context are problematic

5.2.2.1.1 ‘Positions of privilege’

Firstly, as my experience demonstrates, students do not naturally reflect on the values and assumptions informing their beliefs and behaviours.

Teachers are domesticated by their own schooling, and by the contradictory positions of powerlessness and privilege they occupy. They resist problematising their position of privilege relative to the many poor and marginalised communities within which they work.

(Stokes 1997:214)

¹⁰⁰ While white South African benefited from apartheid on a number of levels as explained in chapter one (see page 21), I would argue that in many instances, some of the perceived benefits were not beneficial and hence have placed the term in single inverted commas.

Negotiating the curriculum does not necessarily promote a critical conscientisation that promotes social action; at best it encourages a conscientisation of self. This is not enough to develop a pedagogy for liberation. Providing a democratic space in which the students were encouraged to become agents¹⁰¹ in their own education was not sufficient in developing a pedagogy which had transformation as its goal. Giroux (1997: 96) argued that the critical pedagogue needs to “advance the role of democracy” through his/her pedagogical practices and address the “instances of suffering and inequality that structure the lives of millions of people.” Our negotiated curriculum remained at the level of developing democratic practices in the classroom, but did not go far enough in engaging the students on the ‘positions of privilege’ that we occupy. For Giroux and McLaren (1986:318), empowerment refers to the process whereby students “critically appropriate knowledge existing outside of their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live”. In contrast to Harber (1994) and Wraga (2002), it is my contention that developing democratic practices in the classroom is not sufficient if transformation for social action is the goal. Students need to engage with issues that focus on human rights. Within the South African context, this would include exploring issues around political, economic and social justice, and how our pedagogies can promote these democratic values. It is my opinion that the courses that Harber (1994) refers to, the negotiated curriculum processes of Reid (1992) and Bertola (as cited in Grundy 1987), and the negotiated curriculum as we enacted it, failed to do this.

In order to encourage the students to problematise their previous privileged positions, it is necessary to take their histories as the starting point. As Freire (as cited in Glass 2001: 17) expressed,

the essentially defining ontological feature of being human is that people produce history and culture, even as history and culture produce them, and thus both the theory and application of education as a practice of freedom ‘take the people’s historicity as their starting point’.

Within the context of this negotiated curriculum process, we examined our histories in terms of learning during the two focus group interviews, but we failed to examine our historicities¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ By ‘agents’, I mean active participants who see themselves as co-learners, co-teachers, and co-producers of knowledge.

¹⁰² Glass (2001: 20) defined ‘historicity’ as “the human capacity to produce culture and history even as culture and history produce human existence.”

in terms of our 'positions of privilege' as white, middle-class women, and as teachers in the South African context.

As Stokes (1997: 217) argued

Teacher education, if it is to be consistent with a progressive, democratic vision, must create the conditions of critical dialogue that challenges prospective teachers to examine their cultural identities and promotes the development of critical consciousness of their racial, ethnic, linguistic, and class positions. Teachers tend to be conscious of their own lower and gendered position in the hierarchy (patriarchy) of the public school systems, and they are conscious of some of the pressures that tend to silence them or pressure them toward conformity; but they resist examining their positions of privilege relative to the many poor and marginalised communities within which they work, and they are unconscious of or willing to examine their own contribution to the silencing of their students.

Stokes (1997: 217) analysis of teacher education programmes reiterated Freire's (as cited in Glass 2001: 18) argument in the sense that liberatory education "must include a kind of historico-cultural, political psychoanalysis that reveals the formations of the self and its situation in all their dynamic and dialectical relations." Perhaps one could argue that our negotiated curriculum encouraged, at best, the students to explore their own learning, but it did not encourage them to critically examine our own 'positions of privilege' and the assumptions underpinning our pedagogies, or to redefine ourselves within the context of a democratic South Africa. Rather, it entrenched our values and beliefs of the past as it promoted the values of western liberal democracies because we failed to interrogate our histories and politics.

5.2.2.1.2 Teaching as a practical activity

Secondly, the 'anti-intellectual' position of many students in teacher education encourages the perspective that learning is achieved through experience, particularly experience in-the-field (see chapter 3 page 81). Stokes (1997: 208) in his description of the teacher education context he works in, described a scene very familiar to that of our institution, and the students that register for our course. He explained that in the United States, 90% of the students registering for an elementary teacher qualification are middle-class, white women. These students

tend to be liberal and progressive in the tradition of Parker and Dewey ... however, they do not, and have not been encouraged to view themselves as intellectuals. There is indeed a resistance to viewing their work as being political or concerning knowledge as socially constructed rather than as merely given.

(Stokes 1997: 208)

Freire (1998:43) argued that the “depoliticisation of education” serves the interests of the dominant classes. As I highlighted in chapter one (see page 22-23) Kihn (2002) argued that many professional teacher organisations in South Africa prior to 1994 still promoted the view that education and politics were separate. Given that the students participating in this research process were educated in schools that generally adhered to this perspective, I would argue that this view, of education as apolitical, is still entrenched in the minds of many of our students. Furthermore, in our enactment of the negotiated curriculum we failed to critique the dominant education discourses promoted when these students were at school.

5.2.2.1.3 Instrumental rationality

Thirdly, teaching for many of the students is seen as a technical ‘function’ whereby learning to teach should involve the development of a set of skills that can be used ‘effectively’ in the classroom. “Novice teachers become anxious about their abilities to maintain control, to organise schedules, to write lesson plans, to fulfil curriculum objectives, to use required texts and materials, and to carry out evaluations” (Stokes 1997: 208-209), hence, the preoccupation with lesson plans and assessment as articulated in chapter four (see page 130). This model of teacher education domesticates teachers because it focuses on ‘techniques’ as opposed to ‘intellectual inquiry’, which further promotes anti-intellectualism. As I argued in chapter three (see page 82) the ‘theory’ presented to the students’ concerns debates about which methods and approaches are best suited to different situations and contexts (Stokes 1997: 210). For Freire (1998: 100) the focus on the technical aspects of educational practices leads to an ‘anaesthetised curiosity’ which perpetuates the “scientificist position before the world”. As argued in chapter two (see page 37) this view of theory as distinct from practice is inherent in the positivist perspective. Stokes (1997:210) argued that these debates “convince teachers of the authority of the method. The effort to link theory and practice has the effect of establishing the legitimate authority of this or that method.”

In order to challenge the students’ beliefs, particularly students who have for so long been ‘benefactors’ of apartheid ideology, I would argue that the lecturer’s position is central to the

learning process, and that the lecturer needs to take an activist role in the classroom. This does not mean that one ignores the students prior knowledge and experiences, but rather that the teacher uses these experiences and knowledge to push the students' thinking further and to provide a context for them to critically engage with the intentions of their learning and teaching, and the socio-historical perspectives that have informed their beliefs. As I will argue later in this chapter (see page 159), when I focus on a pedagogy of possibility, Gore's (1993: 143) notion of 'meta-pedagogy'; critical reflecting on the pedagogies of our pedagogy offers the critical pedagogue an opportunity to encourage students to explore our theories and practices more critically.

5.2.3 A final comment on the aims

Our curriculum-negotiation process was not a suitable vehicle for promoting a critical pedagogy. Although this research provided an opportunity for us to confront 'real' problems [and] ... "incorporate action as part of knowing" (Grundy 1987: 156 – 157), it promoted the values and beliefs informing our conceptions of learning and teaching. Furthermore, the democratic values that were promoted were based on liberal-humanist assumptions, which placed the individual prior to society (Gutek 1997). At most, the negotiated curriculum may have encouraged some of the students to engage with their own learning processes (metacognition) and may have led to a transformation of consciousness, but the values promoted would not have encouraged a transformation for social action, as this is not a goal in western liberal democracies. Rather, the values of individual freedom, self-reliance and independence were promoted. According to Carr & Kemmis (1986: 181), "transformation of consciousness ... [is not] sufficient to produce transformations of social reality."

Referring back to Winter's (1996) quote (see chapter two page 29), while this research has certainly challenged and changed my own thought processes and beliefs about learning and teaching within teacher education, my assessment as articulated in this chapter is that it had little influence on the beliefs and opinions of my students. As a white, middle-class, female lecturer, I have realised through this research process that it is easy to reproduce the values and assumptions of a liberal education. Moving to a critical paradigm was not easy. While it is easy to theorise about these issues, putting critical theory into practice (critical pedagogy) is not simple (I reflect on the criticisms of critical pedagogy on page 155 in this chapter). Because our research failed to promote a transformation of our social realities, in the sense

that I¹⁰³ failed to take a sufficiently activist role in encouraging the students to move beyond their current levels of thinking to critically explore the assumptions on which their thinking was based, and how that thinking was based on a particular world-view, it remained at the level of practical action research.

Shor (1993: 29) stated that transforming one's practice from authoritarian to democratic is not easy. He argued that:

The transformation of teachers and students from authoritarian to democratic habits is a long-term project. After long years in traditional schools, teachers become conditioned to lecture, to assert their authority, to transfer official information and skills, as the proper way for professionals to do their work. It is not easy for them to share decision-making in the classroom, to negotiate the curriculum, to pose problems based in student thought and language, to lead a dialogue where student expression has an impact on the course of study, and to learn with and from students.

Likewise, moving from a democratic space rooted in a liberal-humanist position to a democratic space that has emancipation as its goal, is not easy. Simply sharing decision-making with one's students, negotiating the curriculum and engaging through dialogue does not necessarily promote the democratic values Shor (1993: 29) argued for, that is, an emancipation that leads to social action. Rather, in the process of this research, the democratic spaces created further entrenched the democratic values of liberal-humanism because the students were not encouraged to think critically, in the sense that they were thinking reflexively, about their beliefs and actions. In other words, the students' criticality was based on their own assumptions, beliefs and 'ways of knowing' rather than "alternative world views and styles of reasoning" (Burbules & Berk 1999: 50). This reflection was "vacuous, ahistorical, one-sided, and ideologically laden" (Apple 1990:7).

5.3 A POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

Critical pedagogy has been criticised for its use of forceful language, especially in terms of its criticisms of traditional pedagogies; its assumption of 'taking the moral high-ground (particularly in relation to emancipation of the 'oppressed'); and its failing to provide evidence (Tinning 2002: 229). McLaren (1991: 23) takes this issue to task by arguing that

¹⁰³ I use the pronoun, 'I', to indicate that the teacher, as I have argued earlier in this chapter (see page 139) is central to the learning process. The negotiated curriculum as we developed and enacted, placed the students at the centre of the learning process as they decided collaboratively what defined an 'appropriate learning situation' (Grundy 1987: 123) which I realise now was extremely problematic.

this criticism of critical theory and critical pedagogy has only been levelled because critical theory does not provide a recipe (with pre-packaged lesson plans) for implementing a critical pedagogy in the classroom. Rather, the theory requires that the reader grapple with an array of complex issues. Here the responsibility is not of critical theory to describe 'what ought to be', but for the teacher to take ownership and responsibility for grappling with complex thought. In the context of this research process, I realised that I had initially thought that curriculum negotiation would provide the 'recipe' for the enactment of a critical pedagogy. However, in so doing, I too believed and reified the 'authority of the method' in the context of this study.

In critiquing my own pedagogy, I see myself in Macedo's (1997:3) analysis of many teacher educators

in their attempt to cut the chains of oppressive education practices, blindly advocate for a dialogical model, creating, in turn, a new form of methodological rigidity laced with benevolent oppression – all done under the guise of democracy with the sole purpose that it is for your own good.

Focusing on the 'authority of the method', in this case curriculum negotiation, ironically leads to the domestication of a critical pedagogy (Glass 2001: 20).

Ellsworth (1989) is critical and cynical of critical theory stating that it is a utopian and idealistic concept. In fact, Freire (1984), himself, stated that his liberatory education is based on utopian ideals. However, surely "it is still reasonable to work toward a more just, ethical, and moral world. After all, what alternatives do we have?" (Hinchey 1998: 140). Our actions always support one or other agenda, and if we accept the order of things as fixed and given are we not merely perpetuating that order? (Hinchey 1998: 140-141) McLaren (1989 as quoted in Hinchey 1998: 141) formulated a vision for education that focuses on education for possibility –

That educators must begin candidly and critically to face our society's complicity in the roots and structures of inequality and injustice. It means, too, that as teachers we must face our own culpability in the reproduction of inequality in our teaching, and that we must strive to develop a pedagogy equipped to provide both intellectual and moral resistance to oppression, one that extends the concepts of pedagogy beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills and the concept of morality beyond interpersonal relations.

Our enactment of the negotiated curriculum in the context of this research had little effect in challenging our pedagogical practices; understandably, now, for the students, things remain relatively unchanged. As Liston and Zeichner (as cited in Gore 1993: 144) argued

in order for social reconstructionist teacher education to make a difference, actions to alter the position of teacher education within universities, relations between universities and schools, conditions for schooling, social and political conditions of society will need to be implemented. It is certainly insufficient to alter curricula and pedagogy.

This is certainly a limitation of this study. I hoped that through the construction and reconstruction of a critical pedagogy, which uses the negotiated curriculum as the vehicle, I would be able to create a learning environment that would enable the participants (students) to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. While, I saw this as a possibility for encouraging the students to become lifelong learners within a democratic South Africa, I realise it was naïve to assume that this limited study would have any impact on the broader social issues governing and informing the by day-to-day lives of South Africans. I then have to ask myself to what extent could I have expected a pedagogy in the classroom to encourage transformation of our social realities and a pedagogy that would lead to transformation for social action. Indeed transformation for social action is a utopian ideal. Kohli (1998: 515) reflecting on her own experiences in teacher education stated that:

As more of us extolled the virtues of critical pedagogy we came up against its limitations, including its reliance on rational dialogue' ... it became clearer and clearer to me that one did not change deeply held political, social, and philosophical positions simply by acquiring new knowledge or new perspectives through conversations with others.

Kohli (1998: 517) suggested that teacher educators need to develop a "counter education that does not promise collective emancipation"; one based on less utopian dreams. However, despite the limitations that we, teacher educators, can achieve in our own classrooms and with our own students, I still believe in a pedagogy that has emancipation as its aim.

As argued earlier in this chapter (see page 141), and as stated by Cassidy (2000 as cited in Tinning 2002: 236) rationality is not sufficient to promote change, rather, there needs to be a corresponding level of emotional commitment to change too. The question that needs to be explored is how do we promote an emotional commitment to the principles of democracy that has as its goal, transformation for social action, particularly with a group of students who have been privileged, and have 'benefited', from the dominant ideologies of the past? Stokes

(1997: 219) articulated, “among Americans of European origins, there is nearly a complete failure to examine the historical construct of ‘whiteness’ as an identity and access to privilege.” Unless, we deconstruct our notions of whiteness and critique our ‘positions of privilege’, a critical pedagogy in teacher education in the context that I work, is likely to fail; and the democratic principles that underpinning C2005 (DoE 1997b; DoE 2002a) are not likely to be articulated in the classrooms in which our students teach.

For Freire (in Shor & Freire 1987: 109- 110)

... even when you feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom . This feeling of being free ... is still not enough for the transformation of society ... [Students’] curiosity, their critical perception of reality, is fundamental for social transformation but it is not enough by itself..

By questioning my pedagogy in this thesis, I do not mean to devalue it completely; rather I attempt to examine the problems with the assumptions that premise my own pedagogy in order to explore a pedagogy of possibility. While I have argued in this chapter that our pedagogy promoted a view of democracy rooted in western liberalism as opposed to democracy that has social action as its goal, I still believe that developing a critical pedagogy is essential in order to bring about change in the South African context. In doing so, I realise that I am reifying critical pedagogy as a ‘regime of truth’ (Gore 1993).

In promoting a pedagogy that has as its aim a social vision, I do not believe that the negotiated curriculum as enacted in this research process will assist us in teacher education in achieving that social vision. As articulated in the White Paper on the *Programme for Higher Education Transformation* (DoE 1997a: 9), higher education needs to be transformed so that it can “meet the challenges of a new non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society committed to equity, justice and a better life for all.” While the negotiated curriculum did assist us in developing a democratic learning environment, the values inherent in our democracy were based on western liberalism, and I would argue that it was naïve to think that negotiating a curriculum with one’s students could assist us in achieving the aims as articulated in the White Paper (1997a: 9). What occurred in our learning context was a reformation of our practice as opposed to a transformation. By this I mean that although our pedagogy was changed in the sense that it became more democratic, the assumptions and values underpinning it were still rooted in liberalism. However, I still believe that democratic

practices based on a vision of social transformation are important in teacher education in South Africa. This research process has challenged my own thinking in numerous ways and while I make no claim, at present, to know how to achieve this goal, I believe that there are possibilities within teacher education to promote transformation for social action. At this moment in time, I would argue that in attempting to overcome the dominant ideologies of teacher education and to promote this social vision, I believe that *collegial support and collaborative action, confronting notions of whiteness and positions of privilege, confronting our pedagogies, seeing the lecturers' position as central to the learning process and critiquing the discourses that promote a technicist and instrumental view of teaching and learning* are necessary.

Furthermore, in an attempt to disrupt critical pedagogy as a 'regime of truth' (Gore 1993), it is necessary to open up our pedagogies in its construction and implementation to scrutiny with the students. In other words, I need to ensure that my "pedagogy is not just received *by* students, but is 'unpacked' *with* students. The work of unpacking will occur at least partly 'outside the pale of the regime'" (Cocks 1989 as cited in Gore 1993: 143).

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I analysed the extent to which the aims of this study were met. While I argued that the students took some responsibility for their own learning, this occurred at a superficial level. It is my opinion that students do not necessarily want to take ownership for their own learning as Boomer (1992b), Cook (1992) and Lester (1992) imply. Students have developed an authority dependence on the teacher from their experiences in schools and teacher education. At most, the negotiated curriculum facilitated the belief that the students can identify what and how they want to learn. This was, at best, a transformation of consciousness.

Negotiating the curriculum, and constructing and reconstructing this textual representation, has given me the opportunity to reflect on my own pedagogies. For me, the negotiated curriculum was not an appropriate vehicle for developing a critical pedagogy with students that have been 'benefactors' of apartheid. During our negotiated curriculum process, I realised that the values of western liberalism placing the individual as prior to society (Guttek 1997) were further promoted, as we did not attempt to deconstruct our 'positions of privilege', the dominant education discourses, and our embeddedness in the values of western

liberal democracies. I realise now that the lecturer's role is central in encouraging students to reflect critically on our theories and practices. By placing the students at the centre of the learning process, the democratic values promoted in our pedagogy, further entrenched these values and discourses.

It was my idea to negotiate a curriculum with my students, and I believed that they needed to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. If the students had identified this as important, themselves, or if they had had more of an emotional rather than a rational commitment to curriculum negotiation, then the research may have been more collaborative. Ultimately, this was my project, and as I argued in this chapter, the students, towards the end of the research process saw themselves as the researched rather than as co-researchers or active participants.

Despite the numerous problems and limitations with this research, and given the criticisms mentioned in this chapter that are levelled against critical theory and critical pedagogy, it is my opinion that within teacher education in South Africa, particularly in the context of our institution, a critical pedagogy is now more essential than ever. If our students, as teachers, are going to promote the values as articulated by C2005 (DoE 2002a), then we need to ensure that they critically engage with their 'positions of privilege', and explore what it means to be white in the new South Africa (Steyn 2001).

The next chapter (see page 161) highlights the arguments developed in this thesis, summarises the limitations, and makes recommendations for further research in teacher education in South Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

A FINAL REFLECTION

You become what you are in the context of what others have made you.
(Sartre, 1977: 54)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a final reflection on the negotiated curriculum process that occurred in this research. To do this, I reflect on the context of this research, the arguments constructed through this textual representation, the limitations of this research and the recommendations for further research within the context of teacher education.

6.2 CONTEXT

6.2.1 Field of research

The research focused on pre-service teacher education, in particular curriculum negotiation. Through the process of negotiating the curriculum, it was my understanding that a context would be developed encouraging the students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, I had hoped that through the creation of a democratic learning environment, the goal of transformation for social action would be promoted and developed.

6.2.2 Research process

The research was set within a higher education institution in the Department of Education. Twelve pre-service teachers participated in the research process. The research process was defined according to two phases, each consisting of a process of reflection and validation. The first phase was an action research process of curriculum negotiation, which consisted of three clearly defined cycles. The second phase concerned the analysis of the research data and the writing of this thesis. Given that this occurred after the negotiated curriculum was completed and the participants had completed their Bachelor of Education (Primary) Degree, the analysis was an individual process, namely mine. The analysis is however, supported by excerpts of the participants' voices, focusing on their experiences and insights into curriculum negotiation.

6.2.3 Chapter overview

The research presented in this thesis was action research. Although the research was framed in my proposal by a critical paradigm, the research process, as I have argued in chapter five (see page 138), was interpretive as the participants interests were practical¹⁰⁴ as opposed to critical. The process of constructing and reconstructing this thesis however, was embedded within a critical paradigm although the emancipatory intent, transformation for social action, was not realised.

In chapter one (see page 1) of this thesis, I explored the context of teacher education, particularly curricula reform in higher education and the general education and training band in South Africa. Both of these, curricula reform within higher education and the general education and training band are central to teacher education. My understandings of key terms relating to this thesis were presented in this chapter in order to situate the research. As I stated in chapter one (see page 2), the relationship between theory and practice, within the critical paradigm, is reciprocal. For this reason, the literature relevant to this thesis was integrated throughout the thesis.

In chapter two the paradigmatic assumptions underpinning the research process were presented, and the methodology of action research, particularly action research with emancipatory potential was explained. Narrative analysis (Mishler 1986) and dilemma analysis (Winter 1982) were characterised as the approaches to data analysis. Narrative analysis occurred in chapter three (see page 67) and dilemma analysis in chapter four (see page 105).

In chapter three (see page 67), I constructed a narrative account of the negotiated curriculum, and the influence the negotiated curriculum had on pre-service teachers' learning. To do this, I examined the process developed and the manner in which we enacted our curriculum negotiation.

In chapter four (see page 105) I analysed the extent to which the curriculum negotiation process promoted a pedagogy that had emancipation as its goal. I used Winter's (1982) data

¹⁰⁴ Practical in the sense that the focus was to develop a shared understanding of our curriculum process, and learning and teaching, although as I argued in chapter four (see page 128) the students' learning focused on their interests which were predominantly technical.

analysis conception of dilemma analysis (see chapter two page 57). The dilemmas that emerged from this research, focused on the democratic values promoted in our pedagogy namely, participation, collaboration, self-motivation and situatedness, and the extent to which an emancipatory view of authority was promoted.

The focus of chapter five was to critique the research aims and the extent to which the aims were realised. During the critique, both action research in the context of this study and critical pedagogy were analysed and so the limitations of this research process were presented. In addition to this critique I explored, albeit briefly, a pedagogy of possibility.

6.3 ARGUMENTS

The following main contentions are summarised and presented from the research process and this thesis. Although the relationship between this action research and the negotiated curriculum process was reciprocal and dialectical in the sense that they informed and developed from each other, I have chosen to categorise my learning in terms of two categories, namely, action research and curriculum negotiation.

6.3.1 Action research

- In the context of this thesis, it was possible to ‘do’ research from two paradigmatic positions, interpretive and critical. I argued in chapter five (see page 138) that the practical interest is often a necessary step in promoting an emancipatory interest. However, this research did not go far enough in promoting an emancipatory intent because the students’ understandings, at the end of the negotiated curriculum process, remained within the context of our social, cultural and historical positions, as I have argued in chapter five (see page 138). Unfortunately, the reflexive process I engaged in during the writing of this thesis did not involve my students.
- Although practical action research is a step towards developing an emancipatory action research, it does not necessarily encourage the participants to move beyond their already constructed notions of self, and learning and teaching (see chapter five page 139).
- Collaboration, which I argued in chapter five (see page 140), is essential in research that has as its goal transformation of our social realities requires not only a cognitive commitment to the research process, but also a corresponding emotional commitment.

6.3.2 Curriculum negotiation

- Curriculum negotiation is fraught with dilemmas (see chapter four page 105). There are many non-negotiables (institutional policies and procedures) and constraints (authority dependence, teacher education discourses and western liberalism) that limit the extent to which the students can choose what and how they want to learn.
- Our insights during the curriculum negotiation process were limited by our socio-historical positions (see chapter five page 138). While critical theory and critical pedagogy make the assumption that there would be students from different socio-cultural positions in our classrooms, this was not the case in this research. I argued that students, homogenous in terms of culture, class and gender, are less likely to challenge their positions in society, particularly when those positions privileged them in the past.
- Student-centred pedagogies are fraught with dilemmas, particularly in the context of a homogenous group of students and therefore need to be seen as problematic. In order to encourage students to move beyond their current levels of thinking and to challenge their previous positions of privilege, the lecturer's role should be central to the learning process (see chapter five page 139).
- Students' conceptions of learning and teacher education rely on experiences in-the-field, where many teachers' practices are often based on ritual and uniformity (see chapter three page 83). Students have an interest in the lecturer being the disseminator of information (see chapter five page 144); the facilitator of the learning experience (see chapter four page 113); and the primary motivator (see chapter four page 122).
- Power does not reside within a person or a method (see chapter four page 106). At the beginning of this research process, I naively assumed that negotiating the curriculum would encourage my students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. However, I now realise that power is asymmetrically distributed through people, our interactions, instruments (for example, buildings and documents) and our practices and rituals (Rouse as cited in Winograd 2002: 344).
- Creating a democratic learning environment does not mean that one works towards transformation for social action or that the emancipatory intent of our pedagogies will be realised (see chapter five page 149). At best, the negotiated curriculum encouraged a transformation of consciousness in the sense that individuals started to engage with their own learning.

- Simply because students' have chosen what they want to learn and how they want to learn does not mean they will automatically take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Our negotiated curriculum was based on consensual interests and understanding. The goal of consensus was inhibiting for some students (see chapter four page 115). Students' lives at our institution are structured and controlled, and time could have been a factor in this regard. A lack of time and high levels of work encourage surface approaches to learning (see chapter three page 77).

6.3 LIMITATIONS

Although the limitations of this research are embedded in chapter four (see page 105) and chapter five (see page 136), it is necessary to reflect on some of the key limitations of this study in the introduction.

- I saw the students' reluctance to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning as problematic, and I decided that negotiating the curriculum would encourage them to take responsibility. As I argued in chapter five (see page 140), this was a limitation, as the students were not emotionally committed to the research process. Negotiating the curriculum had been 'enforced' rather than negotiated.
- My understanding of critical pedagogy at the time of this research was 'simplistic' (see chapter one page 15). It was only during the writing of this thesis that I began to engage more critically with our pedagogy and critical theory.
- As I explained in chapter one (see page 15), all the students participating in this study were white, middle-class women. The problem with this, which is an assumption that many critical theorists and pedagogues make, is that there were no voices representing a variety of social, cultural and historical positions. The students' choice of what and how they wanted to learn, as I mentioned above was constrained by what they, as a homogenous group, viewed as important.
- It is unlikely that this research will be repeatable as the homogenous composition of the group was unique. The demographics within our department have started to change over the past two years.
- While collaboration is central to emancipatory action research (see chapter two page 45), collaboration, in terms of reflecting on the research process, occurred during the research process and not during the writing of this thesis. The students found it easier to work individually (see chapter four page 118). Given that the students' experiences in schools and higher education have prioritised the individual, it is in some sense

understandable that they would prefer individual learning approaches. Towards the end of the research process, it became apparent that the participants saw themselves as the researched rather than as research participants (see chapter five page 140)

- The dominance of my voice in the final construction of this thesis. The students were not involved in the final analysis of the data or in providing ‘member checks’ (Guba & Lincoln as cited in Lather 1991: 36) of the analysis.
- In retrospect, I have realised that I used curriculum negotiation as a ‘recipe’ for promoting a critical pedagogy (see chapter five page 156). In chapter four (see pages 127, 133), I was critical of the students’ dependence on authority, particularly in relation to their acceptance of curriculum policies. However, I perpetuated this view of the ‘authority of the method’, as I believed that negotiating the curriculum was the panacea to enabling the students’ to take ownership and responsibility for their learning.
- Negotiating the curriculum relies heavily on access to resources and so represents a privileged approach to learning and teaching (see chapter five page 143).
- This research was initially framed within the context of mathematics education. However, the issues that emerged during the research process and in the writing of this thesis were related more broadly to teacher education rather than mathematics education (see chapter one page 19).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- In teacher education in South Africa, it is necessary for students to be exposed to a multiplicity of voices representative of the diverse demographics of our population. It is only through this exposure that students will be able to support all learners in the classrooms and to start engaging with their historicities.
- Historicity is important (see chapter five page 151) in that we need to examine our cultural identities and how we define ourselves. White students and lecturers need to be encouraged to deconstruct our ‘positions of privilege’ (see chapter five page 150), which have been ideologically supported for too long, in order to explore new positions of what it means to be white within South Africa (Steyn 2001: 86).
- Furthermore, in promoting a critical pedagogy it is necessary for white students to be encouraged to “take the socio-economic realities of others seriously” (Steyn 2001: 100), to “address those instances of suffering and inequality that structure the lives of

millions of people” (Giroux 1997: 96) and to work towards the reconstruction of society.

- In the context of working with a homogenous group of students, the lecturer is central to the learning process and needs to play an active role in the learning environment in order to enable the students to critique their beliefs, experiences and values.
- We need to actively critique our pedagogies with the students (Gore 1993), and to critically reflect on the values that are being promoted within our pedagogies. When promoting democratic practices in the classroom, we need to critically evaluate which democratic values are being promoted and at whose expense.

6.5 A FINAL WORD

Grundy (1987: 190) argued that the move from “uncritical to critical, from being ahistorical to a subject who see his/her work within a historical framework, requires not growth, but a transformation of consciousness.” My transformation of consciousness can be likened to the experiences of Hyde (1992a; 1992b) and Bertola (as cited in Grundy 1987), a transformation that remains at the level of the individual rather than a transformation encouraging social action. The question for me is how do I encourage a transformation of our social realities. While I realise, like Hinchey (1998:140) that this is a utopian ideal, I believe that in the context of teacher education in South Africa, with the focus on transformation, we need to move beyond the level of policy and reform, and consider how we can promote transformation through our pedagogies. Negotiating the curriculum with my students was not the panacea I had initially expected. Rather, the values promoted encouraged a democratic environment that reified the individual. It is with new hope that I continue the search for a democratic classroom environment that has as its goal transformation for social action. As Satre’s (1977: 54) quote so aptly expresses, it is this journey with my students (the twelve participants) that has taught me so much about myself and the values that informed the pedagogy I promoted.

REFERENCES

- Academic Development Centre. (1998). *Small group instructional diagnosis*. East London: Rhodes University
- Academic Development Centre (2000). *Quality Assurance in South Africa and the Implementation of Teaching and Learning Policies at Rhodes*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University
- Apple, M.W. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge
- Aronowitz, S. (1993). Paulo Freire's democratic humanism. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.). *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 8-23). London: Routledge
- Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H.A. (1985). *Education under siege: The conservative, liberal and radical debate over schooling*. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey
- Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H.A. (1993). *Education still under siege* (2nd ed.). Westport: Bergin & Garvey
- Ashley, M. (1989). *Ideologies and schooling in South Africa*. Cape Town: S.A.T.A.
- Barbour, R.S., & Kitzinger, J. (1999). *Developing focus group research: politics, theory and practice*. London: Sage
- Barnett, R. (1994). *The limits of competence: Knowledge, higher education and society*. London: Open University Press
- Bennett, S. (1996). Discourse analysis: A method for deconstruction. In M. Williams (Ed.). *Understanding geographical and environmental education* (pp. 30-40). London: Cassell
- Boomer, G. (1992a). Negotiating the curriculum. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 4-14). London: Falmer Press
- Boomer, G. (1992b). Curriculum composing and evaluating: An invitation to action research. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 32-45). London: Falmer Press
- Boomer, G. (1992c). A response: Adelaide to New York. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 91-97). London: Falmer Press

Boomer, G. (1992d). Negotiating the curriculum reformulated. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 276-289). London: Falmer Press

Boomer, G., Lester, N., Onore, C., & Cook, J. (Eds.). (1992). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century*. London: Falmer Press

Borda, O.F. (1997). Wisdom as power. In M. Rahnema & V. Bawtree (Eds.). *The post-development reader* (pp.352-353). South Africa: David Phillips

Brown, T. & Jones, L. (2001). *Action research and postmodernism: Congruence and critique*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

Burbules, N.C., & Berk, R. (1999). Critical thinking and critical pedagogy: Relations, differences, and limits. In T.S. Popkewitz & L. Fendler (Eds.). *Critical theories in education: Changing terrains of knowledge and politics* (pp. 45-65). New York: Routledge

Burroughs, S. (1989). Dilemmas in the role of the support teacher. In R. Winter (Ed.). *Learning from experience: Principles and practice in action research* (pp. 96-111). East Sussex: Falmer Press

Calhoun, C. (1995). *Critical social theory: Culture, history and the challenge of difference*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers

Carr, W & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research*. London: Falmer Press

Chomsky, N. (2000). *Chomsky on miseducation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield

Christie, P. (1991). *The right to learn: The struggle for education in South Africa* (2nd ed.). Randburg: Raven Press

Clements & Battista (1990). Constructivist learning and teaching. *Teaching children mathematics*, 38 (1): 34-35.

Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1985). *Research methods in education*. London: Routledge

Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education* (4th ed.). London: Routledge

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th ed.). London: Routledge Falmer

Cook, J. (1992). Negotiating the curriculum: programming for learning. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 15-31). London: Falmer Press

Cook-Sather, A. (2002). Authorising student perspectives: toward trust, dialogue and change in education. *Educational Researcher*, 31 (4): 3-14.

Cross, M. (1999). *Imagery of identity in South African education: 1880-1990*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press

Dahl, D. (1995). Challenges in understanding the learners' perspective. *Theory into practice*, 43 (2), 124-130.

Delanty, G. (2001). *Challenging knowledge: The university and the knowledge society*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Delvin, M. (2002). Taking responsibility for learning isn't everything: A case of developing tertiary students' conceptions of learning. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7 (2): 125-138.

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *Handbook for qualitative research* (2nd ed.) (pp.1-28). California: Sage Publications

Department of Education (1995). White paper on education and training in a democratic South Africa: First steps to developing a new system. *Government Gazette*, 375 (16312), 15 March 1995. Pretoria: Government Printer

Department of Education (1997a). White paper on the programme for higher education transformation. *Government Gazette*, 3 (18207), 15 August 1997. Pretoria: Government Printer

Department of Education (1997b). *Curriculum 2005: Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3)*. Pretoria: Department of Education

Department of Education (2002a). *Revised national curriculum statement (Grades R – 9) policy: Introduction*. Pretoria: Department of Education

Department of Education. (2002b). A South African curriculum for the twenty-first century: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005. In J. Gultig & M. Adendorff (Eds.). *Curriculum: From plans to practices* (pp. 9-18). Cape Town: Oxford University Press

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: The Free Press

- Dewey, J. (1971). *How we think*. Chicago: Henry Regnery
- Doll, W.E. (1993). *A post-modern perspective on curriculum*. New York: Teachers' College Press
- Donn, G. (1998). International policy-making: Global discourses and the National qualifications framework. In W. Morrow & K. King (Eds.). *Vision and reality: Changing education and training in South Africa* (pp. 70-85). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press
- Ellsworth, E. (1989). "Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy". *Harvard Educational Review*, 59 (3), 297-325.
- Entwistle, N. (1998). Teaching for learning as higher education changes. In W. Marrow, & K. King (Eds.). *Vision and reality: Changing education and training in South Africa* (pp.181 – 191). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press
- Fein, J., & Hillcoat, J. (1996). The critical tradition in research in geographical and environmental education. In M. Williams (Ed.). *Understanding geographical and environmental education: The role of research* (pp.26 – 39). London: Cassell
- Fox, C. (2002). The race to truth: Disarticulating critical thinking from whiteness. *Pedagogy: Critical approaches to teaching literature, language, composition and culture*, 2 (2): 197-212.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy for the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum
- Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy for the oppressed* (new revised 20th anniversary edition). Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of the Heart*. New York: Continuum
- Fromm, E. (1992). *The art of being*. New York: Continuum
- Furlong, J., Barton, L., Miles, S., Whiting, C., & Whitty, G. (2000). *Teacher education in transition: reforming professionalism?* Buckingham: Open University Press
- Giroux, H.A. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition*. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey
- Giroux, H.A. (1988). *Schooling and the struggle for public life: Critical pedagogy in the modern age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Giroux, H.A. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture and schooling*. Colorado: Westview Press

Giroux, H.A. & McLaren, P. (1986). Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. In P. Leistyna, A. Woodrum, & S. Sherblom (Eds.), *Breaking Free: The transformation of critical pedagogy* (pp. 301-332). Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review

Glass, R.D. (2001). On Paulo Freire's philosophy of praxis and the foundations of liberation education. *Educational Researcher*, 30 (2): 15-25.

Gore, J.M. (1993). *The struggle for pedagogies: Critical and feminist discourses as regimes of truth*. New York: Routledge

Green, J. & Hart, L. (1999). The impact of context on data. In R.S. Barbour & J. Kitzinger (Eds.), *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice* (pp.21-35). London: Sage Publications

Grimmett, P.P. (1995). *Changing times in teacher education: Restructuring and reconceptualisation*. London: Falmer Press

Grundy, S. (1987). *Curriculum: Product or praxis?* London: Falmer Press

Grundy & Kemmis, S. (1982). Educational action research in Australia: The state of the art, in S. Kemmis & R. McTaggart (Eds.). *The action research reader* (pp. 83-99). Waurm Ponds: Deakin University Press

Gutek, G.L. (1997). *Philosophical and ideological perspectives on education* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Hall, S. (1996). Reflexivity in emancipatory action research: Illustrating the researcher's constitutiveness. In O. Zuber-Skerritt (Ed.). *New directions in action research* (pp.28-48). London: Falmer Press

Harber, C. (1994). *International political development and democratic teacher education*. *Educational Review*, 46 (2). Retrieved September 30, 2003 from http://web13.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb=1&_ug=dbs+0%2C2+1n+en%2Dus+sid+5CA3.

Heywood, A. (1998). *Political ideologies: An introduction* (2nd ed.). London: MacMillian Press

Hinchey, P.H. (1998). *Finding freedom in the classroom: A practical introduction to critical theory*. New York: Peter Lang

Homan, R. (2002). The principle of assumed consent: the ethics of gatekeeping. In M. McNamee & D. Bridges (Eds.). *The ethics of educational research* (pp. 23-40). Oxford: Blackwell

Hyde, S. (1992a). Negotiating mathematics. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 53-66). London: Falmer Press

Hyde, S. (1992b). Sharing power in the classroom. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 67-77). London: Falmer Press

Jansen, J. (2001). Rethinking education policy making in South Africa: Symbols of change, signals of conflict. In A. Kraak, & M. Young (Eds.). *Education in retrospect: Policy and implementation since 1990* (pp.41-57). Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council

Janse van Rensburg, E. (1995). Trends in educational research. *Discourse*, 6 (1): 30-33.

Kanpol, B. (1999). *Critical pedagogy: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey

Kemmis, S. (1993). Action Research. In M. Hammersley (Ed.). *Educational research: Current issues* (pp. 177 – 190). London: Paul Chapman Publishing

Kemmis, S. (1996). Emancipatory aspirations of a postmodern era. In O. Zuber-Skerritt (Ed.). *New directions in action research* (pp.199-242). London: Falmer Press

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988) (Eds.). *The action research planner*. Victoria: Deakin University Press

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1992). *The action research planner* (3rd ed.). Victoria: Deakin University Press

Kihn, P. (2002). Comrades and professionals: Teacher ideology and practice in the Western Cape, 1985 – 1990. In P. Kallaway (Ed.). *The history of education under apartheid 1948 – 1994: The doors of learning and culture shall be opened* (pp 325-336). New York: Peter Lang

Killen, R. (2000). *Teaching strategies for outcomes-based education*. Juta: Lansdowne

Kincheloe, J.L. (1991). *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment*. London: Falmer Press

Kohli, W. (1998). Critical education and embodied subjects: Making the post-structural turn. *Education theory*, 48 (4): 511-519.

- Kraft, N.P. (2002). Teacher research as a way to engage in critical reflection: A case study. *Reflective Practice*, 3 (2): 175-189.
- Krueger, R.A., & Casey, M. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). California: Sage Publications
- Kvale, S. (1995). Themes of postmodernity. In W.T. Anderson (Ed.). *The Fontana postmodern reader* (pp. 18-25). London: Fontana Press
- Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56 (3): 257-277.
- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with / in the postmodern*. New York: Routledge
- Lester, N. (1992). All reforms are not created equal: Cooperative learning is not negotiating the curriculum. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 198-215). London: Falmer Press
- Light, G., & Cox, R. (2001). *Learning and teaching in higher education: The reflective professional*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing
- Macedo, D. (1997). An anti-method pedagogy: A Freirian perspective. In P. Freire, J.W. Fraser, D. Macedo, T. McKinnon, & W.T. Stokes (Eds.). *Mentoring the mentor: A critical dialogue with Paulo Freire* (pp. 201-228). New York: Peter Lang
- Marsh, C.J. (1999). *Perspectives: Key concepts for understanding curriculum* (new ed.). London: Falmer Press
- McGrath, S. (1998). Questioning education and training in South Africa: The challenge of moving from policy to practice. In W. Morrow & K. King (Eds.). *Vision and reality: Changing education and training in South Africa* (pp.112-118). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press
- Mc Kernan, J. (1996). *Curriculum action research: A handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner* (2nd ed.). London: Kogan Page
- McLaren, P. (1991). Critical pedagogy: constructing an arch of social dreaming and a doorway to hope. *Journal of education*, 173 (1): 9-31.
- McTaggart, R. (1996). Issues for participatory research. In O. Zuber-Skerrit *New directions in action research* (pp. 243-255). London: Falmer Press
- Meerkotter, D. (1998). The state of schooling in South Africa and the introduction of Curriculum 2005. In W. Morrow & K. King (Eds.). *Vision and reality: Changing education and training in South Africa* (pp. 49-69). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press

Michell, L. (1999). Combining focus groups and interviews: Telling how it is; telling how it feels. In R.S. Barbour & J. Kitzinger (Eds.). *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice* (pp. 36 – 46). London: Sage Publications

Miedema, S., & Wardekker, W.L. (1999). Emergent identity versus consistent identity: Possibilities for a postmodern repoliticisation of critical theory. In T.S. Popkewitz & L. Fendler (Eds.). *Critical theories in education: Changing terrains of knowledge and politics* (pp. 67-83). New York: Routledge

Mishler, E.G. (1986). *Research Interviewing: Context and narrative*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press

Morrow, W. (1989). *Chains of thought: Philosophical essays in South African Education*. Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers

Muller, J. (2000). *Reclaiming knowledge: Social theory, curriculum and education policy*. London: Routledge Famer

O'Loughlin, M. (1995). Daring the imagination: Unlocking voices of dissent and possibility in teaching. *Theory into practice*, 43 (2): 107-116.

Onore, C., & Lubetsky, B. (1992). Why we learn is what and how we learn: Curriculum as possibility. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 253-265). London: Falmer Press

Pandor, N. (2001). Prospects for a non-racial future in South Africa: Response. In C.V. Hamilton, L. Huntley, N. Alexander, A.S.A Guimaraes, & J. Wilmot (Eds.). *Beyond racism: Race and inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States* (pp. 490-492). Colorado: Lynne Rienner

Popkewitz, T.S. (1984). *Paradigm and ideology in educational research*. London: Falmer Press

Popkewitz, T.S. (1999). Introduction: Critical traditions, modernisms, and the 'posts'. In T.S. Popkewitz & L. Fendler (Eds.). *Critical theories in education: Changing terrains of knowledge and politics* (pp. 1-13). New York: Routledge

Quantz, R.A. (1992). On critical ethnography (with some postmodern considerations). In M.D. Le Compte, W.L. Millroy, & J. Preissle (Eds.). *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 447-505). California: Academic Press

Reid, J. (1992). Negotiating the curriculum: Action research and professional development. In G. Boomer, N. Lester, C. Onore, & J. Cook (Eds.). *Negotiating the curriculum: Educating for the 21st century* (pp. 253-265). London: Falmer Press

Richardson, J.T.E. (2000). *Researching student learning: Approaches to studying in campus-based and distance education*. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press

Robinson, M., Vergnani, T., & Sayed, Y. (2003). Teacher education at the University of the Western Cape. In K. Lewin, M. Samuel, & Y. Sayed (Eds.). *Changing patterns of teacher education in South Africa: Policy, practice and prospects* (pp. 159-175). Heinemann: Sandown

Rogers, C. (1980). *Freedom to learn for the 80s*. Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing

Russell, T. (1993). Teachers' professional knowledge and the future of teacher education. In P. Gilroy & M. Smith (Eds.). *International Analyses of teacher education: Jet papers one* (pp. 205-215). Great Britain: Carfax Publishing Company

Ryan, A. (1999). *Liberal anxieties and liberal education: What education is really for and why it matters*. London: Profile Books

Samuel, M., & Pillay, D. (2003). The university of Durban-Westville: Face-to-face initial teacher education degree programmes. In K. Lewin, M. Samuel, & Y. Sayed (Eds.). *Changing patterns of teacher education in South Africa: Policy, practice and prospects* (pp. 130-158). Heinemann: Sandown

SAQA. (2000a). *The National Qualifications Framework: An overview*. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.saqa.org.za/showasp?main=structure/nqf/overview01.html&menu=home>

SAQA. (2000b). *The National Qualifications Framework and curriculum development*. Pretoria: Government Printer

Sartre, J. (1977). *Sartre by himself*. New York: Urizen Books

Scott, D., & Usher, R. (1999). *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. London: Cassell

Shor, I. (1993). Education is politics: Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.). *Paulo Freire: A critical encounter* (pp. 25-35). London: Routledge

Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey

Simon, R. (1987). Work experience as the production of subjectivity. In D. Livingstone (Ed.). *Critical pedagogy and cultural power* (pp. 155-178). South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey

Smith, B.L., & MacGregor, J. (1992). What is collaborative learning? In A.S. Goodsell, M.R. Maher, V. Tinto, B.L. Smith, & J. MacGregor (Eds.). *Collaborative learning: A sourcebook for higher education* (pp.9-22). Pennsylvania: National Centre on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Steyn, M. (2001). Whiteness in the rainbow: Experiencing the loss of privilege in the new South Africa. In C.V. Hamilton, L. Huntley, N. Alexander, A.S.A Guimaraes, & J. Wilmot (Eds.). *Beyond racism: Race and inequality in Brazil, South Africa, and the United States* (pp. 85-103). Colorado: Lynne Rienner

Stokes, W.T. (1997). Progressive teacher education. In P. Freire, J.W. Fraser, D. Macedo, T.McKinnon, & W.T. Stokes (Eds.). *Mentoring the mentor: A critical dialogue with Paulo Freire* (pp. 201-228). New York: Peter Lang

Stones, E. (1992). *Quality teaching: A sample of cases*. London: Routledge

Sullivan, B. (1998). Carole Pateman: Participatory democracy and feminism. In A. Carter & G. Stokes (Eds.). *Liberal democracy and its critics* (pp.175-195). Cambridge: Polity Press

Technical Committee on the Revision of the Norms and Standards for Educators. (1998). *Norms and standards for educators*. Pretoria: Department of Education

Tickle, L. (2002). Opening windows, closing doors: Ethical dilemmas in educational action research. In M. McNamee & D. Bridges (Eds.). *The ethics of educational research* (pp. 41-58). Oxford: Blackwell

Tinning, R. (2002). Toward a 'modest pedagogy': Reflections on the problematics of critical pedagogy. *Quest*, 54: 224-240

Usher, R., Bryant, I., & Johnston, R. (1997). *Adult education and the postmodern challenge: Learning beyond the limits*. New York: Routledge

Von Glasersfeld, E. (1987). Learning as a constructive activity. In C. Javier (Ed.). *Problems of representation in the teaching and learning of mathematics* (pp. 3-17). New Jersey: Erlbaum Hillside.

Wilkinson, S. (1999). How useful are focus groups in feminist research. In R.S. Barbour & J. Kitzinger (Eds.). *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory and practice* (pp. 64-78). London: Sage Publications

Winograd, K. (2002). The negotiative dimension of teaching: Teachers sharing power with the less powerful. *Teaching and teacher education*, 18: 343-362.

Winter, R. (1982). Dilemma analysis. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 12 (3): 161-174.

Winter, R. (1996). Some principles and procedures for the conduct of action research. In O. Zuber-Skerrit (Ed.). *New directions in action research* (pp. 13-28). London: Falmer Press

Wraga, W.G. (2002). Recovering curriculum practice: Continuing the conversation. *Educational Researcher*, 31 (6): 17-19.

Wringe, C. (1984). *Democracy, schooling and political education*. London: George Allen & Unwin

Young, M. (2001). Educational reform in South Africa (1990-2000): An international perspective. In A. Kraak, & M. Young (Eds.). *Education in retrospect: Policy and implementation since 1990* (pp. 17-40). Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council

Young, R. (1995). Liberalism, postmodernism, critical theory and politics. In R. Smith & P. Wexler (Eds.). *After postmodernism: Education, politics and identity* (pp. 13-22). Falmer Press: London

Zeichner, K.M. (1983). Alternative paradigms on teacher education. *Journal of teacher education*, 34 (3): 3-9.

Zuber-Skerrit, O. (1992). *Professional development in higher education: A theoretical framework for action research*. London: Kogan Page

Zygouris-Coe, V.I., Page, B.G., Malecki, C.L., & Weade, R. (2001). Action research: A situated perspective. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14 (3): 399-412.

APPENDIX 1

OUR NEGOTIATED CURRICULUM

Action Research Cycle 1

What?	Who?	How?
SPATIAL SENSE		
Introduction to spatial sense and the development of spatial conceptual understandings versus spatial procedural understandings	Lise	Introductory lecture with discussion
Developing Foundation Phase learners' conceptual understanding of geometry.	Gail Heather Belinda Karen	Each group to work collaboratively on their chosen area of study. Lecture times available for consultation with Lise and peers and to discuss progress. Each group to produce a 'document' on their chosen area of study. This document must show the relationship between theory and practice. Each group to facilitate a one-hour seminar session with the class.
Exploring measurement with young learners in particular length, capacity and mass.	Kelly Cathy Megan	
Developing an understanding of time.	Lucy Mia Brenda	
Identifying difficulties young learners experience in developing spatial sense, and exploring the contexts that need to be provided to support them.	Melissa Sharon	

Action Research Cycle 2

What?	Who?	How?
DATA HANDLING		
What data handling entails. How data handling relates to the critical outcomes, mathematics and specific outcome 6 (DoE 1997b). Different data collection techniques. Creating contexts for data collection (including real-life contexts and incidental learning opportunities). Developing young learners' abilities to handle data (collection, organization, and interpretation and analysis of findings).	All	Each student was responsible for bringing an article related to the topic to each lecture session. Lise facilitated the lecture sessions. These sessions focused on sharing our readings with each other and developing a shared understanding of the related topic.

JUNE EXAM		
Developing a concept of number in grade 0.	Cathy	<p>Each student was required to produce a document that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to their chosen area of research. • The relevant outcomes and assessment standards. • The concepts that Foundation Phase learners need to develop, strategies, and theoretical insights into how children develop their conceptual understanding. • An introductory lesson adaptable to any grade within the Foundation Phase if your area is not specific to a grade. • 15 lessons where the learners are actively involved. • Plenary ideas to compliment the lessons. • Assessment procedures (including a rubric). <p>Each student was required to present their area of study to the group for the examinations, and to submit their document.</p>
Counting	Sharon	
Understanding number and number operations 0 – 10	Heather	
Place value	Karen	
Addition	Brenda	
Subtraction	Melissa	
Multiplication	Gail	
Division	Belinda	
Doubling and halving	Kelly	
Exploring patterns and number	Mia	
Fractions	Lucy	
Using cooperative learning strategies to develop an understanding of number.	Megan	

Action Research Cycle 3

What?	Who?	How?
ASSESSMENT		
Exploring ways of assessing children's mathematical understanding.	Belinda	Each student researched her chosen topic.
An investigation into assessment practices used by teachers in four local primary schools	Megan	I was available for consultation and support.
Gold stars are evil: An investigation into the argument over the use of punishment and rewards in the mathematics classroom	Melissa	Each student wrote an assignment on her topic. These assignments were collated and shared with the entire class. The students presented their research to the class during the last cycle.
Is there a place in the classroom for achievement tests?	Gail	
Using interviews and self assessment in the mathematics classroom	Kelly	

Setting learning targets and using these to develop questions to assess learners	Mia	
Journal writing as an assessment tool	Karen	
Journal writing in the mathematics classroom	Sharon	
The purpose of portfolios as an alternative method of assessment	Brenda	
Portfolio assessment: Creating self-evaluators and involving parents and peers	Lucy	
Portfolio assessment: the practical, how	Heather	
Evaluating our own effectiveness in the mathematics classroom	Cathy	

APPENDIX 2

PARTICIPANTS' ROLES

Lecturer's role

- The scribe
 - Students wanted to take an active role in the discussion and argued that they could not participate actively if they were expected to write the ideas generated by the class on the whiteboard, newsprint or overhead projector.
- Spark discussion and interest amongst the students
- Provide non-dominating opinions
- Share personal experiences
- Provide ideas for activities and encourage students to practice their own ideas with the class
- Facilitate learning
 - To offer guidance, support and encouragement.
- Be reflective

Students' role

- To be honest
 - People need to express their thoughts about what should be learned openly and honestly.
- To be realistic about what can be learned within the specified time frames
- Make allowances for individual needs
- Respect other viewpoints
- Support the lecturer
 - The lecturer has certain insights and experiences that need to be acknowledged
- Have goals
- Be actively involved
- Share ideas
- Assist others through team work
 - Thought that it was important to share ideas with each other rather than keeping ideas to themselves.
- Be accountable to the class
- Participate in the groups
 - Use these opportunities to learn from each other
 - Take responsibility for their learning
 - Be reflective

APPENDIX 3

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTIONAL DIAGNOSIS REPORT¹

B. Prim 3 Mathematics Course Evaluation

Lecturer: Lise Westaway

Ten of the twelve students on the course participated in the SGID, on 16 October 2001. Their responses to the course and the way in which the curriculum was negotiated were generally extremely positive. As a group they felt that they had benefited from the experience, and that minor adjustments and developments would improve the course for others in subsequent years.

A number of strengths of the course were identified as common to the group as a whole. All were in agreement that the lecturer's enthusiasm and openness had contributed significantly to the success of the experience. They were aware that they had learned a great deal from each other and appreciated the opportunities they had to choose their own content and learning methods, and in particular, the fact that they could make decisions regarding the ways they would be assessed. They enjoyed the discussions they participated in as a group (as opposed to group work, which they generally did not enjoy, as is recorded later in this report). The students also appreciated the opportunities they had to apply their learning in a practical way in schools and the fact that this gave them a basis for critical reflection on their practice. Another aspect listed as a strength was the opportunity this course provided for research both in the library and on the internet.

All were in agreement that the course had got off to too slow a start. Amongst the suggestions for improvement they felt that the initial slowness they had experienced in getting to grips with what a negotiated curriculum involved could be addressed by starting the course with a lecture by the lecturer or case studies on the topic of negotiating a curriculum. Another suggestion for accelerating the initial stages was that of starting the course towards the end of the second year rather than at the beginning of the third year, so that they were well into it by the beginning of the third year. A number felt that initially they had "too much freedom" and that there was "not enough structure"; that they had needed more guidance while negotiating a curriculum was still new to them. They also felt that they had had to learn by trial and error. These were seen initially as a weakness of the course. In hindsight they recognised that learning by trial and error was actually a strength rather than a weakness. All felt that negotiating the course was likely to run more smoothly in future years, since they "were the guineapigs", suggesting that there is still a notion in the back of their minds that their own role in the process is that of recipient rather than active and equally responsible controllers of the development of the course.

One group, for example, listed as a weakness the fact that each became an expert on her own topic and not on anyone else's. Discussion around this comment revealed that

¹⁰³ This report was written by a SGID facilitator. No grammatical changes have been made although this was suggested by my proof-reader. The report appears in its original form.

they had all felt this to be the case initially but that because they were involved in negotiating their curriculum they were actually in a position to be able to change that situation, and in fact, did do so, at a later stage.

One group wondered what had happened to the journals they were required to keep initially. They explained that they were wondering not because they had liked the journals - because they had not and were glad to be free of them - but because the lecturer had liked them. There was a sense of wanting closure on the journals rather than an interest in reviving them. This comment suggests to me now the possibility of a sense of reluctance on their part at the time to bring this to the attention of the lecturer.

In retrospect and in response to the question on what they could have done better, they felt that they could have shared even more than they actually did.

There was consensus on the fact that they did not find the arrangement of practical work / experiential learning conducted in the schools every Friday beneficial: they felt that the intervening days of the week from one Friday to the next made the experience too fragmented and that a full week at the end of each of the first and second terms would be more appropriate. There was also agreement that while some liked group work, others did not, preferring to work in pairs or as individuals. They recognised the value of learning from each other, but would also have liked the choice of being able to work on their own in certain contexts. I wonder whether this issue was raised during the course of the year, and if not, the reasons for this not being negotiated.

Generally they expressed their satisfaction and approval of the course. The issues raised for improvements seem to me to reflect either that these are of very minor concern in response to the questions in the SGID, or that their immersion for so long in only received curricula may have made their grip on negotiating curriculum a fairly tenuous one.

EJK McKellar
Academic Development Centre
Rhodes University
East London Campus.

16 October 2001.

APPENDIX 4

FOCUS GROUP OBSERVATION REPORT¹

Negotiating a Mathematics Curriculum, Research towards an M Ed, by Lise Westaway.

Observations from Tippy McKellar on the two focus groups attended as a non-participant observer on Tuesday 20th and Thursday 22nd of February 2001, respectively.

Focus Group 1: Students present: Heather, Karen, Cathy, Belinda, Melissa, Sharon.

Focus Group 2: Students present: Brenda, Mia, Megan, Gail, Lucy, Kelly.

Focus Group 1 seemed initially more ill at ease with what they were going to do (and actually voiced their unease) than did Focus Group 2. Once the initial anxieties - of discussing in the knowledge that what was said was being tape recorded - were found to be irrelevant, they settled into a lively discussion, and comments from one student appeared to act as a catalyst for differing opinions from others. In retrospect, there seemed to be a number of students in the first group with fairly strong ideas and opinions on the issues under discussion.

In the second focus group, although the researcher used similar strategies to elicit information and to engender discussion as had been used in the first focus group, the debate seemed to be less lively than in the first group. The fact that the researcher must have felt more confident knowing that the process had worked successfully the first time around should actually have worked in favour of the second group, but this did not seem to be the case.

There were no obvious times in which students in either of the groups felt really awkward: the introductory remarks of the researcher went a long way towards creating a clear and non-threatening atmosphere conducive to open discussion. In the second group one student was initially a little quieter than the others, but soon lost her reserve, and was drawn by the researcher into the discussion.

In establishing the differences in development of the discussion between the two groups, it seems to me that a key difference related to degree to which the members of the two respective groups felt that learning was an active process (Group 1) or something to be learnt in the lecture room (Group 2). For example in Key question 13, the first focus group responses were more related to learning by actively getting into the situation and teaching - through practice during School Experience, and talked

¹⁰⁴ This report was written by a non-participant observer. No grammatical changes have been made although this was suggested by my proof-reader. The report appears in its original form.

about “working in the schools”, “school experience being on-going” and “needing more experience in the classroom”, with the role of lectures being “for consolidation, reflection, discussion”. The second group focused more on their learning situations in the university setting, describing “discussion”, “research” and “observation” as what they would provide for the pre-service teacher curriculum.

These responses suggest a greater need for the support of theory and lecturers within the second group, whereas the first group felt they learned more by being in the classrooms trying things out. This focus for learning within the second group might have been the reason for what the researcher experienced as a vagueness within the second group to come to grips with the essential elements of the key questions. Although the second group did see “active involvement” as the essence of learning (see response to Q. 17), they did not express their views with the same vigour. While the first group clearly expressed a need for students to be given more responsibility and freedom to choose their own direction, the second group appeared to be more content to be steered by others.

Question wording was subtle, and the development from one question to the next might have been lost on some of the students particularly in the second group, who may have felt they had answered that question already. It could also be that as the students had chosen their groups themselves, the tendency to chose instinctively to be with others like themselves may have been the reason for the observed differences between the two groups.

EJK McKellar
27 February 2001.

