

**Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a Grade 5
South African English classroom**

By

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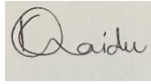
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late father, Langson Mwatikoniwa Muudzwa, who would have loved to see me graduate.

I owe this to my mother and brother, who took on the role of raising me after the passing of my father.

Lastly, I thank my wife Precious Shupikai Kudzinyadza for her support, love, and most importantly, believing in me. Of course, not forgetting my kids, who have missed quality family time during my studies. This study is also dedicated to my kids as a reminder of a milestone I am setting for them to surpass.

May everyone who played a part in this journey be blessed. I remain highly grateful for all your immeasurable support.

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ABSTRACT

This research study was conducted at a school located in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The study examined the role of critical literacy in teaching social justice in a Grade 5 English Home Language classroom. This study is an exploratory case study conducted in the researcher's classroom using a qualitative approach and participatory action research (PAR) as the design. The data collection methods employed included the learners' reflection diaries, observations, and the researcher's journal, complemented by a literature review. The purpose of the research was to explore ways in which critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in the classroom and empower learners to be aware of their rights in society. The data collected in this study were analysed using thematic analysis, and the findings show that critical literacy can achieve social justice principles in the classroom. Using Picower's Framework to teach social justice, the study presents practical steps on how social justice principles and values can be taught in the classroom. The key findings that emerged from this study includes the importance of love, respect, equality, and raising awareness as founding pillars for social justice. The study notes empowerment as a social action instrument for social transformation goals. The study identifies several recommendations based on its findings. These includes the government working with schools to introduce compulsory professional courses and workshops to equip teachers with the knowledge to integrate social justice in all subjects. The study concludes that there is a need for critical literacy in the classroom to teach social justice issues.

Key Terms: Conscientisation, Critical literacy, Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement, Lesson activities, Participatory Action Research (PAR), PAR cycles, Picower's Framework, Praxis, Social justice, Social injustice, Text

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingstudie is uitgevoer by 'n skool in die Wes-Kaap Provinsie, Suid-Afrika. Die studie het die rol van kritiese geletterdheid in die onderrig van sosiale geregtigheid in 'n Graad 5 Engels Huistaal klaskamer ondersoek. Hierdie studie is 'n verkennende gevallestudie wat in die navorser se klaskamer uitgevoer is met behulp van 'n kwalitatiewe benadering bekend as deelnemende aksienavorsing (PAR). Die data-insamelingsmetodes wat gebruik is, het die leerder se refleksiedagboeke, waarnemings en die navorser se joernaal ingesluit, aangevul deur 'n literatuuroorsig. Die doel van die navorsing was om maniere te ondersoek waarop kritiese geletterdheid gebruik kan word om sosiale geregtigheid in die klaskamer te onderrig en leerders te bemagtig om bewus te wees van hul regte in die samelewing. Die data wat in hierdie studie versamel is, is geanaliseer deur middel van tematiese analise, en die resultate het getoon dat kritiese geletterdheid sosiale geregtigheidsbeginsels in die klaskamer kan bereik. Deur Picower se Raamwerk te gebruik om sosiale geregtigheid te onderrig, het die studie praktiese stappe aangebied oor hoe sosiale geregtigheidsbeginsels en -waardes in die klaskamer onderrig kan word. Die belangrikste bevindinge wat uit hierdie studie na vore gekom het, het die belangrikheid van liefde, respek, gelykheid en die verhoging van bewustheid as grondpilare vir sosiale geregtigheid ingesluit. Die studie het bemagtiging as 'n sosiale aksie-instrument vir sosiale transformasiedoelwitte genoem. Die studie het verskeie aanbevelings geïdentifiseer gebaseer op die bevindinge daarvan. Dit het ingesluit dat die regering met skole moet saamwerk om verpligte professionele kursusse en werkswinkels in te stel om onderwysers toe te rus met die kennis om sosiale geregtigheid in alle vakke te integreer. Die studie het tot die gevolgtrekking gekom dat daar 'n behoefte is aan kritiese geletterdheid in die klaskamer om sosiale geregtigheidskwessies te onderrig.

Sleuteltermes: Deelnemende Aksienavorsing, Kritiese geletterdheid, Kritiese edagogie, Kritiese teorie, Sosiale geregtigheid, Sosiale ongeregtheid, Picower se Raamwerk

ISISHWANKATHELO

Olu phando lwenziwe kwisikolo esikwiPhondo laseNtshona Koloni, eMzantsi Afrika. Olu phononongo luhlolisise indima yokufunda nokubhala ngokunzulu ekufundiseni ubulungisa bentlalo kwigumbi lokufundela lesiNgesi leBanga lesi-5. Olu phononongo luphononongo lwetyala oluphononongwayo oluqhutywa kwigumbi lokufundela lomphandi kusetyenziswa indlela esemgangathweni eyaziwa ngokuba luphando lwezenzo zokubandakanyeka (PAR). Indlela zokuqokelela idatha ezisetyenzisiweyo ziquka iidayari zokucamngca komfundi, ukuqaphela, kunye nejenali yomphandi, encediswa luphononongo loncwadi. Injongo yophando yayikukuhlola indlela zokufunda nokubhala ngokunzulu ezinokusetyenziswa ngazo ukufundisa ubulungisa bentlalo kwigumbi lokufundela kunye nokuxhobisa abafundi ukuba baqaphele amalungelo abo kuluntu. Idatha eqokelelwe kolu phononongo ihlalutywe kusetyenziswa uhlalutywe lwemixholo, kwaye iziphumo zibonise ukuba ukufunda nokubhala ngokunzulu kunokufezekisa imigaqo yobulungisa bentlalo kwigumbi lokufundela. Sisebenzisa iSakhelo sikaPicower ukufundisa ubulungisa bentlalo, olu phononongo lubonise amanyathelo asebenzayo malunga nendlela imigaqo yobulungisa bentlalo kunye neempawu ezinokufundiswa ngayo kwigumbi lokufundela. Iziphumo eziphambili eziphume kolu phononongo ziquka ukubaluleka kothando, intlonipho, ukulingana, kunye nokuphakamisa ulwazi njengeentsika ezisisiseko zobulungisa bentlalo. Olu phononongo luqaphele uxhobiso njengesixhobo sesenzo sentlalo seenjongo zokuguqula uluntu. Olu phononongo luchonge iingcebiso ezininzi ngokusekelwe kwiziphumo zalo. Ezi ziquka urhulumente osebenzisana nezikolo ukwazisa izifundo zobungcali ezinyanzelekileyo kunye neeworkshops zokuxhobisa ootitshala ngolwazi lokudibanisa ubulungisa bentlalo kuzo zonke izifundo. Olu phononongo lugqibe kwelokuba kukho

imfuneko yokufunda nokubhala ngokunzulu kwigumbi lokufundela ukufundisa imiba yobulungisa bentlalo.

Amagama angundoqo: Ubulungisa bentlalo, ukufunda nokubhala ngokunzulu, indlela yokufundisa ngokunzulu, ithiyori enzulu, uPhando lweNzame yokuThatha inxaxheba, ubulungisa bentlalo, uMgaqo-nkqubo kaPicower

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AR Action Research
- BCE Before Common Era
- DoBE Department of Basic Education
- CAPS Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
- EFAL English First Additional Language
- ESAL English Second Additional Language
- FAL First Additional Language
- HL Home Language
- IES Independent Education Services
- IOL Independent Online
- L1 Learner one
- LoLT Language of Learning and Teaching
- MTLs Mother Tongue Languages
- NCTE National Council of Teachers of English
- NDP National Development Plan
- PAR Participatory Action Research
- PBIS Positive Behaviour and Intervention Strategy
- PR Participative Research
- RDP Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)
- SDG Sustainable Development Goals
- TCA Thematic Content Analysis
- UNISA University of South Africa

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The denigration of society into a zone of conflict and moral decay (Wolhuter, Janmaat, van der Walt & Potgieter, 2020) is partly attributable to a lack of education and awareness of the fundamental values of humanity. The fabric of humanity is shrinking despite the evolution and progress that humanity has made over the years. The history of humanity has been marked by rampant inequality and the subjugation of one person by another. This reality justifies the need for education that seeks to advance social justice. This need, along with the existence of social injustices, serves as a motivator for this study, which aimed to explore how critical literacy can advance social justice. Research has found that education plays an important role in emancipating and liberating the masses (Morrell, 2005). Critical literacy conscientises the mind and encourages debate on issues of social justice and social transformation (Gómez Castillo & Castañeda-Trujillo, 2023). Through critical literacy, knowledge is constructed, awareness is created, and critical thinking is generated, providing an impetus to solve issues of social injustice and oppression or advocate for a democratic society and social transformation.

Education has a great influence on social transformation. Campbell (2006:25) avers that "education is the greatest engine, not just for economic growth but also for social capital." Kisida and Bowen (2019) have acknowledged the impact of education on civic society, stating that it creates a healthy civic society, allowing learners to participate in a democratic society.

As a teacher, I have, over the years, understood and experienced the power of education and its influence on society, and my findings are congruent with those made by Converse in 1972, that citizens who are educated are more

knowledgeable, participatory and attentive than those who are uneducated (Converse, 1972, cited in Campbell, 2006). These assertions are further supported by Almond (1989; 2003) and Verba (1963; 1995), who argued that a man who is uneducated has a different political opinion and participates differently from a man who is highly educated (Campbell, 2019). Scholars like Freire, Apple, McLaren, and Shor have written extensively on critical pedagogy and literacy and their work remains a frame of reference for theoretical foundations. In recently published literature, these views are supported by Jeroense, Spierings and Tolsma (2025), who have argued that a person's level of education shapes their attitude on politics (Alscher & Jana, 2025 & Jeroense et al., 2025). Education is not neutral; it can never be separated from politics. Critical literacy seeks to interrupt the commonplace as Freire (1997) and Giroux (2025) have argued in their writing on critical pedagogy.

The underlying essence of critical literacy is to give learners a sense of agency to read texts with a critical eye and react responsibly to effect social change. Learners must be critically literate so that they do not become slaves to the knowledge in the texts they read (Zireva, 2014). Texts are not neutral and may be biased and informed by the ideological perspective of the writer (Winograd, 2016, cited in Giselsson, 2020). In an English classroom, learners are equipped with analysing and critiquing skills that are necessary to empower them to be critical and responsive to social problems. This study focuses on critical literacy and its role in an English classroom and explores to what degree it can promote social justice.

The concept of social justice, as used in this study, is not reduced to oppression, nor does it view the oppressed as *Black* or the oppressor as *White*. Rather, it defines the oppressor as any human who denies or infringes on the rights of others, wherein "others" refers to humanity. From this perspective, the study proposes to correct the assumptions associated with the definitions of the oppressor and the oppressed as history portrays them. In the context of this study, it was deemed dangerous to narrowly define social

justice and point to a single group of people as the oppressor. It is also a fallacy to assume that democracy is for blacks, because doing that undermines the ideals of social justice.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

South Africa comes from a bruised and divided past, including an unequal education system implemented under the Apartheid regime. The new, democratic government ushered in a new education system, new school policies, and a review of the curriculum to make it relevant to the needs of a democratic society. In a democratic society, citizens have the right to participate actively in the economy and in political issues in their country, with their rights to freedom protected by law. In 1994, South Africa adopted a new constitution that enshrines the rights to freedom and equal education for all its people, without segregation based on background, race, disability, or any other classification.

Social justice is not geographically bound; it is a global agenda (Muschert et al., 2018). The United Nations' commitment to the 2010 10-year Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) shows universality of issues of social justice. The pillars of the SDG agenda are "economic equality, social equality, dignity of all, environmental justice, community justice and human relationships" (Truell, 2020:7), evidencing the awareness of social justice at a global level.

According to the World Bank (2018), South Africa is labelled by Amnesty International as a country whose economy does not equally benefit all its citizens and is considered most unequal (Amnesty International, 2020; The Global Citizen, 2019). Amnesty International, in 2020, reported on this inequality gap and its translation in access to equal and quality education. Most schools in South Africa are in rural areas and are mainly underfunded. The majority of learners in these areas come from poor backgrounds and do not have equal access to quality education (Du Plessis, 2014, cited in

Mahaye, 2020). During the global outbreak of COVID-19, the disparities in the South African education system worsened for the already disadvantaged and became more visible. This meant that learners without access to educational resources were excluded from learning opportunities, highlighting systemic injustice. Society is arranged in the order of the haves and have-nots, and it is this structure of society that Michael Apple (2019) encourages people to deconstruct.

It is in this context that I take an interest in investigating critical literacy in the classroom and its relevance in promoting social justice. Although critical literacy has been used in English classrooms for decades, a review of the literature shows that very little research has been done on how critical literacy can be integrated in the classroom to teach social justice. In an English classroom, literary texts can be used to conscientise learners by exploring issues of inequality and social justice. Historically, in South Africa, the curriculum in black schools endorsed servitude and education was of poor quality. Together these factors created an oiled vehicle to force the subjection of the black population and prepare them for a docile existence (Grey, 1854, cited in Seroto, 1999:21). These brutal tendencies of exploitation were rejected, resulting in the historic June 16 Uprising in 1976 by learners against Bantu Education (Christie, 1991). Similar movements, such as #FeesMustFall in 2015-2016, are emerging in the 21st century to address tendencies toward exploitation and injustice, advocating ideals of radical social transformation and equality (Gukelberger, 2023). The belief that critical literacy can be a tool to conscientise people to reflect and act against oppression or injustice provides a strong rationale for this study.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical pedagogy is an educational philosophy and a social movement that originated from the tenets of critical theory and other traditions in education and culture. Kincheloe (2005) describes it as a practice in the teaching of language and learning that is motivated by the ideals to transform power relations and authoritative tendencies that are oppressive to society (Aliakbari

& Faraji, 2011). This approach invites learners to be aware of their own self-identity, and to question the societal status quo to advance social transformation. Critical pedagogy attempts to humanise, empower, and conscientise learners.

Critical pedagogy originated with a Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire who popularised this concept in 1968 in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire accused the dominant banking model of education of promoting passive learning and not encouraging critical thinking. According to him, the banking model of education is “an instrument of oppression” (Freire, 2005:71). He proposed a democratic, problem-posing model of education, which he argued is a liberating praxis where the oppressed need to “fight for emancipation” (Freire, 2005:86).

Shor (1999) defines critical pedagogy as traits of thinking that go beyond meaning at surface level, debunking dominant myths, or official pronouncements in order to gain a deeper meaning of social context, ideology, and consequences of people’s actions or discourse. In education, this calls for teachers to empower learners to criticise the dynamics of power and oppressive tendencies.

Critical pedagogy, as a theory, attempts to empower learners to question and challenge dominant beliefs, practices, and power dynamics. At the heart of critical pedagogy is “problem-posing education”, which subscribes to the essence of critical consciousness. Unlike banking education, it rejects communicate and encourages communication (Freire, 2005). This pedagogical approach enables learners to acquire emancipatory and directive knowledge to help them understand how social relations are distorted and manipulated by power (McLaren, 2002).

1.4 KEY CONCEPTS

1.4.1 Social justice: Murrell (2006) defines social justice as an attitude towards fighting all forms of oppression and unequal treatment that thrive in

institutions, practices, and policies, as well as a pledge to democracy and inclusive participation as the means to achieve justice (cited in Hytten, 2011).

1.4.2 Praxis: Critical thought and reflective intervention for a purposeful action (Breunig, 2025; Giroux, 2025).

1.4.3 Conscientisation: An attempt to critically empower the oppressed and marginalised populace to realise the oppressive system in the world they live in (Zireva, 2014).

1.4.4 Critical literacy: Hughes (2007) has defined critical literacy as looking at text beyond the literal meaning, examine and investigate what is present and missing to understand the writer's intent and meaning of the text (Hughes, 2007 cited in Zireva, 2014).

1.4.5 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): A document that guides teachers in the attainment of educational requirements, values, and skills, setting out guidelines on what is to be taught and assessed in South African public schools from Grade R–12.

1.4.6 Lesson activities: All programmes of learning that are used in or outside the classroom to achieve lesson aims and objectives (Savona, Elmer, Hürliemann, Joliat and Cavasino, 2021).

1.4.7 Picower's Framework: A guiding framework for the teaching of social justice in the classroom developed by Picower (2012).

1.4.8 Social injustice: Pertains to practices that endorse the perpetuation of economic, political, social, and cultural disadvantage of other people, and a deliberate effort to deny dialogue about the visions of laws and justice in society (Manderson, 2012).

1.4.9 Participatory action research (PAR): A research design that is concerned with the emancipation of people and giving them democratic power as a response to social injustice (Mabetha, Ojewola, van der Merwe, Mabika, Goosen, Sigudla, Hove, Witter, & D'Ambruoso, 2023).

1.4.10 Cycles of PAR: The recursive cycles in the process of PAR, which are problem identification, action plan, measurement, and reflection, after which the cycle restarts (Mabetha et al., 2023).

1.4.11 Text: Covers all forms of social signification and representation including writing, speech, technology, visual arts, advertising, dress, and behaviour (Mingers & Willcocks, 2017).

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A lack of critical literacy can be detrimental to the realisation of social justice in society. According to Shor (1999), critical literacy invites learners to interrogate knowledge deeply in its global context, an action that encourages learners to act against social injustice (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, cited in Norris, Lucas & Prudhoe, 2012). I believe that teaching English using critical literacy pedagogies in classrooms contributes to building and shaping social justice principles as it encourages learners to uncover unequal power dynamics and change their lives by inspiring and equipping them to act against injustice, specifically the perpetuation of the marginalisation in society (Lee, 2011).

Comber (2015) argues that critical literacy offers an alternative to radicalism thus offering a possibility of social justice through critical thinking. Given the history of inequalities and injustices in South Africa, there is a strong need for a genuine economic, political, social, and educational transformation through critical literacy. Critical literacy plays a vital role in fostering as well as refining the realisation of democratic ideals.

While international studies have examined the general role of critical literacy in education (Giroux, 1980; Hammond & Horarik, 1999; Marti, 1991), local studies such as those conducted by Lloyd (2016), Krstic and Nilsson (2018), Olifant (2020); Prinsloo & Janks 2002), provide insights into the need for critical literacy and an advancement of social justice in the South African context. These studies focus on literacy as a skill that enables reading, writing, and understanding of text. In the research referenced above, there is no explicit mention of the importance of critical literacy in promoting social justice principles in the classroom. The emphasis in these studies rests primarily on critical literacy practices, reading perceptions, and teaching in the classroom.

Based on these studies, it is evident that there is limited visibility of action-oriented approaches that are exclusively directed at addressing social justice and social transformation. Scant literature is available, and little is known about the role of critical literacy as a conscientising tool to advance social justice in the classroom. The use of critical literacy in the classroom can help to build values through critical thinking (Langer, 1997); therefore, it is pertinent that more studies must be done on how the teaching of critical literacy can advance the social justice agenda in classrooms. Through the use of qualitative participatory action research (PAR), this study investigated how the teaching of English using critical literacy can promote and advance social justice in a South African Grade 5 English classroom.

1.5.1 Main research question

This study is informed by the following main research question:

How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom in South Africa?

1.5.2 Sub-questions

In the light of the main question, the following sub-questions serve as key foci for the research study.

1.5.2.1 What critical literacy skills can be taught in an English classroom?

1.5.2.2 What social justice principles can be taught in an English classroom?

1.5.2.3 What teaching strategies and lesson activities support the promotion of social justice?

1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.6.1 Aim

This research study aims to identify how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom in South Africa to empower learners to become aware of social justice.

1.6.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1.6.2.1 Identify what critical literacy skills can be taught in an English classroom;

1.6.2.2 Specify what social justice principles can be taught in an English classroom; and

1.6.2.3 evaluate what teaching strategies and lesson activities promote social justice.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is defined as the framework for how an inquiry should be conducted (Schwandt, 2007). Research methodology is a systematic way to find solutions to particular problems. It is a scientific study of how research is conducted. It involves explaining the processes by which researchers conduct their work of reporting and predicting phenomena (Goundar, 2012; 2019). It is also defined as the ways by which knowledge is obtained (Rajasekar, Philominathan & Chinnathambi, 2014).

1.7.1 Research design

According to Creswell (2009:22), "research designs are set of plans and processes for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to

detailed methods of data collection and analysis." This sub-section outlines the research paradigm, research approach, and research strategy used. This study was conducted using a participatory action research (PAR) design, which can be understood as a psychological empowering tool and revolutionary method of inquiry that seeks to intervene on matters of social injustice (De Castro, 2016). The PAR approach is considered a praxis method of inquiry directed at liberating the oppressed and restoring social justice (Cardno, 2003). Although PAR is by all length and breadth a qualitative inquiry, it is unique in that it seeks to effect social transformation with specific action as its ultimate objective. This research method also has its traces in critical pedagogy, which is the paradigm adopted for this study. In this regard, PAR is an appropriate qualitative research design for this study.

1.7.1.1 Research paradigm

A paradigm is a way of thinking that describes the researcher's view of the world (Kuhn & Hacking 1970; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Given the imperative of a paradigm in research, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:27) maintain that "research must be guided by the assumptions and set of values of a chosen paradigm as well as beliefs it upholds. This study is underpinned by the critical paradigm. The philosophical position of those who subscribe to critical theory adopts a critical epistemology shaped by historical factors and biases, as well as by interactions between individuals, which together create historical truth or a social system (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Critical theory may be the answer to this study's research question, *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a South African grade 5 English classroom?* The critical paradigm is appropriate in that it aligns with this research question, as critical theory challenges power and politics and confronts all oppressive tendencies to improve social justice in a particular situation.

1.7.1.2 Research approach

The PAR design provides democratic qualitative inquiry that is both liberating and equitable (Koch & Kralik, 2006) and is considered distinct from other qualitative methodologies as it is characterised by an action to address a problem. The central theme of this study revolves around critical literacy and social justice. The PAR approach features aptly as a design that is congruent with the emancipation, empowerment, and liberation of the mind. The PAR approach is also understood to serve a dual educative role and an action role to realise social transformation.

1.7.1.3 Research strategy

Exploratory case study

This study investigates the role of critical literacy in teaching social justice. A research strategy that includes PAR and an exploratory case study approach is appropriate for such an exploration. This is because the PAR design is effective for collecting data from an environment where a phenomenon exists, and as stated by Creswell (2013), a case study approach explores a real-life case (or cases), in a detailed manner through in-depth data collection over time from different sources. Exploratory case study research is deemed an empirical-based inquiry that examines a problem in its real-life context with the aim of increasing knowledge about a topic that has not yet been fully explored. By its nature, PAR is participatory, which means that a researcher has the opportunity to be involved in a specific case or setting. In my study, I assumed the role of participant researcher in a selected Grade 5 English classroom in one school in one province (Western Cape). Thus, I participated in the social setting under study. The use of an exploratory case study approach in my study facilitates discernment of challenging issues, expands experience, and strengthens what is already known about the role of critical literacy in teaching social justice.

1.7.2 Research methods

Research methods are the tools that one uses to do research. Research methods refer to the different processes used in a study. All the methods used in a study by a researcher are referred to as research methods (Goundar, 2012).

1.7.2.1 Selection of participants

Sampling involves the selection of participants or situations that can provide a researcher with rich data on a particular phenomenon (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Etikan and Babatope (2019) describe sampling as the method used in research to demarcate a sample from the population. This study used purposive sampling. The study focused on one urban school in the Western Cape, a private school servicing mostly learners from an informal settlement. The participants in this study were one Grade 5 English teacher (myself) and 24 learners. These participants formed the study population, where *population* refers to a group of people to whom the implications and discussion of findings are attributed (Sampson, 2012). I chose a small sample size to enable me to extract detailed and in-depth data. The choice of the participants was based on two factors, one being that as a teacher, I was able to conduct a study in my classroom with the intent to improve and reflect on my classroom practice. The second factor is that my classroom population could provide a sample size sufficient to conduct research. The participants were selected based on characteristics that align with the study's goals and by virtue of their ability to give rich information, relevant to the problem under study (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018).

1.7.2.2 Data collection

In research, qualitative data collection refers to the choosing and production of linguistic data to analyse and understand a problem and collective experiences, as well as the related processes in meaning-making (Flick, 2017). In this exploratory case study, a combination of data collection methods was used. The study used observations, learners' reflective diaries,

and the researcher's reflective journal. Data collection methods should be consistent with the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings of a study (Flick, 2017; Kakulu, 2014). This study, being qualitative, adopts the critical paradigm and a critical pedagogy framework, which assumes the appropriateness of a case study as a suitable method for the related research questions.

1.7.2.3 Data analysis

Richmond (2006) avers that data analysis involves working with information or data to support the plan, goals, and work of a research programmes using different ways. This study used thematic content analysis (TCA), which is a descriptive approach that uses qualitative data (Anderson, 2007). In this study, TCA was used to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report themes found within the data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006, cited in Nowell; Norris, White & Moules, 2017). According to Clarke (2006) and King (2004), TCA is a suitable method for examining the perspectives of different research participants. It is also an effective method for highlighting differences and similarities, and generating insights (Nowell et al., 2017). In this study, TCA is the method of choice for data analysis, as the study focuses on a social phenomenon that can be effectively presented and described in thematic terms.

1.8 MEASURES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

The trustworthiness of research is measured and evaluated by four elements that serve as validating yardsticks in research. Similarly, in qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and authenticity are some of the aspects adopted by qualitative researchers as put forward by Mertens (2015) & Shenton (2004). The measures of trustworthiness will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher has a responsibility to protect entities and conform to the

principles and rules of conduct. As de Vos et al. (2012) maintain, research must be guided by trust that is mutual, cooperation from both sides, acceptance, and the meeting of expectations between or among parties in the study.

1.9.1 Informed consent

Entails that participants should be well informed about the study before participation. Obtaining informed consent from participants is essential as it ensures that, they are well informed about the study before they agree to participate. Grinnell, Gabor and Unrau (2008) argue that researchers should have “respect for participants and allow them to choose how they shall participate in the study” (cited in de Vos et al., 2012).

1.9.2 Avoidance of harm

Participants must be protected from any form of harm, unseen or foreseeable. Barbie (2007) argues that it is important for researchers to subscribe to ethical rules in research (cited in de Vos et al., 2012).

1.9.3 Voluntary participation

Participation in a research study should be an open and voluntary process, and no one should be forced or coerced to participate (Rubin & Barbie 2005, cited in de Vos et al., 2012). In this study, the participants participated of their own free will.

1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation is comprises of five chapters. A summary of each chapter is provided below.

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

This chapter presents an orientation to the study. It focuses on the problem statement, main research question, sub-questions, aim and objectives,

research methodology and design, definition of key concepts, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK INFORMING SOCIAL JUSTICE, CRITICAL LITERACY, AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

This chapter presents the literature review and discusses the purpose of using critical literacy in the classroom. This chapter also discusses the origins of social justice and contextualises social justice in the South African Grade 5 English classroom. Furthermore, Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework used in this study, namely critical pedagogy. The works of leading critical pedagogy theorists such as Freire, Apple, and McLaren, amongst others, are discussed.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology, including the research design, paradigm, approach, and methods used to conduct the research. This chapter also discusses the research instruments that used for data collection and analysis. This section further discusses the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of the study.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents and discusses the presentation, interpretation, and analysis of the empirical findings in relation to the research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter outlines the study's recommendations and conclusions, aligning them with the study's objectives. This chapter also highlights the study's limitations and provides suggestions for future research. Lastly, the study's contributions are highlighted in this chapter.

1.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an orientation to the study, stating its aims and objectives. It also discussed the problem statement, elucidated the key concepts, and introduced the theory underpinning the study. It further described the methods that were used in the study to answer the research questions and provided an outline of the chapters. The next chapter focuses on the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK INFORMING SOCIAL JUSTICE, CRITICAL LITERACY, AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 contains three main bodies of literature that are organised and selected in line with the three concepts embedded in the research question, namely, social justice, critical literacy, and critical pedagogy. Firstly, I discuss the history and origins of social justice and define it. Next, I contextualise social justice in the South African curriculum and in an English classroom. Thereafter, I discuss critical literacy in the South African curriculum and how it can be used as a vehicle for teaching social justice. Lastly, I discuss critical pedagogy, the theory that underpins this study.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 History and origin of social justice

The term *social justice* originated with the Peruvian theologian and philosopher, Gustavo Gutiérrez, in the 20th century. Literature suggests that the term originally had nothing to do with equality, but during the 19th century, politicians and scholars expanded its popularity to be more closely associated with civil rights, equality, and freedom. Gutiérrez, an ordained Catholic pastor, medical doctor, theologian, and philosopher, spent most of his time ministering to the poor. In his book, *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutiérrez proposed a new spirituality, calling for unity with the marginalised and advising churches to change the current economic and social institutions to be socially just. In the same vein, Niebuhr, a Protestant theologian, has described social justice in terms of how companies exploited workers by underpaying them. Niebuhr's beliefs were shaped by his experience of World War I and II, and as such, his view may be classified as neo-orthodox theology. He was also a pastor at Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit,

Michigan, where he led a congregation that was predominantly African Americans who worked at the nearby Ford automobile factory on the assembly line (Miller, 2019). Both Gutierrez and Niebuhr are influential theologians who popularised the idea of social justice in the 19th century; they were Christians and worked for the poor. The experiences of these philosophers shaped their ideologies.

Philosophers such as Freire, Giroux, Gutiérrez, Niebuhr, Apple, and Hopper believed in the responsibility of social institutions, including schools, to liberate the oppressed. The Pachamama Alliance community records that by the mid-2000s, social justice had expanded from focusing only on economics to include social life and all aspects of humanity, such as gender, race, inequality, and environmental issues (Pachamama Alliance, 2021). Thus, the meaning of social justice has evolved and continues to evolve over time to represent the experiences and interests of those living at a particular time, though the principles and fundamental drivers of social justice remain unchanged.

2.2.2 Towards a definition of social justice

Social justice encompasses ideals of freedom, respect for diversity, equality and equitable access to opportunities, resources and having an unbiased stance on culture, language, origin, or history. Social justice is known as a diversity in western societies and those societies that went through settler colonialism, like South Africa, where there is a huge number of the oppressed relative to the empowered citizens (Burke & Shay, 2017).

Jost and Kay (2010) views social justice as a condition where burdens of society and its benefits are shared in line with allocation principles. These principles are informed by rules and procedures governing decisions in politics and different decision-making processes preserving liberties, entitlements, and rights of human beings to be dignified and treated with respect by government and fellow citizens (Jost & Kay, 2010).

According to Robinson (2010), social justice refers to an obligation for one to have a concern for others and do what is good for society, reminding all humanity that all needs of societies and individuals should be fulfilled within the limitations dictated by the ecosystem in which they live, and for all people to have equal access to the resources in this ecosystem to improve their living conditions. Social justice involves a fair and just redistribution of resources as well as the acceptance and tolerance of different cultures and diversity (Taylor, Tjabane & Pillay, 2011).

In this study, I use the definitions of social justice proposed by Jost & Kay (2010) and Narismulu (2013), as working definitions that best align with a South African context, and which emphasise the diversities of culture, human rights, and dignity and responsibilities of both citizens and the state. I have expanded this definition to include a colonised state of mind (Brinkman, 2024). In the context of South Africa, social justice may also encompass the freedom to be oneself and of exercising human rights without infringement on others; the practice of religion or observance of any culture without prejudiced judgment; and equal access to economic, political, and social affairs without exclusion.

2.2.3 Contextualising social justice in the South African curriculum

The education system in South Africa is pivotal in redressing historical educational injustices by addressing the educational imbalances and living up to the expectation of a new democratic South Africa and the needs of its diverse population. Such redressing measures come in the form of reviews of educational policies as well as laws to safeguard the values that have been adopted in the new educational policies and the constitution. One such policy, with the clear mandate of a progressive and democratic South African education system, is the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The CAPS is a product of years of reflection and a review of South African curriculum policies. Having said that, CAPS seems to overly compensate non-English speakers and subtly promote educational inequality in the name of

language choice, especially in English where there are three levels of English (Home Language (HL), First Additional Language (FAL) and Second Additional Language (SAL) (Bassom, 2019; Bergbauer, van Staden & Bosker, 2016 & Sibeko, 2021).

2.2.3.1 Promoting mother tongue learning

In a study conducted in Ghana, it was found that limited English skills can hamper academic success (Stoffelsma & Spooren, 2019). Comparatively, a move to use mother tongue as a language of learning may have negative impact especially on broadening the horizons of inequality. The South African Department of Basic Education (DoBE) is engaging in discussions to change the language of instruction to mother tongue-based learning, where learners will be taught in their home language. In a BusinessTech article dated 13 April 2022, the then Minister of Basic Education, Dr Angie Motshekga, said that the National Development Plan (NDP) proposes the use of learners' home language as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) for longer periods, with English to be introduced early in the foundation phase. The minister acknowledged that despite these efforts, the reality is that schools and parents still prefer English as the LoLT. The feasibility and cost of changing the language of instruction to mother tongue-based learning is a costly initiative. The minister further cited the hegemonic nature of English, adding that English has an undeniable influence as a global medium of communication. English has a significant role in after-school life and working spaces. This argument is further supported by Phillipson (1999); Skuttnab-Kangas and Phillipson (2000), who argue that linguistic imperialism marginalises most of the population while empowering only a few (Skuttnab-Kangas & Phillipson, 2000).

Using mother-tongue languages (MTLs) for learning and teaching appears to be validated at the surface level; however, learners learning in vernaculars may not receive the language development needed to benefit from the role English plays in after-school life and access to opportunities in comparison with their White counterparts or others who would have studied in English. Although English is often labelled as the language of the coloniser, the role and influence of English

cannot be ignored. The Philippines Department of Education conducted a study with regarding the use of MTLs as a language of instruction. It was found that at the completion of Grade 6, the all-English group had a higher English proficiency level and performance across all subjects that was significantly greater than the achievement of the groups that used the local language as their language of learning, which is the Tagalog language (Mahboob & Cruz, 2013). These findings clearly indicate that learning in one's mother tongue does not necessarily aid or benefit learners, but rather continues to put them at a disadvantage in both proficiency and overall performance. Another point to consider is that mother-tongue learning limits the potential of learners as locally relevant, while also excluding them from the global stage, as the English language remains the medium of instruction in many countries worldwide. Based on the above assertions, I view the introduction of mother tongue-based learning as an indirect perpetuation of unequal education and a form of injustice.

Although South Africa and other former colonies of European countries feel the need to compensate Black children by making sure that they learn in their mother tongue, I believe that this notion is socially correct but academically and politically retrogressive. The Kenyan commission (1965) held this view on the use of MTLs as mediums of instruction when they stated that the commission understands the importance of vernaculars in verbal communication domestically. The commission further noted that it sees no justification in assigning to MTLs a role for which they are not suitable, namely the role of using MTLs as the medium of instruction in the early years of school (Obondo, 2007). The concerns raised by the Kenyan Commission were genuine, and although they were uttered decades ago and the context of today may be different, the economics and politics of this world are still very much dependent on the colonisers, thus cutting that dependency through a language boycott may not necessarily provide any gains for the African child and may covertly put them at a disadvantage. Phillipson (1992) argues that the global dominance of the English language is not neutral but is closely tied to historical, political, and economic power structures, especially those associated with colonial powers. Phillipson's arguments align with the Kenyan submissions that linguistic

imperialism is still a problem in former colonial states and continues to perpetuate inequality (Kenyan commission 1965; Phillipson, 1992).

For a long time now, there has been a widespread call to advance African languages as mediums of instruction in South Africa. This view of African languages highlights the emergence of an elite African class, where only a few can speak English at the same proficiency level as native-English speakers. This move isolates the majority from accessing economic and political power (Sibanda & Tshehla, 2025). Some scholars like Alexander (2000) and Brock-Utne (2000) view neo-colonial language policies as an undemocratic situation made possible by an 'elite closure'. This condition is created when only a small class of people (the elite) become the selected speakers of English. These upper-class members of society deliberately use official language policies to undermine the access of non-elite classes to the influence of power and socio-economic advancement (Obondo, 2007). This means that the majority of learners are excluded from the influence of power because learners learning in their mother tongue may not speak English at the same proficiency level as native-English speakers learning in English. This puts non-English learners at a disadvantage because politics and economics are tied to the dominance of the English language (Phillipson, 1992).

2.2.3.2 The different levels of English

In many ways, introducing different levels of English in all grades is an indirect realignment to the prescriptions of Bantu education. The demands and expectations promoted in the English First Additional Language (EFAL), English Home Language (HL), and English Second Additional Language (ESAL) curricula are different (Makalela, 2023). The adoption and provision of three different English curricula covertly promotes inequality and projects a narrative of unequal competencies along racial lines, as these curricula develop different proficiency levels in English.

Curriculum is at the centre of shaping ideologies and promoting equality and justice. The fact that the curriculum is designed to cater to three categories of

English-language speakers puts the CAPS curriculum in a situation where it is overcompensating for non-English speakers, but more importantly, it is a structural and systematic endorsement of separatist education, where there are distinctions between *better*, *good*, and *best* (Abdulatief, Guzula, Kell, Lloyd, Makoe, McKinney & Tyler, 2018). The adoption of three distinct levels of English Language in the curriculum provides freedom of choice in the language of instruction and learning (LoTL). However, a single English Language curriculum would ensure a move towards equality in education. The English Language curriculum division, although developed with concerns that non-English language children should not be expected to compete with English HL speakers in English (a language not their own), the English language abilities of a learner doing EFAL and ESAL is also now a major concern in the new dispensation and in relation to their future position in the world (Probyn, 2024).

As an English teacher who has had the opportunity to teach both English HL and English FAL learners, I can attest that the competencies promoted in these curricula are distinct. Hence, the recognition of different curricula for English Language further strengthens inequality in education, which converts into differentiated access to opportunities later in life. Saneka and De Witt (2019) support these claims, stating that English is powerful as the global language for communication. Having a one-English-Language policy would have done justice to recognising that a Black child can learn and excel in English equally as well as a White child learning an African language. There is no Xhosa curriculum for non-Xhosa speakers, for example.

2.2.3.3 Social justice in the CAPS

The CAPS builds on the Preamble of the Republic of South Africa's Constitution, which provides for the Bill of Rights. The constitution enshrines the following enactments:

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights. Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1998).

To introduce and implement a curriculum that best suits South Africa's history and undo the legacy of Apartheid, the curriculum has been revised three times since 1997, with the latest review being in 2011. The DoBE acknowledges the need for a relevant curriculum, but it does not propose clear ways to achieve this in the classroom. It does, however, mention that the curriculum should produce learners who can identify and solve problems effectively as individuals and as part of a team using critical and creative thinking to make decisions, as well as organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively (DoBE, 2011). These objectives do not explicitly explain how social justice can be achieved in a classroom. Social justice is only mentioned in passing, and there is no clear task to promote it in classrooms. The lack of a decisive implementation plan and directive on social justice in the curriculum renders the concept of social justice as empty rhetoric. Many scholars (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Brown, 1999; Jeong, 2012 & Prinsloo & Janks, 2002) have extensively discussed the role of English in promoting critical literacy. However, there is a scarcity of literature examining the role of critical literacy in advancing social transformation or social justice. This study investigates the application of critical literacy in teaching social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom. Critical literacy has the potential to conscientise the mind and create an awareness of the urgency to fight against any form of injustice.

2.2.3.4 Social justice education in an English classroom

The ultimate goal of all critical literacy efforts is to find balanced solutions to societal problems and achieve social transformation which includes social justice as a key component (Lamsal, 2024). There may be many ways to realise social justice, but in a democratic space, dialogue, freedom, equality, and education are key pillars to achieve social transformation. Education worldwide has the mandate to liberate and create a more equitable society (UN General Assembly, 1948).

The United States is one of the countries with a mature, and one of the oldest,

democracies, yet it is still haunted by remnants of inequalities from all spheres of life (Alvi & Rafique, 2023; Kraus, 2025). Beck (2005) argues that African American learners endure the most exclusion in schools as their cultural identity is not validated and their competencies and academic prowess are viewed as deficient (Ladson-Billings, 2022; Tatum, 2017). It is essential that learners' identities are represented in a classroom through exploration and access to relevant texts and content that reflect a diversity of cultures and identities. *Text* in this study is understood not just as written words but as a complex system that is designed to transmit information, evoke emotions, and shape our understanding of the world (Pekrun, 2022). This includes visual text, food, clothes, music, culture, and language. In the quest for social justice, educational systems and teachers are important in the social justice discourse by their use of critical literacy practices that are culturally responsive and grounded in developing multi modal consumers and producers of text who are critically literate, active, and creative (Iwuanyamwu, 2023; National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2019). Critical literacy helps learners in uncovering and destabilising power and promote freedom and expression (Beck, 2005; NCTE, 2019). Social justice is a universal human plight, and the role of education remains equally important in shaping and honing skills for a democratic and socially progressive society.

Education takes place anywhere, but schools remain at the centre of encouraging the higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills needed in life. An educated population may have a better way of dealing with issues affecting them than an uneducated population. In the same vein, it has been argued that an uneducated population is easier to oppress than an educated population (Jefferson, 1987). Education may be viewed as an enemy by politicians, as it levels the playing field, providing the population with a fighting chance to question the balance of power and issues of justice. Apple (2016) has referred to education as a political act, adding that it is not neutral and is a threat to power. Learners should participate in their education, while teachers are encouraged to create empowering, democratic, and critical environments for their learners (Mantero, Watzke & Miller, 2022). A classroom is fertile

ground for encouraging learners to become critical thinkers, using texts drawn from diverse backgrounds and allowing learners to read, analyse, and reach their own conclusions. The English classroom is the primary setting for learners to acquire the skills that distinguish the democratic *open mind* from the totalitarian *closed mind* (NCTE, 2019).

Although the CAPS is a rigorous document designed to reflect on education as a right for all, as informed by the Constitution of South Africa, there is still more to be done regarding its implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of the policy. The ambiguity persists regarding the CAPS' reference to literacy and social justice. The CAPS document refers to inclusion and diversity to describe equal education. Mbatha (2016:29) refers to equal education as "democratic, socially just and equitable, non-sexist and racially biased." The CAPS position lacks a sense of urgency to promote critical literacy to champion a revolutionary agenda for social transformation and social justice. The CAPS does not outline in absolute terms a monitoring and evaluation tool to ensure equity, inclusivity, and social justice in South African institutions of learning. Goetze, a remedial therapist and Head of Special Education at the Independent Education Services (IES), in her article titled *Why CAPS is Harming Our Children* has argued that there is something very wrong with CAPS and she is tired of being part of a system that is directly harming children. One of the five reasons she mentions is that CAPS is not producing thinkers (Goetze, 2016). In short, Goetze has implied that the CAPS does not effectively lay a clear path for critical pedagogy education.

The DoBE needs to put in place structures that ensure procedures and standards are followed without irregularities, and a rigorous follow-up evaluation plan is necessary. In as much as the CAPS cites all principles of what constitutes a fair and balanced educational mandate, focus and actions should equally be directed to how theory can be converted to effect urgency and action against pockets of unequal education, as South African society is still under the influence of remnants of colonialism. This is where critical education can find its relevance.

Using various English texts, such as poems, novels, and cartoons (literature), can help learners engage critically with texts, empowering them to generate ideas and arguments that address the real-life problems they face. The study of texts in the English classroom is important because it empowers creativity, imagination, and appreciation of one's identity, history, cultural values, and traditions, which are necessary for social integration in society. Mavesera and Mutasa (2009) argues that literature texts form a consistent and reliable source of life experiences for people, and their aspirations and endeavours. Reading a variety of texts enhances one's quality of life; broadens one's horizons; empowers; challenging the status quo; and exposes exploitative experiences and social, political, and economic patterns and ills (Mavesera & Mutasa, 2009). In an English classroom, critical literacy promotes universal values such as self-identity, self-awareness, appreciation of diversity, and mutual coexistence, all of which advance the discourse around social justice. Using different texts in an English classroom promotes critical thinking, a world of imagination, and more importantly, a voice to critique power and challenge hegemony. The critical study of text encourages learners to be more aware of their environment and to know what is right and wrong. The selection of texts plays a crucial role in fostering cultural understanding, instilling cultural values, developing learners' character, and exploring social and political awareness (Wahyuni, Jia, Mujiyanto, Vinahari & Melati, 2024). Using teaching strategies such as inquiry-based learning in the teaching of critical literacy and incorporating different texts from diverse backgrounds encourages learners to develop social consciousness. Inquiry-based learning is a pedagogical orientation that engages learners to investigate a variety of disciplinary and multidisciplinary phenomena to uncover inequalities and injustices (Pedaste et al., 2015).

Gabrielsen, Blikstad-balas & Tengberg (2019) posit that educational systems across the world believe that reading in the classroom may teach learners social, human, and cultural values. Rosenblatt (2005), in the same vein, avers that engaging actively in reading is seen as form of vicarious experience, and Poulet (2017) concurs that it helps to understand and respect other people's perspectives. Reading literary texts is powerfully imaginative and expands our

capacity for empathy and social judgment (Gabrielsen et al., 2019). In support of this statement, Mokgadi and Hove (2024) emphasise the importance for learners to understand what they read and not just go through the words. When reading is approached in this way, it can go beyond basic comprehension and open new horizons of richer experiences where learners can use their imagination, have empathy for and develop a thoughtful understanding of social situations (Mokgadi & Hove, 2024). Classroom debates in an English lesson encourage learners to exercise judgment and critical thinking and grow readily to participate in social dialogues and discourses that pertain to social justice.

2.2.3.5 The origins of critical literacy

Critical literacy is an old concept that dates back 2000 BCE and was originally linked to the dialogues of Plato and Socrates against the traditions of Homer in Greece (Yoon & Sharif, 2015). Critical literacy can also be traced to the pre-Socratic philosophers Xenophanes (570–475 BCE) and Heraclitus (535–c. 475 BCE) (Abednia & Crookes, 2018:2). Abednia and Crookes (2018) argue that dialogues and disputes in philosophical and religious contexts were part of traditions in early literate civilisations. Among these early civilisations are the Buddhist idealism, the Jain asceticism, and the Charvaka materialists.

Critical literacy is also linked to text-based and text-oriented traditions that involve challenging and disputing scholarship documented by the Jewish and Islamic traditions. In the 17th and 18th centuries, critical literacy continued to emerge in the Chinese intellectual traditions as neo-Confucianism replaced the earlier line of thinking around 1300 BCE (Abednia & Crookes, 2018:2). Critical literacy has also been influenced by Marx and Engels, who both lived under the repressive capitalist system in Germany and started to pursue revolutionary scholarship and struggle that led to the rise of communism in Germany (Carver, 1989; Mclellan, 1973; Wheen, 2000). Marx and Engels envisioned that without education, the lives of the working class were doomed to slavery and toil, but with education, they had an opportunity to better their lives (Kellner, 2006; Mattos, 2022). Marx's socialist ideologies held the view that education would help fully develop socialised individuals, creating a society that is cooperative

and harmonious. Education also helps to inspire creative thinking and imagination in all forms (Kellner, 2006). In the 19th century, critical literacy can be traced to the Brazilian philosopher, Freire, who coined and popularised the term *critical pedagogy*. Freire developed the concept of critical literacy, aligning intricately with the Frankfurt School of thought (1923), which propounded critical theory. The Frankfurt School of thought, and Freire's movements against oppression (1960), built their arguments in line with Marx's ideology. Marxism posits that the battle between the workers and the capitalists defines economic relations in a capitalist economy and inevitably lead to a communist revolution (Kilman, 2022). Marx's assertions were made directly in support of the revolution against capitalism. The impact of a revolutionary consciousness inspired by Marx's ideology attracted various scholars, such as the Frankfurt scholars and Freire, to embark on revolutionary ideologies and education in their respective countries (Balcells & Kalyvas, 2025). This revolutionary consciousness became a reference point for promoting criticality and consciousness for scholars from the Frankfurt School of thought and for Freire.

2.2.3.6 What is critical literacy and its role in promoting social justice?

Critical literacy involves interacting with texts with a critical eye to search for representation of textual prejudices (Luke, 2007; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2010, cited in Papola - Allis, 2020). Critical literacy addresses the question of power, privileges, and injustices that society experiences. Social justice issues can be found in and out of schools; in all cases it is closely aligned with critical literacy tenets (Burke & Collier, 2017, cited in Papopa-Allis, 2020). Critical literacy can serve as a vehicle for combating inequality and facilitating social transformation. Cochran-Smith (2010) avers that, when teachers use critical literacy pedagogy in the classroom, they are supporting learners in acting for social justice. Critical literacy allows for multiple perspectives and empowers marginalised voices to understand text, meaning and power dynamics. Looking at multiple texts and problematising them expose biases in text and conscientises learners to take an active role and participate in issues of justice in society. One way to build knowledge and dispositions that encourage social justice is to use diverse texts

in an English classroom (Papopa-Allis, 2020). The texts and related discussions in an English classroom provide a medium for examining cultural issues and a platform to start discussions about equity, dismantling hegemonic assumptions and disrupting the status quo (Howrey & Whelan-Kim, 2009).

2.2.3.7 Critical literacy in the South African curriculum

A critical pedagogy to education disrupts the chain of oppressive texts and speaks in the voice of the oppressed. It also defines justice through the lens of the oppressed and supports the belief that learners can learn by critiquing multiple texts as well as through examination of injustices that exist in texts (O'Byrne, 2018). Critical literacy is both a liberator and an opposing force, as it seeks to disrupt the notion that education is a saint and liberator. The curriculum should thus be clear in its advocacy for critical literacy as a spark to ignite dialogue, preceded by praxis. South Africa, having transitioned from one curriculum to another over the last two decades, highlights the need for a curriculum that reflects the nation's politics and social interests as an important educational matter. The objectives and role of formal education are formalised and stated in the curriculum, as well as its underlying ideologies and the kind of candidates or graduates it is expected to produce.

The CAPS lists the following ideologies:

- . *Social transformation: ensuring that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed, and that equal educational opportunities are provided for all sections of the population.*
- . *Active and critical learning: encouraging an active and critical approach to learning, rather than rote and uncritical learning of given truths.*

At the policy level, the above ideologies highlight the realities South Africa has experienced and the future to which it aspires. These ideologies have a political undertone, highlighting the role of education in politics and its influence on shaping society (Dacko, Mickiewicz & Płonka, 2021; Sinakou, Boeve-de Pauw, Goossens & Van Petegem, 2018). The CAPS further advocates for a critical learning approach, opposing the traditional banking education model. The

agenda of social transformation is lively echoed in CAPS, but the policy does not describe social transformation in a way that creates a sense of urgency. The policy does use signpost words like social justice and critical literacy. Freire (1970) argues that using language, as described above, distorts reality. This study aims to explore the sense of urgency that critical literacy can bring to the social justice agenda when learners are conscientised and empowered to take action. The #FeesMustFall campaign in South Africa, the call for a decolonised curriculum, and the Black Lives Matter campaign in the United States are recent examples that illustrate the role of critical literacy enlightenment and a sense of urgency for social transformation. The #FeesMustFall and Black Lives Matter movements are direct results of critical education and a conscientised mind (Heffernan, 2018; Le Grange, 2016;) Curriculum should create learners who are conscientised to act against repressive systems.

The role of formal education is recognised for equipping learners with knowledge in the curriculum (Idris & Putra, 2021). It is thus essential for teachers to be aware of the potential for content that may promote docility and passivity on issues of social justice. This is because the curriculum is often politicised to serve the interests of those in power. The CAPS highlights the need for critical learning; however, it fails to cite practical ways on how to ensure that learners are critical of what they learn. This is a shortcoming of the CAPS curriculum. There is no evidence that suggests that the content of the curriculum changes the attitude of individuals to be subservient and conservative (Cantoni, Chen, Yang, Yuchtman & Zhang, 2014). However, the achievement of the values, skills, and attitudes in a curriculum indirectly fosters subservience. Every learner strives to achieve their academic goals in order to prepare for opportunities later in life. As a result, most learners subscribe to rote learning, where they memorise content and regurgitate the answers in standardised tests, which have become a benchmark of academic success. This method of learning is not considered higher-level thought or critical thinking (Resilient educator, 2012). It therefore calls for a curriculum that provides follow-up on how learners are applying the skills, values, and attitudes in a critical manner. In other words, there is a need for a curriculum that outlines practical

access to critical literacy.

2.2.3.8 Using critical literacy to teach social justice

Proponents of critical theory and architects of critical pedagogy agree that critical literacy has a role to drive the social justice agenda in society (Apple, 1993; Freire, 1972; Luke, 2014; Shor, 2017). Apple (1993) and Freire (1972) hint at the role of academic institutions and the type of knowledge these institutions promote, as well as whose interests they serve (Janks, 2017). Freire (1970) and Shor (1999) among other distinguished scholars on critical literacy, caution against passive education where learners are merely recipients of knowledge. Freire (1970) termed this type of education *banking education*, arguing for a more critical approach (problem-solving approach) where learners participate actively in finding solutions to problems and are encouraged to critique expert knowledge. In the same vein, Luke (2018) acknowledges schooling as “part of the problem but also a site for critiquing and redressing inequality” (Luke, 2018:9). This admission by Luke highlights the narrative that, although education is a “double-edged sword”, it can be used to advance social transformation. Education is a political matter; it is thus imperative that learners are empowered to expose political undertones that knowledge or texts may possess. To uncover hidden political undertones embedded in texts, Luke has argued that “literacy matters”, citing that “cognitive capacity and individual psychology” is important (Luke, 2018:4). Shor (1999:2) refers to literacy as social action using language that develops people as agents in a larger cultural system.

Critical literacy is an agent for change and praxis is a cyclical process of “reflection and action upon the world to transform it” (Freire, 1970:33). Shor (1999) views critical literacy as “language use that questions the social construction of the self” (Pena & Chapeton, 2018:162). In summary, these assertions refer to the power of language as a force that can profoundly change who we are, how we perceive the world, and how we can transform. According to Sibanda (2022), critical literacy “provides learners with functional skills and

more importantly with the conceptual tools that are necessary to critique and engage society along with its inequalities and injustices” (Sibanda, 2022:3). These postulations highlight the core principles of critical literacy and its responsibility to encourage learners to think critically about social justice.

Critical literacy aims to produce candidates who can participate actively in critical discourse analysis and decode hidden meanings in texts. Teachers should teach their learners to think beyond the text (Jones & Clarke, 2007, cited in Beach et al., 2020). On this note, Sibanda (2022) argues that critical discourse analysis focuses on constructing meaning of practices and social actions through the lens of power relations. Critical literacy is essential for learners to participate in critical dialogues that are significant to their lives. Powell and Bentley (2022) recognise critical literacy as a way of teaching that is focused on justice, questioning, and analysing power dynamics, where teachers and learners co-create knowledge. In an English classroom, critical literacy is important because learners encounter texts that are never neutral (Apple, 1992). As a result, learners should develop their responsiveness to societal problems in their world, so they can learn to ask why things are the way they are and who benefits the most as a result (Beach, Boggs, Castek, Damico, Panos, Spellman & Wilson, 2020). As such, critical literacy is valuable in teaching social justice in the classroom.

2.2.3.9 Praxis as an agent for social justice

The notion of social justice is one that requires praxis to drive discourse and narrative toward real change in society (Conway, 2013). Praxis is central to the deployment of critical literacy efforts as it is one thing to be conscious of injustices, and it is completely another thing to be conscious of and act upon injustices to liberate oneself (Breunig, 2005). Praxis is the result of complete reflection and action, leading to a political moment and revolution where the world will no longer be described with deceptive words, but will become the object of transforming action by men and women (Freire, 2000). Freire has argued that it is not enough for people to be aware of injustices and not take responsibility for changing them. Thus, praxis applied in the classroom means

that learners, through a democratic and critical education, engage in real-life matters that require solutions and rigorously discuss issues of justice at length. Scholars such as Prinsloo & Janks (2002), and many others, have written about the need for social change through education. Janks and Prinsloo (2002) have used the word social change to indirectly refer to a just society. In light of this, Freire (1970) has cautioned that the words we choose have the power to create a sense of urgency. Similarly, social justice may be used to refer to a broad range of issues associated with unjust tendencies, including inequality, poverty, and oppression, among others. In discussing issues pertaining to justice, the word praxis creates a sense of urgency in the social justice discourse as it directs focus to specific issues that relate to social justice and transformation.

Amirudin, Tjalla and Indrajit (2022) define critical education as a type of education that sees theory and praxis not as separate, but with the goal to empower the oppressed and conscientise them to act through emancipatory praxis (Amirudin et al., 2022). Based on Suharto's definition, critical education is driven by praxis. Praxis empowers learners to act, rather than merely advancing theoretical ideologies that may amount to no practical action or solutions to societal problems. Conscientising the learners is one step, and a political challenge is the ultimate step that enables praxis to effect social change. Critical education has "implicit expectation that *conscientização* (critical awareness) should lead to an epistemological and a political moment" (de Castro 2016:81). De Castro's assertions align with those of Freire (1970), Apple (1992; 2016), and Giroux (2018), who argue that education is a political matter. Giroux insists that "schools are not neutral sites of instruction but are political and cultural arenas within which diverse ideological and social forms are in constant struggle" (Giroux, 1983: 11). He further argues that teachers should be viewed as "transformative intellectuals" who have a responsibility to engage students in critical forms of learning that enable them to "challenge and transform the conditions under which knowledge is produced and distributed" (Giroux, 1988: 121). Concurring with these scholarly perspectives, I believe that a collaboration of education and politics, not just in terms of reforms but also of tolerance for learners to engage actively in political matters, would result in the learners

taking praxis to another level.

It is, therefore, essential that learners from the early years of primary school through to tertiary education have their voices represented and supported by principles and values that they have participated in creating. This is because social justice can be perceived as true when people at the receiving end of societal inequalities qualify it as *just*, as that will be justice by their standards. The above statement closely aligns with Freire's proclamations on the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. In the eyes of the oppressor, justice has a different standard, and conversely, in the eyes of the oppressed, it has a different measure and meaning altogether.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.3.1 Introduction

A theoretical framework is “a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory that has been constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships” (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:13). A theory is a “description of the relationships between concepts that help us to understand the world” (Varpio, Paradis, Uijtdehaage and Young, 2020:990). The theoretical framework employed in this research is essential for interpreting the research findings and the researcher's voice. According to Georges (2005), a theoretical framework should aim to provide researchers with opportunities to discover their voice and build theories that seek to liberate, rather than control (Nhan, 2020). Furthermore, this section situates the theory within its context by connecting it to the research question and the study's rationale. In this study, the main research question is: *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom?*

2.3.2 The Critical Pedagogy Theory

The theory of critical pedagogy embodies critical literacy, which entails empowering learners with critical skills to challenge power and advocate for a more just and democratic society. “Critical pedagogy in literacy is known as

critical literacy, which looks at how one's identity is shaped by literacy practices" (Zireva, 2014:98). Critical pedagogy has developed from the tenets of critical theory, which inspires the principles of critical literacy. Critical theory is a "concept promoted and widely popularised by the Frankfurt School of thought in the 1920s in Germany" (Degener, 2001:59). Critical theory advocates a dialectical approach to learning that examines the contradictions and critiques of power in society. This study adopts critical pedagogy as a theoretical framework to address the research questions posed. Critical pedagogy was born out of the ideologies of critical theory.

Critical pedagogy provides this study with a context in which to explore pressing issues of social justice. It also provides learners with a means to challenge the status quo and social stratification. Taylor and Hikida (2020:270) have argued that "critical pedagogy emphasises learners' development to understand how power and oppression operate in the lived experiences of people, and to gain the ability to read the world and the capacity to work towards transformation." It has also been averred that critical pedagogy can help learners to develop an understanding of how oppression is constructed and how it can be resisted (Taylor & Hikida, 2020).

2.3.3 Why use critical pedagogy for this study?

Critical theory and critical pedagogy share the same philosophical undertones of questioning power and interrogating the commonplace. Critical pedagogy is a preferred theoretical framework for this study because it offers learners a sense of urgency and empowers them to act against structural inequalities and oppression. Critical literacy is the cornerstone on which critical pedagogy is built. Critical pedagogy employs critical literacy to conscientise learners, providing them with a platform for dialogue and critique. Critical pedagogy, as an educational theory, fits aptly in the context of the classroom and in education. Architects of critical pedagogy believe in the role of education, schools, and learning centres as oases of knowledge, notwithstanding that education can be weaponised and politicised. Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) posit that schools

provide platforms for learners to develop an understanding how and why knowledge and power are constructed (cited in Gregory & Cahill, 2009). In the same vein, Freire concurs that, “education can not be separated from politics” and further argues that “the act of teaching and learning is considered a political act in and of itself”, and this, is the central tenet of critical pedagogy (Prahani, Deta, Yasir, Astutik, Pandiangan, Mahtari and Mubarak, 2020:22). Critical pedagogy questions power, knowledge, democracy, and issues of justice in society. Dewey (1916) perceived classroom practices as critical for shaping and constructing learners’ own knowledge through meaningful explorations and discussions (Dewey, 1916). Dewey’s views align with learner-centred pedagogy and collective problem solving, which also support the Freirean perspective. Dewey believed that learners need to be exposed to critical literacy in the classroom to capacitate them to become socially conscious and responsible citizens who will bring about social transformation.

2.3.4 Brief history of the origin of critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is commonly associated with the work of Freire, who, as already mentioned, was a Brazilian philosopher and educator in the 1940s. The history and origins of critical pedagogy can be traced back to the works of Plato and Socrates (Guilherme, 2017:3), and the Frankfurt School of thought. Plato and Socrates have shaped the philosophy of education, and dialogue was central to their philosophy. This concept later became one of Freire’s tenets in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in the 1970s. Freire had bitter experiences in his homeland of Brazil, which inspired him to break learners’ silence, empowering them to act (Uddin, 2019).

The central idea of Freire’s critical pedagogy originates from critical theory. Critical theory has its traces in Marxist ideologies, which emerged popularly in the 1900s from the German philosopher, Marx, who mobilised a revolution against capitalism and fascism in favour of socialism. Marxist theory is based on a critique of social classes in which the workers and the bourgeois struggle. The Frankfurt School of thought borrowed these ideas, refined them, and coined the term *critical theory*. Later, the term *critical literacy* emerged. Freire published his

work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1970, which later became a reference point for many critical thinkers who shared the Freirean perspective.

Critical pedagogy has gained international recognition, reshaping the discourse on teaching, society, politics, and the economy. Various critical pedagogy theorists, including Apple (1990); Darder (2008); Giroux (2020) Gramsci (1988), Illich (2013); Kincheloe (2007); Shor (1999) & McLaren (1988) have written extensively about critical pedagogy. These theorists share a common goal: helping those who are oppressed to become emancipated and for them to engage in a critique of a wide range of issues, including social, personal and cultural forces (Uddin, 2019). Freire, having observed that the education system at the time added no intellectual value to the learners, but was rather a system that perpetuated subjugation and oppression, termed it *banking education*, as already mentioned. Freire instead proposed, *problem-posing education*, which he argued “encourages dialogue between the teacher and the student” (Uddin, 2019:112). In applying the problem-posing education model, teachers must use approaches that encourage active participation and activities that are learner-centred, providing learners with opportunities to be manufacturers of knowledge not docile consumers.

2.3.5 Informing tenets of critical pedagogy: Dialogue

Dialogue happens when people interact with each other and relate their experiences to the world they live in. Dialogue cannot happen between people who want to name the world and those who do not wish for this naming; it can only happen if people are willing to talk, reflect, and listen to each other (Freire, 2000). In other words, each person has the right to speak and the right to name the world in dialogue. According to Bercaw and Stooksberry (2005:1), there are three main tenets that inform critical pedagogy, which are: “reflection upon the individual’s culture or lived experience, development of voice through a critical look at one’s world and society and transforming the society toward equality for all citizens through active participation.” Critical pedagogy is premised on the need to achieve social transformation and a democratic society. Proponents of this theory believe that learners should participate in issues that involve them

and engage in dialogue and discourses that help them realise democratic ideals and move towards a more socially just society. Apple (1921) and Freire (1970) both agreed that education is not neutral, rather “it is a political act” (Shih, 2018:230). Freire’s dialogic pedagogy assumes that teachers must encourage certain values and attitudes for learners to adapt to a changing society and that teachers can achieve this through pedagogical praxis (Shih, 2018). Critical pedagogy aims to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor through critical consciousness and dialogue, a central tenet that can help teachers realise this objective. Freire (1970) believed that once learners are conscientised, they become aware of their own self, their environment, and society at large. With this knowledge, they are able to confront any injustice they are confronted with and prepare for social transformation and the liberation of the self.

2.3.6 Dialogue and critique: Related foundations of critical pedagogy

Dialogue and critique are foundational and interdependent concepts that inform critical pedagogy. These concepts are thus important in the teaching of critical literacy in the classroom.

2.3.6.1 Dialogic pedagogy

In an English classroom, teachers should adopt a dialogic approach to teaching, where learners are given space to engage with issues that pertain to themselves and the welfare of society. Bakhtin (1981) conceptualises meaning as dialogic, emerging through the interaction and contestation of multiple voices that negotiate, challenge, and reconstitute dominant discourses within specific socio-cultural context. Using this approach will position learners as critical thinkers and encourage them to be responsible citizens, becoming more aware of themselves; their cultures; and the social, economic, and political contexts in which they live. Ball and Freedman (2004) also support Bakhtin’s assertions positing that learning is shaped by dialogue through interaction of multiple perspectives in a classroom. Dialogic pedagogy opens not only the conscience of the oppressed but also that of the oppressor, hence Freire argued for the need to “educate the oppressor to save them from themselves.” (Freire,

1996:26). Freire believed that once learners are critically conscious, it will be difficult to oppress them. Freire encouraged learners to break free from the culture of silence (Shih, 2018:65).

In a dialogic classroom, issues of identity, culture, power, equality, democracy, and liberation of the mind and self should be at the forefront. Freire (1970) and Giroux (1993) believed that education should change society and that the goal of education is to “liberate human potential” (Vin et al., 2020:78), which can be achieved in part through critical consciousness. Using dialogic pedagogy in an English classroom advances learners’ critical thinking skills. Some theorists consider promoting dialogue as important in encouraging critical thinking as it enables the consideration of others’ perspectives, which is necessary for assessing truth claims. Instructional formats that incorporate cooperative learning and dialogic features are expected to promote learners’ active learning and higher-order thinking skills simultaneously (Renshaw, 2004, cited in Hajhosseiny, 2012). Dialogue is thus a crucial element in driving critical literacy as learners, through dialogic pedagogy, are exposed to consciousness and empowerment, which enables them to approach issues with reason and a critical eye.

2.3.6.2 Critique

Another tenet central to critical pedagogy is critique. Critique and dialogue are mutually dependent. We cannot have dialogue without critique, nor can we have critique without dialogue. Critique and dialogue are essentially informing tenets of critical pedagogy, and the two are inseparably important and interlinked in discussing critical pedagogy. Aronowitz (2015) and Freire and Macedo (1987) argue that critique foregrounds analysis of socio- political structures and discourses, with the goal of transforming those that are oppressive (Macedo & Freire, 1987; Tyler & Hikida, 2020). These scholars emphasised the role of critique in developing learners’ understanding of how power and oppression work, in looking at people’s lived experience by reading the world, and in empowering learners to work towards transformation. In support of this statement, hook (1997) argues that critical pedagogy is an empowering tool that

helps learners to challenge oppressive systems (Bells, 1997). By exposing learners to the realities of history, cultures, and experiences, critique-centred critical pedagogy uncovers how socio-political topics, such as racism, climate change, and immigration policy, can help learners in developing their understanding of how oppression has been constructed and resisted (Taylor & Hikida, 2020). Of importance is the realisation that, in an English classroom, teachers should employ critical pedagogy to discuss issues that are relevant and relate to the learners' lives and experiences.

Providing learners with a platform to examine social aspects through discussions on issues of race, equality, and justice will prepare them to be responsible citizens and encourage them to engage in and participate in the discourses of social, economic, and political relevance in their lives. These learners will grow to be conscious of the world they live in, emancipated and empowered to defend justice and a just society for all.

Critique needs to be encouraged in the classroom. Teachers must empower learners to design, redesign, and re-position their stance as necessary in the time they are living. Knowledge is time-relevant and requires constant review to gain new perspectives that serve the current social, political, and economic environment. It is for this reason that critical literacy is essential for learners to engage with the relevant issues affecting them now and in the future. Critical literacy helps learners to use language to question their everyday world experiences (Vasquez, Janks & Comber 2019).

2.3.7 Criticality with text in the classroom

In an English classroom, critique of texts is important as learners will not just read texts for meaning but will also engage deeply to uncover biases and injustices. Macedo (1987) believed that reading the word is simultaneously about reading the world and that our reading of any text is mediated through our day-to-day experience and the places and spaces that we encounter and occupy, together with the languages we use (Macedo & Freire, 1987; Vasquez et al., 2019). Similarly, each text we read projects a world to which it relates,

and, inherently, the beliefs and values of the society it represents. In other words, text embeds the feelings, opinions, and values of the person who wrote it, or the group of people it represents. It is thus important that the text is read with criticality.

Being critical comes with the ability to be open to many perspectives. Critical literacy encourages learners to explore and reflect on the possibilities of the world, being empathetic to social issues such as social justice, and developing into responsible citizens. These are the primary goals of critical literacy. Being critical of power or challenging hegemony is viewed as revolutionary and labelled as rebellious, but education is revolutionary by nature—it is a political act (Apple 1992; Freire, 1970, Giroux 1990), and its goal should be change. Because of critical pedagogy's stance, teachers who adopt this approach are often perceived as holding revolutionary ideologies and frequently encounter trouble with the "power", as Peter McLaren (2010) has pointed out in *Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy*. Scholars of critical pedagogy and critical thinking, such as Paulo Freire and Karl Marx, had at one point in their lives been jailed or interrogated by the authorities. Education that critiques power is considered unfriendly and toxic. It follows that equipping learners with critical skills will be viewed as a political rather than an academic endeavour; however, this should not discourage teachers. Critical literacy is perceived as political due to its fundamental principles that encourage challenging the status quo. Critical literacy remains a crucial goal, as it can bring about much-needed social transformation.

2.3.8 Praxis as a driver for social transformation

Education seeks to transform society, and at the centre of critical pedagogy in education is praxis. Freire (1972) described praxis as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1972:52). Freire believed that it is not enough for people to study the world, recognise its problems, and do nothing about them; he further argued that people have a responsibility to act to create a more just world. Burke, (2018); Freire (1972); White (2007) & Zuber-Skerritt, (2001) all share the belief that praxis is a liberator and a necessity for

human life. These scholars believe that praxis is committed to social justice and creates change, and recognises the importance of considering the social, political and economic implications of practice and research (Stuart, 2020). Praxis is thus a driver for change and social transformation, linking theory to practice and action.

In an English classroom, this realisation converts the knowledge of learners into the question: *What* can be done to inspire social transformation or achieve social justice? The response to the *What* question is the appropriate action the learners will undertake to address issues in society. It follows then that praxis needs reflection of self, morals, and society, and for one to act truly and rightly with a further concern for humanity and a better world for all.

Praxis is a practical response to a perceived state of injustice. In South Africa, for example, the #FeesMustFall campaign is a product of emancipatory and critical education acting on what the learners believe to be an injustice in education. Movements such as this exemplify praxis in action. Protesting is a right enshrined in the Constitution as a way for the aggrieved party to present its grievances. This can only be achieved when the aggrieved party is conscientised and has gained emancipatory knowledge. Social movements, such as the #FeesMustFall movement, are pivotal in shaping policy direction, public perception, and politics, which are crucial to achieving social transformation. Praxis in an English classroom would thus mean learners are able to influence the direction of their learning and be vocal on issues of democracy and justice. Santos in Vally (2020) argues that colonial residues continue to thrive and dictate access to success with the greater disadvantage experienced by people of colour, stating that these “are manifestations and exemplifications of colonial bifurcation agenda perpetuated by colonial mentality of inequality” (Vally, 2020:7). There is a need to rethink education in former colonial states, and this has given a rise to decolonial perspective that challenges the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems and advocates for more inclusive and contextually relevant curriculums. A decolonisation of education ensures the recognition of diverse ways of knowing, particularly those

historically marginalised within formal education. Scholars such as Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argue that decolonising the curriculum requires interrogating power relations embedded in knowledge production and prioritising indigenous epistemologies (Smith, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). In this regard, Henry Giroux's (2018) work is particularly relevant, as he positions education as a political act that can either reproduce or challenge social inequalities. From Giroux's perspective, a decolonised curriculum has the potential to empower learners to critically engage with dominant narratives, thereby encouraging democratic participation, equality, and social justice. By disrupting hierarchical knowledge systems and amplifying marginalised voices, decolonising education becomes a transformative tool for creating a more just and equitable society. It is especially important that learners are taught to be critical thinkers from a young age, so that they develop empathy and are poised to challenge any oppressive tendencies they may encounter in life. Critical literacy is thus important for conscientising learners and teaching them about social justice.

Through reading various texts, learners are exposed to critical thinking and learn to appreciate multiple perspectives and value other people's opinions and cultures. In a critical pedagogy classroom, learners will read text with context, and it is through this that they will gain critical consciousness, resulting in transformative praxis. Education has a moral obligation to empower learners to be critically and morally conscious. This is considered an important part of identity formation, with implications for one to do things that are morally right (Maseko, 2018).

Issues pertaining to social justice should not be viewed in favour of only the previously disadvantaged, but rather holistically, including the oppressors. This is because justice cannot be realised as long as there is still another group of people in society who are or might remain marginalised in accessing and enjoying democracy and justice.

2.3.9 Role of critical pedagogy and conscientisation in the

classroom

As discussed in the previous sections, critical pedagogy plays a significant role in shaping identity and preparing learners to act against acts of injustice. Freire's critical pedagogy emphasises the struggle to liberate the marginalised (Shih, 2018:66). Liberation of the mind and from political, social, cultural, and economic oppression is key to social transformation. Critical pedagogy encourages conscientisation and the development of solutions to oppressive systems and tendencies. Learners who are conscientised are better equipped to address issues related to inequalities and social injustice.

In the classroom, teachers have a task to adopt methods that encourage the awakening of learners' conscience and prompt a sense of urgency to practical solutions. Teachers, as agents of change and revolution, need to use materials and topics that facilitate dialogue and critique. The need for teachers to spearhead the discourse for critical pedagogy in the classroom is supported by Nouri and Sajjadi (2014), who have also stated that education should create a democratic and just society (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). Critical pedagogy promotes an education that seeks justice in all spheres of human existence. The adoption of learner-centred pedagogy in the classroom is one way to engage learners meaningfully in the learning process and, at the same time, build their confidence in participating. When learners participate in the learning process, they take charge and assume responsibility for their education, which forms part of their responsible citizenship. Critical pedagogy enables learners to rediscover the realities and possibilities in their lives, enabling them to negotiate and find ways to liberate themselves by exposing dominant cultures and ideologies (Shih, 2018). Creating a positive classroom atmosphere through democratic leadership and freedom in the classroom can foster a good climate to nurture confidence and cultivate critical thinking. Teachers who provide their learners with the space to engage freely in critical discussions in class encourage learners to participate actively in society. Conscientisation without the freedom to exercise this and evaluate the knowledge gained would result in a theoretical rhetoric without practicality. Norton and Toohey (2004) argue that critical pedagogy strives to promote learners' critical consciousness to be

conscious of their socio-political environments and to confront the status quo, with the goal to transform their classrooms and society at large (Norton & Toohey, 2004). In support of Norton and Toohey (2004), Spivak (2023) argues that marginalised voices are often silenced within dominant knowledge systems, highlighting the need to create spaces where subaltern perspectives can be heard. It is essential that teachers who promote critical pedagogy create a space in their classrooms for learners to engage with issues of leadership, critique, and discourse, which are the core principles of critical pedagogy.

Giroux (1988) has averred that knowledge is legitimised in the classroom in addition to challenging existing forms of knowledge to legitimise the subjugated ones and form new knowledge (Giroux, 1988). Giroux's assertions highlight the significance of critical pedagogy in the classroom and its potential to shape society. The need for a more balanced and just society is an ideology that will continue to evolve over time. In other words, social justice is an infinite concept, meaning that what is considered just today may be deemed unjust tomorrow, as the politics of a specific time dictate what is right and wrong. As knowledge continues to improve and evolve, and people become more conscious, they will see the need to rethink and rediscover the existing ideologies, tendencies, and practices. It is thus important that knowledge be current, critical, and dialogic to serve the interests, needs, and standards of those living at a specific time. Critical pedagogy and conscientisation play a vital role in the classroom, as they prepare future candidates who will fight for the way they expect to live and for future generations.

In the classroom, teachers and learners should have a partnership with the same goal, which is to realise social justice. In this partnership, teachers should continuously pose problems for learners to solve. Freire (1970) referred to this as problem-solving education, and Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) have referred to teachers as *problem posers*. Problem-posing education can be achieved through critical pedagogy in a democratic space where the mind is not shackled or sanctioned through repressive and oppressive practices.

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 2 presented the literature review, examining the history of social justice and how it is contextualised in South African education. A review of the literature has shown that critical literacy can be used in the teaching of social justice in the classroom. The sources reviewed focus on the *what* of critical literacy without aligning it to the attainment of social justice ideals in the classroom. In comparison, this study fills a knowledge gap, focusing on the *how* of critical literacy by aligning it to the realisation of social justice principles and values in the classroom, such as love, respect, fairness, inclusion, equality, and empowerment. The previous studies were carried out in different historical contexts or geographical boundaries using participants of age groups and backgrounds different from those used in this study. Lastly, this study used participatory action research (PAR) creating a methodological gap between this study and the sources reviewed, which used different research designs. The data from the literature, as presented in this chapter, is compared with the empirical data obtained from this study, as presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 2 further discussed the theoretical framework used in this study and traced the origins of critical literacy, exploring how it is positioned within the South African education system. The research methodology used in this study is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the processes I used to investigate the role of critical literacy in teaching social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom. The chapter further articulates the design, paradigm, approach, procedures, and data collection processes employed to answer the research questions. In addition, the chapter discusses the selection of participants and the cycles of participatory action research (PAR) as applied. Lastly, the chapter discusses measures of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations that were applied in this study.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR THE EMPIRICAL INQUIRY

I chose to employ empirical research in this study for several reasons. Firstly, empirical research in education “describes the epistemological theory that regards experience as a foundation of knowledge” (Aspin 1995:21). This means that knowledge is based on observable data and conclusions derived from data and experience. This study employed a qualitative empirical inquiry, with elements of autoethnography, because it is compatible with the methods used to collect the data needed to answer the research questions under investigation. By observing how critical literacy can be used in the teaching of social justice in the classroom, this study is well-positioned for empirical inquiry, as empirical inquiry relies on experiences and observations as the foundation for establishing new knowledge.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design sums up the ultimate plan connecting the conceptual research problems to relevant and accomplishable empirical research (Asenahabi, 2019; Creswell, 2014). In social science research, three types of

research design can be distinguished: Action research (AR), participative research (PR), and Participatory Action Research (PAR). These three methods operate on a continuum, sharing some similarities but differing in purpose, influence on participants, and the role of the researcher, as well as the *emergent property* (Boga, 2004). Thiollent (2011) avers that AR and PR are divergent research types with distinct origins. The PAR approach originated from liberation theory and certain practices considered as consciousness raising, which became popular in Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s in education and religious and social contexts particularly influenced by Freire (Thiollent, 2011). The PR method aims to create an environment and process that facilitates the emergence of context-bound knowledge, thereby developing a *local theory* that can be understood and acted upon (Boga, 2004). Action research is considered a systematic method of inquiry, whereby teachers conduct research in their classrooms to improve their own practice. Action research is defined as “a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality of justice of their own social and educational practices” (Heydenrych, 2001:38). According to Elliott (1991:61), AR “is the study of a social situation with the aim of improving the quality of action within it.”

This study used PAR as the method of inquiry. The PAR approach can be understood as a revolutionary method of inquiry that seeks to intervene in social injustice (de Castro, 2016). It is considered a praxis method of inquiry directed at liberating the oppressed and restoring social justice (Cardno, 2003). According to Asenahabi (2019), PAR is a democratic method that enables the participation of all people, facilitating collaboration and establishing self-critical communities that allow people to reflect and theorise about their practices, and take action. In other words, PAR is people-centred and is viewed as an inquiry process that focuses on experiences of people who are oppressed, encouraging them to respond to their oppression. The PAR approach to inquiry is explicitly political and is clearly driven by values of social justice and transformation. In support of this, Koch and Kralik (2006) have added that PAR is an example of qualitative inquiry that is

considered democratic, equitable, liberating (Koch & Kralik, 2006), and is considered distinct from other qualitative methodologies as it is action oriented (Macdonald, 2012). Although PAR is by all length and breadth, a qualitative inquiry, it is unique in that it seeks to effect social transformation with specific action as its ultimate objective (Macdonald, 2012). Nelson (2017) asserts that PAR is a qualitative method of inquiry that focuses on building the capacity to participate in democratic processes and on liberating those who are marginalised (Buntu, 2019). My choice of PAR as a method of inquiry pivoted on the alignment of PAR with critical pedagogy, which is the theoretical framework underpinning this study. This study uses a qualitative approach, and PAR is a suitable qualitative method of inquiry that aligns with the research question the study aims to address. The central theme of this study revolves around critical literacy and social justice. In this context, PAR features aptly as a methodology that is congruent with the emancipation, empowerment, and liberation of the mind. Two critical roles are served by PAR: an educational role and an action role, both aimed at achieving the objectives of social transformation. It is in this regard that PAR can be seen as an appropriate qualitative research methodology for this study, as this study seeks to advocate, emancipate, and empower learners by using critical literacy to teach social justice.

3.3.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm can be described as the way humans perceive a phenomenon, their understanding of it, its underlying mechanisms, and the motivation to learn more about it (Adams, 2022). A paradigm is a way of thinking that is philosophical and sums up the researcher's worldview (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The researcher's world view can also be known as the researcher's perspective, as it includes a set of beliefs or thoughts that may influence the meaning and interpretation of data in a study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Babbie (2001) describes a paradigm as an important model or frame of reference that the researcher uses to establish their findings and reasoning (Zireva, 2014). Given the imperative of a paradigm in research, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) maintain that every research study must adhere to and upholds

the set of values, assumptions, beliefs, and standards of a particular paradigm (Kuyini & Kivunja, 2017). For this study, the critical paradigm was chosen. The ontological position of critical theorists is that of historical realism. Proponents of historical realism believe that reality exists, but it is influenced by many factors such as cultural factors, political factors, ethnicity, gender, and religion that interact to form a social system (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). The critical paradigm aligns with interpretivism. The interpretive researcher acknowledges that a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations (Pham, 2018, cited in Adams, 2022). Similarly, critical theory challenges the position of historical realism, maintaining that there is no single reality or knowledge, and it encourages us to critically examine our understanding of knowledge.

Owing to the nature of my research question, *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a South African Grade 5 English classroom?*, I chose the critical paradigm as the most appropriate framework to align with this research question. The critical paradigm supports research about social justice issues and seeks to address and redress the political factors, social factors, and economic factors that advance human struggle, conflict, social oppression, and the maintenance of unequal power structures. Critical theory is known as a transformative paradigm as it seeks to confront social oppression and promote social justice in the present situation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

3.3.2 Research approach

For this study, a qualitative research approach was chosen. Shank (2002:5) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning.” *Systematic* inquiry refers to inquiry that is consistent, well-organised, and guided by prescribed rules observed by members of the qualitative research community. *Empirical* inquiry refers to a method of inquiry that is grounded in the experiences of the participants. *Inquiry into meaning* suggests that the researcher tries to understand how others make sense of their experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) posit that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. In other words, in qualitative research, events are studied in natural settings and an interpretation of the

phenomena is based on the understanding of meaning attached to these events by people (Ospina, 2004). Qualitative research can be used in any scientific inquiry that aims to understand human attributes that are not quantifiable or scorable, such as the nature of human thought (Berry, Ellis, Woods, Schwien, Mullen and Yang, 2003). Concurring with Ospina (2004) and Berry et al., (2003), Creswell (2007) has argued that qualitative research is an approach that researchers use to investigate and understand the meaning that is attached to a human or social problem by a group of people or individuals. Qualitative research includes all forms of social inquiry that do not use numeric data. It includes all forms of data in words, such as textual analyses, conversation, discourse, and narrative analyses. Qualitative inquiry aims to understand the meaning of human action by describing the essential characteristics of social objects or human experience (cited in Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007).

3.3.3 Research strategy

According to Malhotra (2017), a research strategy is a plan of activity or scheme for searching for information, and for the assessment of it. Congruent to Malhotra's assertions, other researchers avow that a research strategy provides direction in research and comprises the process by which research is conducted (Wedawatta, Ingirige & Amaratunga, 2011). In this study, an exploratory case study is considered a suitable research strategy, as it aligns with the research objectives, the research questions, and the philosophical underpinnings that anchor the study.

3.3.3.1 Exploratory case study

There are various types of case studies, including those that are illustrative, explanatory, phenomenological, and instrumental. This section distinguishes between case studies and exploratory case studies. Exploratory case studies serve to provide insight into the structure of a phenomenon or to develop a hypothesis, model, or theory (Pride, Ferrell, Lukas, Schembri, Niininen & Casidy, 2017). In comparison, case studies investigate the relationship between variables to provide extensive insights and understanding of a phenomenon.

This comprehensive understanding is conveyed through thick description, a process that entails a thorough examination of the entity being evaluated, the conditions under which it is studied, and the qualities of the individuals involved, as well as the characteristics of the community in which it is located (Kakulu, 2014).

Creswell (2013:97) asserts that in case study research the researcher explores a “real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information.” In an exploratory case study, research questions are empirically investigated to gain an understanding of complex issues, identify key issues, and generate ideas for further research (Yin, 2014). In this study, the research comprised an intervention on how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice. Social justice is a social phenomenon, thereby providing justification for an exploratory case study as an appropriate research strategy. In line with the above assertion, Seaton and Schwier (2014) argue that an exploratory case study can be used where there is no single set of outcomes expected. The nature of the intervention in this study is open to multiple possibilities that are not tied to a single reality. Exploratory case studies employ open-ended questions, which comprise structured questions with unstructured responses, where respondents provide answers in their own words (Makwara, 2020).

Based on the reasons discussed in this section, an exploratory case study strategy is a suitable strategy for this study. For Yin (2014:7), the purpose of an exploratory case study is “to answer 'how' or 'what' questions,” and it is an appropriate approach when a researcher wants to get an extensive and in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon. Furthermore, the exploratory case study method supports the use of multiple data collection methods, further justifying the rationale behind the choice of this research strategy for this study. An exploratory case study is also more compatible with theoretical frameworks, as used in this study, whereas a case study typically employs a conceptual framework (Seaton & Schwier, 2014). Using an exploratory case study for this

research sheds light on a complex issue and can expand on what is already known from previous research.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods refer to the tools used to conduct research, as well as to the various procedures, schemes, and algorithms employed in research. Thus, all the methods used by a researcher during a research study are collectively referred to as research methods (Goundar, 2012). This study employed observations (Appendix A), an intervention comprising six lessons (Appendices B–G), learners’ reflective diaries (Appendix H), and a researcher’s reflective journal (Appendix I) as research instruments to collect data.

3.4.1 Selection of participants

This section about the selection of participants discusses the concepts of the study population, sampling, and sampling techniques, and how these were applied in this study. In this study, the *population* refers to the demarcated sample of people or clearly defined group to whom the findings and the discussions, as well as the implications can be applied (Sampson, 2012). Punch and Oancea (2014) argue that the concept of a population in research refers to the total target group of potential participants about whom the researcher is trying to make a statement (Mufanechiya, 2020). In this study, the population consists of 24 Grade 5 English learners and their teacher, a participant researcher, in a classroom in the Western Cape.

Sampling can be described as a process where a researcher searches for and chooses participants, situations, or contexts that will provide rich data on a problem under investigation or a phenomenon of interest (Moser and Korstjens, 2018). Berry et al.,(2003) asserts that a sample contains various forms of information concerning the group being examined. LeCompte and Preissle, posit that any sampling strategy employed in qualitative research can be described as “criterion-based selection”, meaning that it is based on the criteria

chosen by the researcher (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:369). Participant selection is a crucial aspect of any research project, as it affects the quality and validity of the research findings. Purposive sampling selects samples with characteristics that are purposely relevant to the study (Andrade, 2021). This study employed purposive sampling to collect sufficient information to answer the research questions. In support of this dictum, Flick (2017) asserts that the most important idea informing purposive sampling is to select participants who can provide rich information with regards to answering the research questions.

There are 984 public primary schools in the Western Cape Province (Department of Basic Education, 2018; IOL, March 2021). My choice of a school in which to conduct my research was motivated by factors such as geographical proximity to me, as the researcher, and learner diversity. This study focused on a single, urban, private school in the Western Cape, situated adjacent to an informal settlement. The Department of Basic Education divides schools in South Africa into five categories known as quintiles. “Quintile one schools are those schools that serve the poorest communities, and quintile five schools are those schools that serve the least poor communities” (White Paper 5, 2005:8). Although this school does not fall under the quintile system ranking because it is privately funded, it serves learners from poor backgrounds.

The government uses the poverty indicators of literacy and unemployment levels in a community as the indices to determine a school’s quintile ranking. Poor schools are classified as quintiles one, two, and three and are declared no-fee-paying schools, receiving a higher state subsidy than the affluent schools classified as quintiles four and five. The purpose of ranking schools according to quintile levels is to address inequalities of the past. As this research is grounded in social justice, I deemed it appropriate to conduct the research in a school where learners are directly affected by issues of social justice, particularly inequality. I was also interested in the fact that the school is diverse, multicultural, and multiracial. These factors make it unique amongst schools and provided a fair representation of the diverse nation of South Africa. Most learners attending this school come from the neighbouring township, which has

a historically disadvantaged past.

The participants in this study were one Grade 5 English teacher and a total of 24 learners. I chose a small sample size to support extraction of detailed and in-depth data. My decision on the sample size was influenced by the scope of the research, the nature of the topic, and the data collection methods I used, as well as adherence to the delimitation of what constitutes an acceptable sample size (Bertaux, 1981; Creswell, 1998). By using an exploratory case study, I was able to observe, collect, and generate data that met the standard sample size requirements, yielding balanced results by qualitative research standards.

3.4.2 Data collection

Data collection is a process of systematically gathering and assessing information on variables of interest to help a researcher answer a specific research question, test hypothesis, and analyse results (IJRAR, 2018). This definition aligns with what was discussed about data collection in Chapter 1, section 1.7.2.2, based on the work of Flick (2017), and adds that data are collected with the intent to *make meaning*. The methods used to collect data in this study are congruent to its theoretical and methodological position. As discussed in Chapter 1, section 1.7.2.2, data collection methods should be chosen in consistency with the practical foundations of the philosophy, theory, and methodology used in a study (Kakulu, 2014). This study used an exploratory case study and different data collection methods. The methods and instruments used in this study were thus chosen in alignment with Kakulu's assertion. The use of multiple sources in this study enhanced the trustworthiness of the data collected (Nkabinde, 2021).

Exploratory case studies have a very narrow focus, resulting in detailed, descriptive data unique to the case being studied. Although PAR is a qualitative design, it follows a distinct research pattern, comprising cycles or phases that must be followed. It comprises four critical phases, or cycles, as envisaged by Bonser and Grundy (1988), where phase 1 of the cycle is the diagnosis phase, which involves recognising and analysing a problem before drawing up a strategic intervention plan (Heydenrych, 2001). Phase 2 of the cycle is the action phase, which involves implementation of the strategic plan adopted in phase 1. In this study, it was an intervention using Picower's framework (2012). In this study, phase 3, termed the measurement phase, entailed gathering the learners' critical reflections and my critical observations "documenting the effects of critically informed action using appropriate methods and techniques" (Heydenrych, 2001:43). In phase 3, I used the learner's reflective diaries to measure the effectiveness of the action plan. In phase 4, which involved reflection and evaluation), I "evaluated and reflected on the results, making sense of how the whole process spanned out, making sense of the evidence" (Heydenrych, 2001:44). Figure 3.1 explains the cycles of PAR.

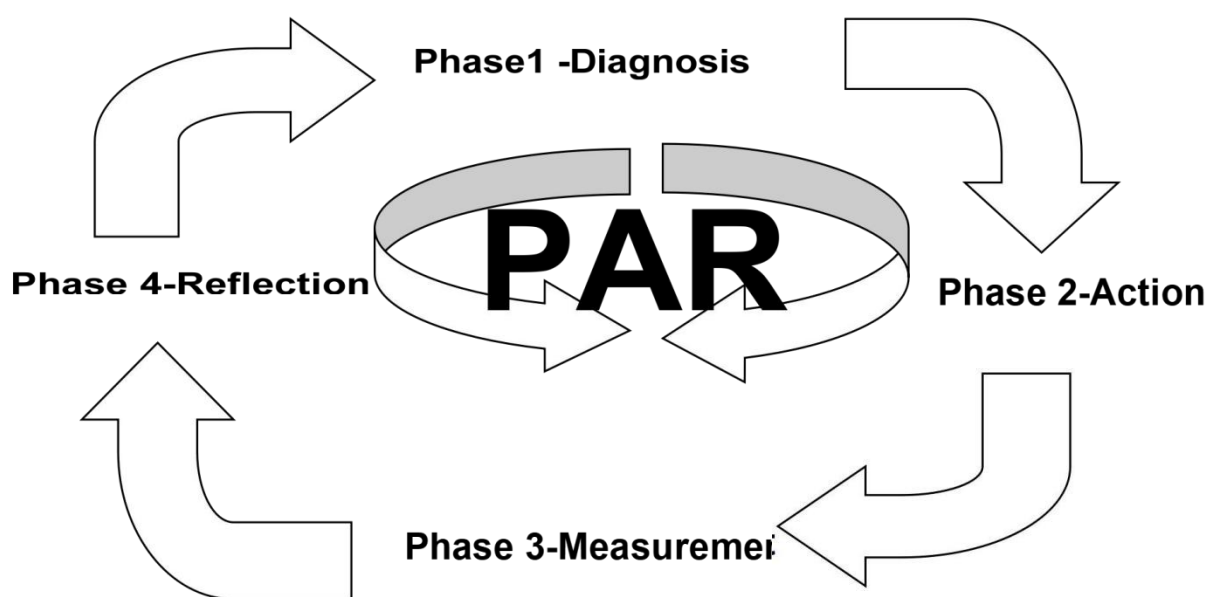


Figure 3.1: Cycles of participatory action research (PAR) (James, Milenkiewicz & Bucknam, 2008)

3.4.2.1 Cycles in PAR

Figure 3.1 illustrates the processes and stages of PAR, highlighting its cyclic and iterative nature. By using PAR in this study, I benefited from the rigour that each phase offered. According to Kock, McQueen and Scott (1997:2), "PAR increases rigour at each cycle as disconformity evidence from the practitioner in further iterations helps practitioners correct distortions created by personal assumptions and historical memory."

3.4.2.2 (i) Phase 1 diagnosis (Based on a literature review and observations)

Phase 1 involves diagnosing the problem. It articulates what the problem is. Phase 1 of this study identified social injustice as the recalcitrant problem that inspired the study's focus. This diagnosis is articulated in the problem statement of this study, and the motivation for the study is presented in the rationale (see Chapter 1, sections 1.2 and 1.5). An extensive literature review was conducted to establish what has been written by other scholars on the topic under study (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). Having identified the study's niche, I assessed the relevance and importance of the study to me, the research community, and society as a whole. Phase 1 in the PAR cycle was addressed through an extensive review of the literature. Additionally, in support of the literature, I documented my reflections as a teacher over the past few years. As a teacher, I managed to reflect on issues of social justice and injustices, and how these shaped learners' moral duty and civil obligations. I have observed how learners interact with each other in the classroom, on the playground, and in other places where I would accompany my learners, such as on school outings. These reflections were recorded in the researcher's reflective journal.

Observations, the researcher's reflective journal, and a critical literature review were important instruments used in the diagnosis made during phase 1. The data gathered using these instruments were crucial in informing and planning how I (the researcher), would develop an action plan for phase 2 of the research process.

3.4.2.2 (ii) Phase 2-action plan (Intervention plan)

For my intervention, I used Picower's (2012) framework of six elements to teach social justice. Picower's framework provides a framework for teachers to integrate key concepts of social justice education into their lessons, offering strategic guidance to help them move from theory to practice. Picower identified the following six elements in his framework: self-love and knowledge, respect for others, issues of social injustice, social movements and social change, awareness raising, and social action (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Picower's elements of social justice (Picower, 2012)

ELEMENT ONE Self-love and Knowledge:	Provides learners with the opportunity to identify themselves and their origins.
ELEMENT TWO Respect for Others:	Provides learners with the opportunity to showcase their cultural background with their classmates.
ELEMENT THREE Issues of Social Injustice:	Provides learners with the opportunity to learn about the history of oppression and how oppression affects different people, and to celebrate diversity.
ELEMENT FOUR Social Movements and Social	Provides learners with examples of historic movements by ordinary

Change:	people or iconic individuals standing together to address the social injustice issues they learned about in Element Two.
ELEMENT FIVE Awareness Raising	Provides a platform and opportunities for learners to educate others about the issues they have learned about.
ELEMENT SIX Social Action:	Provides opportunities to take action on issues that affect learners and their communities.

3.4.2.2 (ii a) Rationale for using Picower's six-elements framework for teaching social justice

I used Picower's (2012) six-elements framework to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English Home Language classroom. The rationale for my choice of this framework is based on its alignment with the theory underpinning this study, namely, critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy teaches learners to think critically and question the information they are given. According to Picower's framework, addressing the six elements of social justice helps to develop the learner's analysis and understanding of what constitutes oppression, enabling them to plan a course of action against it (Picower, 2012).

Picower's assertions are closely aligned with the Freirean perspective, which emphasises the need for critical pedagogy education with praxis as the goal. My choice of Picower's framework was further motivated by the fact that it enables me to incorporate critical literacy into a Grade 5 classroom, teaching social justice. The six elements begin with learners learning about self-love to gain knowledge about their identity and origins and to learn respect for other people. Learners also explore social injustice and learn about social

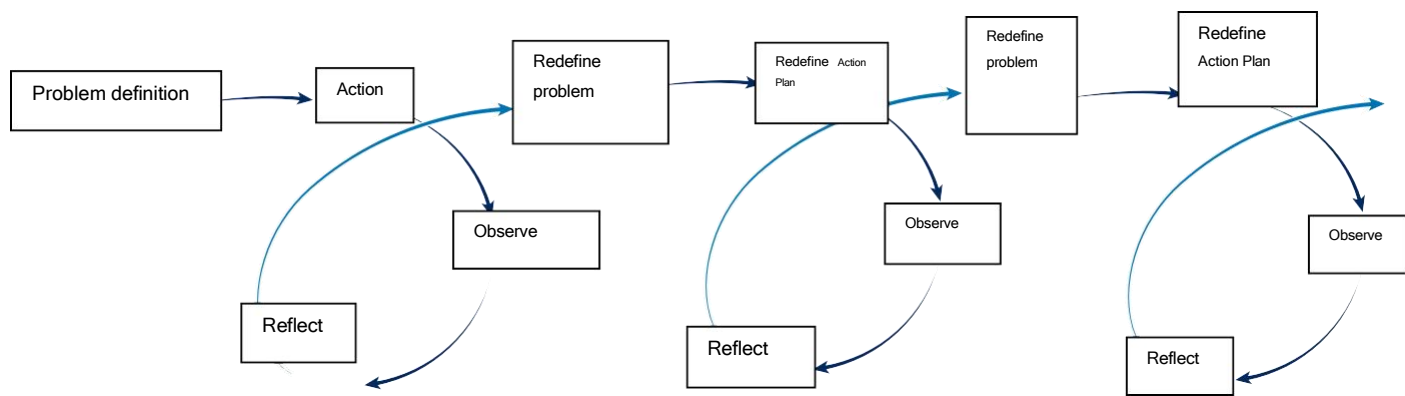
movements, increasing their awareness of social justice, and they participate in activism. By addressing all six elements, learners develop an analysis of oppression and the tools to act against it (Picower, 2012). Lastly, I chose Picower's framework because of its compatibility and applicability in a classroom with Grade 5 learners.

3.4.2.2 (iii) Phase 3-measurement

Phase 3 involved measuring the effectiveness of the intervention plan in helping learners become conscious of social justice through critical literacy. In other words, phase 3 involved observing the action plan to determine its success. I observed and recorded how the learners approached the different lessons with criticality. To measure this, I used the learners' reflective diaries. Phase 3 provided me with an opportunity to assess the impact of the action plan using the researcher's reflective journal.

3.4.2.2 (iv) Phase 4-reflection

In phase 4, the findings were obtained, and reflection on the effectiveness of the action plan was conducted. The four PAR cycles each have a specific action, and the PAR approach assumes that the researcher repeats the cycles if the first four cycles do not give satisfactory responses to the research question. In other words, the researcher restarts the process (redefining the problem, redefining the action plan, observing, and reflecting) until no gap exists and no further questions can be asked. Hence, PAR is an iterative process. Phase 4 enables the researcher to explore alternative options by providing the opportunity to redefine the problem and restart the cycle, as illustrated in Figure 3.2. This study was completed in a single cycle, comprising four phases of PAR: problem identification, action, observation, and reflection.



activities (Williams, 2021). In this study, I observed Grade 5 English Home Language learners and designed lesson plans. The learners were observed to see how well they understood and incorporated the principles and values of social justice in the classroom. This is important because the ability of learners to become aware of and practice the skills, values, and attitudes that advance social justice means that they have become conscientised about social justice and its value in their lives. Learners should be able to practice in their classroom, on their playgrounds, or anywhere in their environment against acts of injustice. An observation schedule was used (see Appendix A) to guide the aspects to be observed. By working collaboratively with learners, I was better able to understand what informed their understanding, history, or background that may have driven them to adopt a certain way of thinking, judgment, or moral consciousness. In this study, overt observation was the preferred choice, as the participants were aware of being observed (Kawulich, 2012:21).

Observation also requires that the researcher takes field notes and records and documents the process. Holloway (2005) refers to field notes as a comprehensive documentation and description of participants' actions, as well as a thorough reflection by the researcher on the collected data. This serves to ensure that the researcher does not forget any of the observations by keeping a detailed record of events or behaviour (Holloway, 2005).

3.5.2 Intervention comprising of six lessons

3.5.2.1 Teaching element one: Self-love and knowledge

To teach element one, I provided learners with an opportunity to develop their sense of self-love and knowledge of self by writing positive affirmations about themselves and their culture. Promoting self-love and self-awareness is integral to fostering a sense of empowerment and resilience among learners. Picower's (2012) six elements of social justice provide a framework that emphasises the importance of addressing inequalities and dynamics of power in classrooms or schools. By incorporating self-love into the educational

curriculum, teachers can create an encouraging environment for learners to embrace their identities, appreciate their worth, and develop a positive self-image. This aligns with Picower's emphasis on fostering self-empowerment and dismantling oppressive structures within educational institutions.

Furthermore, cultivating self-love contributes to the development of critical consciousness, one of the key elements highlighted by Picower. Learners who possess a strong sense of self-worth are more likely to critically examine societal norms and challenge systemic injustices. Teaching learners about self-love also encourages them to recognise and appreciate diversity, aligning with Picower's commitment to creating inclusive educational spaces that celebrate differences and challenge oppressive ideologies.

Incorporating self-love and knowledge in the classroom is also crucial for addressing the element of collective responsibility. As learners develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their interconnectedness with others, they are better equipped to engage in collective efforts to promote justice and equity. This aligns with Picower's emphasis on fostering collaboration and collective action to challenge systemic injustices. By nurturing self-love, I aim to inspire a sense of agency in learners, empowering them to make positive contributions to their communities and advocate for social change.

Ultimately, teaching learners about self-love and knowledge of self-aligns with Picower's social justice framework by creating a foundation for dismantling oppressive structures, fostering critical consciousness, advancing inclusion, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility. These elements work collectively to develop socially conscious individuals who are prepared to engage actively in creating a more just and equitable society.

Objective of element one: Learners must be able to love themselves and appreciate others. To teach the first element of Picower's elements of social justice, I designed a lesson with two activities.

3.5.2.1(i) Lesson 1 (See Appendix B)

Activity One: The first activity was a writing task in which learners were asked to write 10 positive sentences about themselves and their culture. This activity was designed to encourage learners to see themselves and their culture in a positive light, thereby appreciating who they are and feeling a sense of pride. The learners each had a turn to read their sentences aloud to the class. This was done to help learners better understand their classmates and the cultures that they come from.

Activity Two: The second activity was also a writing activity. In this activity, I asked learners to write five positive things about the person sitting next to them and their culture. This activity was important as it enabled learners to think and reflect on the positive qualities of their peers and their culture. I hoped this would encourage learners to see each other and their cultures in a positive way.

Conclusion: After lesson 1, learners reflected in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. What makes you proud of your culture? Begin with the words: Today I am proud to be abecause.....
2. Choose another culture that you heard about in class (different from your own) and write a paragraph on why you think that culture is special.

3.5.2.2 Teaching element two: Respect for others

Element two of Picower's framework focuses on respect for others and builds on element one, which is self-love. In teaching these elements, learners are encouraged to love themselves before extending that love and respect to others. Element two also emphasises the need to understand and respect other cultures. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of promoting cultural awareness and inclusivity to create a harmonious and diverse classroom environment. By teaching this element, learners can develop empathy, reduce stereotypes, and contribute to a more tolerant, culturally sensitive classroom, which ultimately lead to them respecting everyone in their classroom,

community, and society.

Objective of element two: Learners must respect and appreciate the diversity within their own classroom. To teach element two, I designed a lesson with a single activity.

3.5.2.2(i) Lesson 2 (See Appendix C)

Activity One: This activity was an oral activity. On this day, learners came to school dressed in their cultural attire and prepared a show-and-tell presentation about a celebration in their culture. The aim of this lesson was for learners to experience different cultures and gain a better understanding of these cultures. An activity like this fosters an appreciation for diverse cultures and promotes mutual respect among individuals.

Conclusion: After lesson 2 had been completed, learners reflected in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. What does respect for people mean to you, and how do you see it reflected in your classroom, school, or community?
2. Share an experience where you learned something new about a cultural tradition or celebration different from your own. How did this experience make you feel, and what did you learn from it?

3.5.2.3 Teaching element three: Issues of social injustices

Element three of Picower's framework emphasises the importance of developing critical consciousness and a sense of social responsibility among learners. In a Grade 5 English classroom, integrating discussions on social injustices aligns with the broader educational goals of promoting equality, developing critical thinking skills, and enhancing communication skills. Learners become critically conscious by analysing the struggles of characters and the societal contexts portrayed in the texts they read. Moreover, addressing social injustices in the English classroom promotes social justice and cultural

awareness, helping learners to develop a broader perspective on human experiences.

Furthermore, teaching issues of social injustices also cultivates a sense of responsibility, empowering young minds to become informed and active citizens capable of challenging inequalities. By incorporating these discussions, teachers create space for meaningful dialogue, encouraging learners to articulate their thoughts, challenge assumptions, and engage in respectful debates that contribute to their personal and intellectual growth. Ultimately, integrating social justice issues into the English classroom equips learners with the tools to navigate a complex world and encourages them to become advocates for positive change.

Objective of element three: Learners develop an understanding of social injustices in South Africa, focusing on historical and contemporary issues.

To teach element three of Picower's elements of social justice, which focuses on issues of social injustice, I designed two activities.

3.5.2.3(i) Lesson 3 (See Appendix D)

Prior to this lesson, I asked the learners to talk to their parents, guardians, aunts, and uncles to find out if any of them had lived during Apartheid. They were tasked to go and ask their parents and relatives what it was like to go to school, the hospital, restaurants, and beaches during Apartheid. The purpose of this task was for learners to have a better understanding of social injustices before I taught it, using Apartheid as an example. Members from these multi-generational homes were encouraged to use their home language to explain their experiences, making it easy for the learners to understand.

Activity One: To teach this activity, I led a class discussion on the concepts of fairness and equality. As a stimulant for this lesson, I showed the learners images of posters reading 'Whites Only', 'No Blacks Allowed' in trains, on beaches, and at restaurants, among many other places. After viewing the posters, I asked the learners to share their thoughts about the posters. I also

asked the learners to tell the class about their families' first-hand experience of Apartheid and the injustices they lived through. I asked learners to share their thoughts on what they believe is fair and what they consider unfair. In my discussion, I introduced the term *social injustice* and explained that it refers to unfair treatment or discrimination within a society. I further provided a simplified historical overview of social injustices in South Africa, focusing on Apartheid and its consequences. I discussed current social injustices in South Africa, including economic inequality, access to education, and healthcare disparities between the wealthy and the impoverished. I used Nelson Mandela's imprisonment as a case study to help learners connect historical injustices to ongoing challenges. I posed questions and encouraged dialogue about how these issues affected communities today.

Activity Two: This activity was a debate on inequality. For this activity, I drew on the discussion in Activity One about inequality and engaged learners in a debate. The topic for the debate was "Black and white people should live separately. Do you agree?" This activity encouraged learners to be conscious of multiple perspectives on issues of justice and to understand what social justice means in their lives.

Conclusion: After lesson 3 had been completed, learners reflected in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Write two paragraphs beginning with the following words:
 - a. To be fair is to be...
 - b. To be unfair is to be...
2. Write a paragraph beginning with the words: For me, social justice means...

3.5.2.4 Teaching element four: Social movement and social change

Teaching Picower's element four to Grade 5 learners in an English classroom provides a valuable opportunity to encourage critical thinking, activism, and

global awareness. At this developmental stage, learners not only hone their language skills but also begin to form their own perspectives on societal issues. Picower's element four explores the dynamics of social movements and their role in encouraging positive change. By introducing these concepts in an English classroom, learners can explore diverse narratives, develop language proficiency through discussions, and promote an understanding of the world beyond their immediate surroundings. This element encourages learners to engage with texts that showcase real-world examples of social change, empowering them to recognise their own agency in shaping a just and equitable society. Furthermore, incorporating these elements into an English classroom aligns with educational goals of promoting civic responsibility and preparing learners to be informed, compassionate global citizens.

Objective of element four: Learners learn about social movements and social change in South Africa, focusing on iconic figures who played key roles in bringing about positive transformation. I designed two activities to teach element four.

3.5.2.4(i) Lesson 4 (See Appendix E)

Activity One: I taught element four using stories of iconic people who led the revolution to fight oppression and injustices in South Africa. A list of people who fought for freedom in this country was presented, along with the challenges they faced during the struggle for freedom and justice. I read and discussed excerpts from newspapers on Apartheid activists, including Nelson Mandela, Helen Suzman, Solomon Mahlangu, Steve Biko, and Albertina Sisulu, among others. Learners also watched videos of the 2015 #FeesMustFall university student protests for equal access to quality and free education. This activity mirrored the social movements in the 1960s, 1970s, and the present day, which they learned about in their history class in Term 1. The learners encouraged each other to become aware of and engage with present-day social movements that have brought about change in South Africa. The learners participated in discussions on the role of social movements in facilitating dialogue with

aggrieved parties to achieve social justice.

Activity Two: This lesson ended with an activity that encouraged learners to write *thank you letters* to any anti-apartheid activist or present-day social activist for the sacrifices they had made. The learners then displayed these thank you letters in a *gallery walk* for all learners to view. Writing these letters served to honour those who sacrificed their lives and those who continue to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of others.

Conclusion: After lesson 4 had been completed, learners reflected in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Which social activist most inspires you?
2. What social cause has this activist fought for?
3. What benefits do you now enjoy in your life that were fought for by this activist?

3.5.2.5 Teaching element five: Raising awareness

Element five of Picower's framework for teaching social justice focuses on raising awareness of social justice issues. It is essential to educate learners about raising awareness of social justice, enabling them to become conscious and conscientious about social justice issues. When learners become conscious of social justice, they are empowered to confront issues of injustice. It also helps to develop empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility in young learners.

Objective of element five:

Learners must be aware of social justice and injustice issues in their lives. To teach element five, I designed an activity that gave learners the opportunity to teach each other about the social justice concepts they had learned in previous lessons.

3.5.2.5(i) Lesson 5 (See Appendix F)

Activity One: To teach element five, I used group work as it encourages collaboration among learners. The focus of this activity was for learners to share what they had learned about social justice in the previous lessons. Learners were put into groups of five. The small group size allowed every learner to participate in the group discussion. Each group was tasked with designing a poster to raise awareness about a social justice issue they had learned about in a previous lesson, such as equality, tolerance, or diversity. After designing the posters, each group presented their poster to the class. This provided learners with an opportunity to teach each other what they knew and had learned about social justice.

Conclusion: After lesson 5 had been completed, learners reflected in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Why did your group choose the social justice issue that you did?
2. Why is it important for you to raise learners' awareness about this social justice issue?

3.5.2.6 Teaching element six: Social action

Picower's element six, teaching social justice, focuses on social action and activism. Social action refers to learners participating in actions against issues of injustice and advocating for social justice and transformation. By teaching Picower's element six in a Grade 5 English classroom, I primed the learners' consciousness and empowered them with knowledge on how and why it is important to act against injustices. By introducing learners to social action and activism at a young age, I aimed to foster critical thinking skills while empowering them to become agents of positive change in their communities. Teaching learners about social action and activism in relation to social issues broadens their perspective on justice and fosters a deeper understanding of societal dynamics, encouraging them to critically examine and challenge injustices. Element six provides learners with an opportunity to test the knowledge they have learned from exploring all the other elements. Teaching social action to learners equips them with the tools and motivation to advocate

for a better world where social justice becomes an ideology that governs society.

Objective of element six: Learners must be able to organise and participate in social action campaigns against injustices. To teach element six, I designed a lesson that provides learners with an opportunity to participate in solving real-life problems and in groups.

3.5.2.6(i) Lesson 6 (See Appendix G)

Activity One: To teach element six, I used group work and discussion as the methodology. The first part of the lesson was a discussion during which I explained and discussed with learners what social action is. The second part of the lesson was a role-play where I grouped learners to take on different roles in a typical real-life situation. The role play was based on a girl who was expelled from school for wearing a particular type of hairstyle. To introduce the lesson, I showed learners clips of social action in real life. These included the Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976, and the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign, and I provided the context and background against which these uprisings transpired. The reason for showing these videos was to encourage the Grade 5 learners to see how learners can stand together against forms of injustice. The videos were important because they provided real-life examples of learners collectively addressing issues of injustice. I explained to the learners that social action means people coming together to tackle an issue, such as tendencies of social injustice at home or in the community. I introduced the terms *protesting* and *picketing* and explained how these terms can be used as tools in social action. The discussion aimed to critically prepare learners to realise the costs and benefits of embarking on social action. Using this knowledge of social action, learners were tasked in groups to choose one aspect of social justice from their classroom or community that affects them and to plan a social action campaign that would bring about social justice for that issue.

Conclusion: After lesson six had been completed, learners reflected in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Do you think that social action campaigns can bring about change in our

society? Explain why you say this by providing an example.

2. Write a paragraph about one social action campaign that you can participate in that you think could bring about change in your school or community.

3.5.3 Learners' reflective diaries

Krishnan and Lee (2002) define diaries as first-person observations of experiences that are recorded over a period of time (Krishnan & Lee, 2002). These diaries or journals can be used as key qualitative data collection methods intended to "reveal existing phenomenon and generate hypothesis" (Yi, 2008:2. Learner diaries in this study were utilised to gather the experiences and reflections of learners on their journey of conscientisation, and to provide a phenomenological record of social justice by their understanding. Learner diaries can also be used for pedagogical purposes, for example, as effective communication channels between teachers and learners discussing their learning process or lessons given by the teachers (Yi, 2008). Through the learner diaries, I was able to collect rich data on how the learners experienced learning about issues of social justice.

3.5.4 Researcher's reflective journal

According to Yi (2008), teacher journals can be used in research as a qualitative data collection method. These journals can also be used for basic research for teachers to find out what the learners remember from their class (Howell-Richardson & Parkinson, 1988). In the same way that the learners' diaries were used by them, as the teacher-researcher, I also kept a record of my experiences in the classroom and my interactions with the learners. In my journal, I recorded my personal feelings and perceptions of issues related to classroom management, learner behaviours, discipline, freedom, democracy, and how I exercised power in the classroom. Using a reflective journal enables teachers to reflect on theory and their teaching practice, evaluation, and assessment (Yi, 2008).

3.5.4.1 Researcher positionality

In this study, my identity, values, and lived experiences informed both my understanding of social justice and my approach to teaching and research. I am a teacher at a school serving learners from previously disadvantaged backgrounds, the majority of whom live in informal settlements, and I believe in social justice. My views are influenced by Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, and Steve Biko, whose ideas about critical consciousness, emancipation, inequality, and liberation have shaped my pedagogical practices. I believe that education should empower learners to confront oppression, challenge injustice, and engage critically with the social realities that shape their lives. My role as both teacher and researcher in this study was to create a classroom space where learners could find their voices, engage critically in dialogue, and begin to recognise their potential as agents of social transformation.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a process through which data is organised, categorised, and summarised to extract answers for a specific research question. Data analysis is a systematic process that involves using statistical and logical techniques to describe, illustrate, condense, recap, and evaluate data. Richmond (2006) asserts that data analysis encompasses methods for working with information or data to support the objectives, goals, and plans of a research program or agency. Data analysis sums up the compendium, modelling, and interpretation of data to extract insights that support decision-making.

Three types of data analysis can be distinguished in qualitative research: thematic content analysis (TCA), textual analysis, and discourse analysis (Makaring, 2023). Bhandari (2023) has stated that discourse analysis is used to study communication and how language is used to achieve effects in specific contexts, whereas textual analysis is used to examine the content, structure, and design of texts. In comparison, TCA is used to identify and interpret patterns and themes in qualitative data (Makaring, 2023). For this study, data was analysed using TCA, which is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data (Anderson, 2007) and a common practice across many qualitative analytic

methods (Makaring, 2023).

Thematic content analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Clarke (2006) and King (2004), TCA is a suitable method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights (Nowell et al., 2017). In this study, TCA is the method of choice for data analysis, as the study focuses on a social phenomenon that can be effectively presented and described in thematic terms.

“Clarke and Braun’s” thematic interpretation can be summarised in a *spiral image* (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As shown in Figure 3.3, the data analysis spiral involves managing and organising data, then reading and memoing patterns or emergent ideas, followed by describing and classifying the data into codes and the codes into themes. Thereafter, interpretations are developed and assessed. The final step is representing and visualising the data (Bayne, 2020:39). In this study, data were collected, and thematic analysis was used to get the resultant account or narrative. The data analysis flow used in this study is summarised in Figure 3.3.

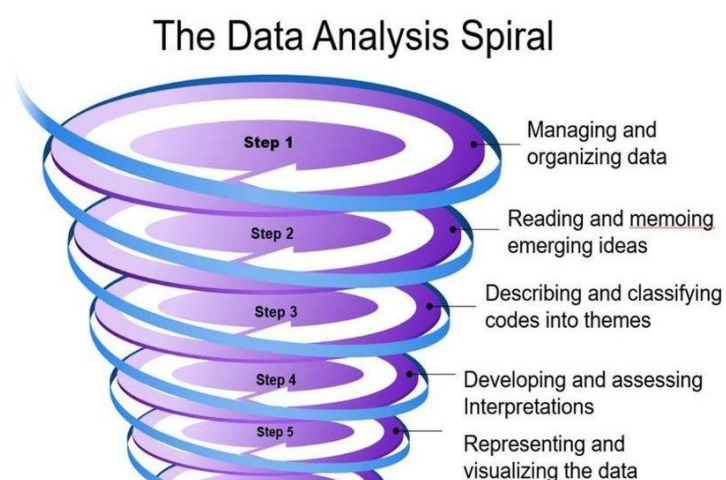


Figure 3.3: The Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell and Poth, 2018:185)

3.7 MEASURES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

The trustworthiness of research is measured and dictated by five elements, which provide validation yardsticks in research. In qualitative research, these elements are credibility, transferability, dependability, authenticity, and conformability (Mertens, 2015; Shenton, 2004).

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to “the concept of internal consistency” (Mufanechiya, 2020:116). It relates to confidence in the accuracy of the findings, demonstrating the truthfulness of the literature and the empirical data gathered. According to Sampson (2012), this concerns the accumulation of evidence that shows that the measures, findings, and discussion of findings provide a reasonably accurate answer to research questions (Mufanechiya, 2020:116). In this study, credibility was maintained through the collection of data from multiple sources using various methods of data collection, including classroom observations, the intervention, the learners’ reflective diaries, and the researcher’s reflective journal. I also used member checking to discuss preliminary findings with the learners as a way to further strengthen credibility.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the supply of adequate detail to enable readers to judge how applicable the findings are to other contexts. The findings should be comparable, and the data should be transferable to other settings or groups. Transferability enables readers of the research to make judgments based on similarities and differences, comparing the research situation to their own experiences (Mertens, 2015). This study is based on a single case; it is not intended to claim full generalisability. It provides in-depth insights into a specific context, which may offer transferable lessons under similar conditions. The limitations inherent in a single-case design are acknowledged, particularly regarding its broader applicability.

3.7.3 Dependability

Polit and Beck (2008) refer to dependability as providing stable data or evidence that the study's findings remain the same if repeated with similar participants in the same context (Polit & Beck, 2008). This means that review of the collected data by an independent coder should confirm the correctness of the data and give the same results (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). In this study, I employed careful documentation and an audit trail as a dependability strategy, systematically recording the research process. Careful documentation and an audit trail are essential for gathering documents that would enable other researchers to reach the same conclusions about the data (Polit & Beck, 2017). While doing this research, I kept all the records of the data collected during the study. Further, I recorded detailed descriptions of the data collection and data analysis processes. Detailed descriptions provide the reader with a clear path of how the researcher conducted the study. Providing an accurate and honest account of the research process, as well as the challenges encountered, is part of the audit trail.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the ability of the study to provide a chain of evidence linking the data to the conclusions reached, ensuring that the data are evaluated with objectivity and neutrality (Flick, 2018). In the views of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Speziale and Carpenter (2007), confirmability refers to the extent to which data findings and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than the researcher's personal constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007). In this study, the responses from participants were captured and recorded verbatim. This recording was used to ensure that the participant's responses were not altered, thereby maintaining maximum confirmability. The use of original documents and learners' responses to activities served as an audit trail for confirmability.

3.7.5 Authenticity

The authenticity of a study is generated through a truthful representation of the

participants' lived experiences. Any distortion of these experiences may compromise the study's validity and ultimately impact the results. Distortion may be influenced by several factors, such as opinions, beliefs, or other constraints, either within or outside the researcher's control. In this study, authenticity was ensured by using data collection and analysis methods that are genuine and credible (Malaza, 2018). Although authenticity is not traditionally included in the four elements of trustworthiness, this study aimed to position truthful presentation of learners' experiences, as well as those of the teacher-researcher. The issues of social injustice explored in this study are not foreign to the context of South Africa, nor is the role education has played in challenging these injustices. Therefore, focusing on the topic of social justice was as important for me as it was for the learners. This subject matter was authentic to the lives and history of the learners as they experienced it. In summary, I included authenticity as it "reflects the 'feeling' tone of participants' lives as they are lived by them" (Polit & Beck, 2017:560).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When dealing with people, animals, or organisations, there is a need to ensure the protection of entities involved or participants, especially where anonymity has been guaranteed. It is the researcher's responsibility to conform to the principles and rules of conduct. As de Vos et al., (2012) maintain, research should be based on mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, and clear expectations among all parties involved in the study. In line with this submission, authors are required to report on the ethical considerations of their research (Connelly, 2014). To satisfy this requirement, I sought ethical clearance (see Appendix J ; Appendix N; Appendix R and Appendix S)

3.8.1 Informed consent

According to Grinnell and Unrau (2008), respect for persons requires that subjects be given an opportunity to choose what shall or shall not happen to them, and that adequate information be furnished to participants before the

investigation (Grinnell & Unaru, 2008). Informed consent is an integral component of any research process. Permission should also be granted by the internal review board or review committee. For this study, the University of South Africa (UNISA) acted as the review committee, overseeing its ethical clearance review committee (refer to Appendix J). Informed consent from participants and permission from the university's ethical committee were sought (see Appendix P and Appendix Q).

The UNISA Policy on Research Ethics guides the ethical and scientific intellectual culture among the university's employees and students such that there is adherence to ethical research practice. This ensures that all rights and interests of participants, institutions, and the environment are protected. The protection of rights and interests is important, especially where the data collected has the potential to infringe on the privacy and dignity of participants and where participants and third parties are vulnerable. The vulnerability could be as a result of participants' age, disability, gender, poverty, ignorance, or powerlessness. In this study, all activities were done with scholarly integrity, excellence, social responsibility, and recommended ethical behaviour. As a result, the ethical and scientific soundness of the research was not compromised in any way (UNISA, 2016).

3.8.2 Avoidance of harm

Babbie (2020) argues that the fundamental ethical rule for social science research is that it should not cause harm to participants (Babbie, 2020). This study ensured that no harm was incurred, either through participation or indirectly through the release of information about participants. Privacy and anonymity were guaranteed; where participants' responses were quoted, these responses were labelled using letters and numbers to preserve the identity of the participants (see Appendix M).

3.8.3 Voluntary participation

Participation in a research study should be an open and voluntary process,

and no one should be forced or coerced to participate (de Vos et al., 2012). For this study, the participants participated of their own free will. Learners were informed before participating that their decision to participate or not would have no impact on their academic assessment or on their relationship with me as their teacher. Assent was obtained from the learners, and informed consent was obtained from their parents (see Appendices O and P, respectively). Learners were explicitly told that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. These measures were implemented to address the power imbalance inherent in the teacher–learner relationship and to ensure ethical research practices.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology; the rationale for the empirical inquiry used in this study; and discusses the research design, paradigm, approaches, strategy, and methods employed in the study. The chapter further discusses the sampling techniques used in the study, as well as the data collection methods employed. The chapter also introduces the cycles of PAR as a research design that is compatible with this study. Chapter 3 also discusses Picower's framework as the guiding framework for data collection on which the study's intervention was based. The next chapter will focuses on data presentation, analysis, and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presents the data collected for this research. It also highlights the research process used to collect the data and provides an analysis and interpretation of the data to answer the research questions. This study employed four research instruments, yielding three distinct sets of data. The data was gathered from observations, the intervention, learners' diaries, and the researcher's journal. The data were analysed using thematic content analysis to derive the themes that were interpreted to answer the research questions for this study.

4.2 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The aim of this study was to understand how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in an English classroom to empower learners to be social-justice conscious. To undertake this study, I employed the participatory action research (PAR) design. There are four cycles to PAR. The first cycle involves the diagnosis of a problem (see Appendix A). In this study, the problem was diagnosed as learners not being aware of social justice issues. The second cycle involves the action to solve the problem, and in this study, the action was a series of lessons referred to as a teaching intervention (see Appendices B–G). In this study, the third cycle involved measurement to determine the effectiveness of the action (see Appendix H). This was undertaken by me, as the researcher, when analysing the learners' reflective diaries. All 24 learners' diaries were used in my data generation. However, I discarded data from some diaries that contained duplicate or similar entries. The fourth cycle was reflection on the action plan (see Appendix I). I documented this in the researcher's reflective journal. Table 4.1 summarises the research process.

Table 4.1: The research process of this study

Research design - PAR	Data Set	Research Questions
Cycle 1 - Diagnosis	Date Set 1: Observation (Prior to the intervention)	- What critical literacy skills can be taught in an English classroom? - What social justice principles can be taught in an English classroom?
Cycle 2 - Action	Lesson Plans (intervention)	- What critical literacy skills can be taught in an English classroom? - What critical literacy skills and can be taught in an English classroom?
Cycle 3 - Measurement	Date Set 2: Learner's Diaries	- How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom in South Africa?
Cycle 4 - Reflection	Date Set 3: Teacher's Reflective Journal	- What teaching strategies and lesson activities support the promotion of social justice through critical literacy?

I initially planned on starting my intervention in the first week of July 2024. However, this did not go as planned because in July 2024, schools across the Western Cape Province, including mine, were hit by floods. This resulted in some learners, who live in informal settlements, not attending school because their homes were affected. These floods resulted in a delay in the commencement of my intervention. Once my learners returned to school, I allowed them to settle back into their routine before I began my intervention. I

wanted all my learners to participate in the intervention in a stress-free environment.

Despite the challenges that delayed the start of my intervention to generate the data, I experienced immense support from the school principal, the school management, and my colleagues. They supported me emotionally and provided me with access to the research site after school hours to assist in the successful completion of my data generation.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF DATA

Data presentation refers to the structuring, organisation, and showing of data collected during a study so that it is easier to read and understand. Different tools are used to communicate data such as tables, graphs, and summaries. This study used textual and tabular presentation.

4.3.1 Data set 1: Observation (Before the intervention)

The observations were conducted by the researcher before the intervention. Observation as a data generation method can help to study a new or complex behaviour, enabling researchers to see what really happens in the natural setting (Ellis, 2022). I observed my sample population of learners for about six months from January to July 2024 in their classroom and on the playground. These observations were crucial in providing me with a comprehensive understanding of the learners' social justice awareness before the intervention began. My observations were structured around ten guiding questions (see Appendix A), and the responses to these questions are detailed below.

1. Do the learners communicate with each other kindly and respectfully?

I observed that some learners did not speak to each other in a kind or respectful manner. They seemed unaware of the importance of communicating with kindness. On a few occasions, I overheard threats such as, "I will sort you out after school," which were used to intimidate one another about potential confrontations outside of school. Some learners also resorted

to swearing and using obscene language, which resulted in them receiving written warnings.

Whereas learners generally interacted kindly, some incidents of fighting and antagonistic behaviour were recorded, particularly during breaks and sports activities, as they have more freedom on the playground and on the sports field. Learners worked effectively in small groups, but as group sizes increased, conflicts arose. In the classroom, there was a noticeable lack of care among some learners for those sitting next to them. Most learners preferred to work individually and rarely collaborated with peers. However, I noticed two learners who consistently helped their peers, ensuring that their peers completed their tasks and understood the teaching and learning material.

Some learners made a conscious effort to show kindness to others. These learners would write positive notes for their classmates' birthdays and sometimes even use their tuck-shop money to buy small gifts for them.

2. Do the learners express themselves freely in the classroom?

In general, learners in the classroom are encouraged to express their feelings and communicate within the framework of their rights. However, I noticed that many learners lack a clear understanding of both their rights and responsibilities. Learners have opportunities to voice their concerns if something is bothering them. As their teacher, I maintain an open-door policy and foster a parent-like relationship with my learners to ensure they feel safe and comfortable sharing their thoughts, just as they would with their parents.

To further facilitate communication between myself and my learners, I have established a suggestion box where learners can express complaints or concerns that they may not feel comfortable discussing directly with me. Whereas a few learners have utilised this option, many still choose to remain silent about their feelings. Some learners have expressed their emotions through tears when they feel they have been treated unfairly.

The primary challenge that learners face in expressing themselves in the classroom is a lack of confidence. Nonetheless, in the classroom, I encourage my learners to take turns sharing their thoughts and participating in discussions on various aspects of English teaching and learning.

3. Do all the learners have equitable opportunities to participate and succeed in learning activities?

Providing all learners with equal opportunities to participate and succeed is fundamental to my teaching approach. I strive to create the best possible environment for all learners to thrive. However, I recognise that challenges and barriers can arise in the classroom, which may hinder some learners from achieving this learning objective.

Disruptions from certain learners negatively impact those who struggle with concentration. Additionally, some learners naturally progress at a slower pace and require more time than I anticipate, even with accommodations in place. To address this, I offer extra sessions for those who are slower or those facing academic challenges, providing them with additional support.

For academically gifted learners who finish assignments quickly, I provide enrichment worksheets and more advanced tasks to keep them engaged. When necessary, I assign my assistant to provide one-on-one support to both slower and gifted learners, ensuring that each learner receives the attention they need.

4. Do learners demonstrate respect for each other's diverse backgrounds?

Respect among learners has been a challenge, despite the school having a Positive Behaviour and Intervention Strategy (PBIS) programme in place. The PBIS programmes reinforces responsibility, safety, and respect as foundational pillars for positive behaviour; however, many learners frequently label each

other and use unkind words such as *mofi*, *kwerekwere*, *idiot* resulting in numerous written warnings for bullying, as defined by the code of conduct of the school. A significant number of learners appear resistant to accepting different cultures, often making derogatory comments about one another's backgrounds. While they understand the concept of a *rainbow nation* and what it represents, they seem to lack insight into its importance. There is a prevalent intolerance towards diversity, with some learners looking down on others, particularly those from foreign backgrounds, whom they derogatorily refer to as "kwerekere," a term that is informally used to refer to immigrants, particularly of African descent. There is a similar confirmation of this 'abuse' in literature, (Rousset, Maluleke & Mendelsohn, 2022).

5. Are learners encouraged to explore and express their identities in a positive and affirming way?

We begin each day with a dance session where learners choose a song that they want to dance to. Dancing helps create a positive learning environment. After the dancing, the learners listen to a positive-affirmation song, encouraging them to repeat uplifting lyrics that promote self-acceptance and appreciation. These affirmation songs empower them to view themselves in a positive way and foster self-love.

After the music, learners engage in a five-minute meditation, allowing them to calm their minds and connect with themselves before the lessons begin. These sessions provide learners with opportunities to explore their identities and cultivate greater self-awareness and appreciation. However, many learners struggle to appreciate themselves and often express negative self-perceptions. Phrases like "I know I'm not smart" reflect their low self-esteem and may hinder the learner's ability to appreciate who they are. To counter this negativity, I used positive affirmations, model framing, and strength spotting. For example, in the above "I know I'm not smart", I will model frame the response, "You are not there yet". Spotting learners' strengths also helps them appreciate and focus on them, ultimately helping them understand who they are.

6. Are there mechanisms in place for learners to participate in the decision-making process in the classroom?

In my classroom, I embrace a democratic approach to teaching. I provide my learners with opportunities to express themselves and participate in decision-making processes that affect them. I involve them in drafting classroom rules because I believe in a learner-centred approach that prioritises their voices. Learners actively engage in democratic practices, such as selecting classroom monitors, choosing helpers, and establishing discipline procedures. I believe that involving learners in decision-making fosters a sense of democracy and justice. When learners take part in these processes, it becomes easier to manage their behaviour and remind them of the agreed-upon classroom rules if they transgress.

7. Do learners demonstrate an awareness of social justice issues, social injustices, and inequalities in their classroom?

Learners demonstrated some understanding of social justice in general, but they lacked a clear comprehension of its true meaning. They were not aware of the components of social justice or what constitutes injustice. When discussing unfair situations, they primarily used terms like “bad” or “good” rather than recognising the complexities involved. Further, learners were unaware of how social justice manifests in their lives, whether at school, home, or in the community.

Their confidence in the classroom was low, and they hesitated to express their feelings about issues that bothered them. When addressing conflicts, they often resorted to violence, handling situations like bullying through physical altercations. Only a few learners chose peaceful means, such as reporting to the teacher or seeking mediation. Furthermore, the learners were reluctant to openly communicate their dissatisfaction. For instance, many learners expressed discontent with the behavioural reward system, which they say

repeatedly benefits the same individuals. I observed that they fear potential reprisals or getting into trouble. After realising that the learners were not happy with the current reward system, I implemented an all-class reward system, where every learner is recognised for other achievements such as kindness, cleanliness, and handwriting. This approach aims to encourage more learners to be rewarded.

8. Do learners understand their rights and responsibilities in the classroom?

On average, learners have a good understanding of their rights but a limited grasp of their responsibilities. They often discuss their rights but take little action regarding their responsibilities. Whereas they can identify broad rights such as education, safety, and protection rights, they struggle to recognise the specific rights they enjoy in the classroom. It seems that they do not understand their agency and responsibilities in ensuring that these rights are upheld. I observed a significant gap in their comprehension of the connection between rights and responsibilities, which is crucial to their lives.

9. Do the learners understand how to confront injustice in the classroom?

Learners understand what an injustice is, but I have observed that they struggle to communicate it effectively and appropriately. Sometimes, learners cry in class, withdraw, or even miss school altogether. This made me realise that the PBIS programme, which focuses on promoting positive behaviour in learners, does not address the issue of injustice. This observation prompted me to integrate learners' experiences of injustice into my teaching, better preparing them to confront injustice in their daily lives. As I have already mentioned, in my classroom, I have a suggestion box for learners to anonymously express any injustice they may have experienced; however, learners rarely use it. When learners feel offended by others, they report this to their teachers or parents.

10. Do learners know who to report to when their rights are infringed by learners or teachers?

Learners have been informed of whom they should report to if their rights are infringed. However, some learners do not follow the correct reporting procedure when reporting incidents of injustice in the classroom or at school. When reporting incidents of injustice, in most cases, learners bypass the teachers and report this to their parents. Other learners know that if they feel misrepresented by their class monitor, for example, they can report the incident to the teacher. Learners also know that if they feel misrepresented by the teacher, they can approach other teachers for guidance. Although learners are encouraged to report incidents such as bullying, name-calling, and stealing of personal belongings, learners most frequently report incidents of lost belongings.

4.3.2 Data set 2: Learners' reflective diaries

Data set 2 is derived from the reflections the learners recorded in their diaries. These reflections are the outcome of an intervention that consisted of six lessons (see Appendices B–G). These lessons were designed as an action plan to solve the problem identified in the study, which is the learners' levels of social justice awareness. After each lesson, the learners answered reflective questions in their diaries. Each lesson focused on one element of Picower's (2012) six elements of teaching social justice. This intervention aimed to address the primary research question, *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English Classroom in South Africa?*

4.3.2.1 Lesson 1: Self-love and knowledge of self

Lesson 1 focused on self-love and self-awareness. The aim of the lesson was for learners to develop a positive self-image and appreciate their identity. After the lesson, learners reflected on two questions.

4.3.2.1(i) Lesson 1 - Question 1

What makes you proud of your culture? Begin with these words: Today I am

proud to be a because

Summary of learner responses to lesson 1 - question 1:

Most learners expressed pride in their culture by referring to traditions, rituals, food, clothing, and dance that are specific to their culture. Some learners highlighted that they are proud of their culture because they were taught respect and responsibility and they appreciate a strict upbringing that instils discipline. Table 4.2 presents a selection of learner responses.

Table 4.2: A selection of learner responses to lesson 1 - question 1

Culture	Learner responses to what makes them proud of their culture.
Xhosa	Learner 3: <i>I am proud to be Xhosa because I love my tradition. Xhosa boys goes to the mountain to be initiated into becoming a man. When they come back from the mountain, they are now called “man” and everyone respects the initiates. I also like the fact that, when the boys come from the mountain, the parents slaughter a cow and give presents, new clothes to the initiate. That’s why I am proud to be a Xhosa boy.</i>
Zulu	Learner 8: <i>I am proud to be Zulu girl. I think Zulu have the most special and beautiful culture. I love the fact that as a Zulu girl, we have to keep ourselves respectful to the elders and don’t get married at a young age. Zulu girls perform the umemelo ceremony a symbol when girls are initiated into womanhood assuring the parents that a girl child is virgin, this is very important in Zulu culture. A cow is slaughtered, and gifts are handed out.</i>

Tswana	Learner 5: <i>I am proud to be a black South African Tswana girl. I love myself because that is who I am. Tswana people have a beautiful culture and I am happy to be part of it. Tswana traditional attire is beautiful, we wear animal skins and our dance is amazing.</i>
Shona	Learner 4: <i>I am proudly Zimbabwean. I am proud of my culture because as a Zimbabwean boy we are taught to be respectful. Young boys are taught be responsible from a young age. Boys go to the fields to herd cattle and bring firewood and make male fire called “dare” a circle only for men. During “dare fire” the father or older brothers tell stories to the young ones, stories of courage, and hard work.</i>
Afrikaans	Learner 16: <i>I am proudly Afrikaaner. As Afrikaaners we have a very strict upbringing. We also love each other, and our special food include bredie (meat stew), potjiekos (meat and vegetable stew). I love my culture because in our culture we respect our history and tradition. Our traditional clothing for men are knee socks and shorts and women wear long bonnets and long dresses.</i>
Ndebele	Learner 7: <i>I am proudly a Ndebele girl. I love my culture because it is beautiful. Ndebele people are very loving people and respectful. Ndebeles are very proud of their beautiful traditional clothes which are very colourful blended with beaded necklaces for women and girls. Men and boys wear caps and blankets with beading as well.</i>

4.3.2.1(ii) Lesson 1 - Question 2

Choose another culture that you heard about in class (different from your own) and write a paragraph on why you think that culture is special.

Summary of learner responses to lesson 1 - question 2:

Most learners expressed that certain cultures are unique because they place a high value on their traditions and wear distinctive clothing that represents their heritage. Some learners believed that some cultures are stronger and more influential than others, whereas others noted that certain cultures stand out because children in those cultures are taught to be respectful. Table 4.3 presents a selection of the reasons learners gave for why they think that cultures other than their own are special.

Table 4.3: A selection of learner responses to lesson 1 - question 2

Culture	Learner's responses to why they think another culture, different from their own, is special.
Ndebele	Learner 1: <i>I think Ndebele culture is special because Ndebele people wear colourful clothes with beads.</i> Learner 3: <i>Ndebele people are very proud of their tradition.</i>
Shona	Learner 5: <i>I think Shona culture is special because they are respectful towards elders. Young kids are taught to be respectful; they kneel down when they greet elders.</i> Learner 9: <i>I think the Shona culture is special because Shona people are kind and helpful. Shona people are taught to help each other and be kind to other people.</i>
Xhosa	Learner 16: <i>I like the Xhosa culture because I like how they dance and their dresses are beautiful. Xhosa people has a beautiful cultural attire. Xhosa girls are taught to look after themselves until they are old enough to get married.</i>
Sotho	Learner 8: <i>I think the Sotho culture is a special culture. I like Sotho culture because my grandmother is Sotho. Sotho people are very loving. My grandmother loves me very much.</i>
Chinese	Learner 10: <i>I like the Chinese culture, I think they are unique and eat almost everything but I like the noodles too, they honor tradition and have a deep respect for hierarchy.</i>

Zulu	Learner 11: <i>I think the Zulu culture is special. Zulu's are strong and not afraid. Zulu dance is exciting to watch and their cultural clothes are beautiful.</i> Learner 2: <i>Zulu culture is very special, young Zulu girls go to a virgin ceremony called Umemulo a tradition where Zulu virgin girls are celebrated and get gifts if they reach the age of 21 years as virgins. I think this is very special when you get gifts.</i>
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4.3.2.2 Lesson 2: Respect for others

Lesson 2 was about respecting others. The aim of this lesson was to teach learners to respect others and appreciate diversity. After the lesson, learners reflected on two questions.

4.3.2.2 (i) Lesson 2 - Question 1

What does respect for people mean to you, and how do you see it reflected in your classroom, school, or community?

Summary of learner responses to lesson 2 - question 1

There were two parts to this question. The first part of the question asked learners what respect for people meant to them. In response to this part of the question most of the learners said that respecting people means “using a low tone of voice when communicating” (L1) and “being kind and helpful to one another” (L5). Other learners said that they showed respect by “greeting elder people” (L4) and not “making fun of disabled and poor people in society” (L10).

The second part of question 1 asked learners how respect was reflected in their classroom, school, and community. Table 4.4 presents a selection of the learner responses to this part of question 1.

Table 4.4: A selection of learner responses to lesson 2 - question 1

Learner responses to how they see respect reflected in their classroom and at school,
Learner 16: <i>For me respect means we treat each other equally. We are taught to treat each other with kindness and make sure that everyone feels safe and accepted. We don't bully each other, and we also don't want to be bullied.</i>
Learner 7: <i>At school we show love and respect by looking after the younger kids and protect them because we are older ...(sic) them.</i>
Learner 12: <i>At school we show respect by greeting teachers and friends, we say kind words to each other and to the volunteers.</i>
Learner responses to how they see respect reflected in the community.
Learner 16: <i>For me respect means we don't make fun of disabled people. Our teacher always tells us to respect everyone. He always says we must have respect and have empathy especially to individuals with disabilities.</i>
Learner 10: <i>In my community we show respect by greeting elders. We do not wait for them to greet us.</i>
Learner 9: <i>Respect for me means we do not laugh at poor people or beggars on the streets.</i>

4.3.2.2(ii) Lesson 2 - Question 2

Share an experience where you learned something new about a cultural tradition or celebration different from your own. How did this experience make you feel, and what did you learn from it?

Summary of learner responses to lesson 2 - question 2:

In answering this question, some learners said they had never been exposed to a cultural ceremony different from their own. Most of the learners wrote the following: "I have never been exposed to different cultures other than my own." Some learners shared that they only knew their culture. Only a few learners had

experiences of other cultures. Table 4.5 presents a selection of the responses to question 2.

Table 4.5: A selection of learner responses to lesson 2 - question 2

Participant	Learner responses to experiencing other cultures.
Zulu	Learner 8: <i>I am Zulu and my experience of Xhosa culture did not make me feel any different. My mother is Xhosa, and my father is Zulu so I can say that I grew up experiencing both cultures and I do not feel different when I am on either of the cultures. What I learned from both Xhosa and Zulu is that, both cultures are very proud of their cultures and want to always represent themselves.</i>
Shona	Learner 5: <i>I have never been exposed to another culture different from mine. The only culture that I know well is my Xhosa culture.</i>
Shona	Learner 4: <i>My friend is Tswana. I always visit my friends when they have special cultural ceremonies. The Tswana culture is very different from my Shona culture. In my friend's culture they wear colorful clothing and in Shona culture we wear black and white. This experience makes me happy.</i>
Tswana	Learner 9: <i>I learned about Xhosa culture, I learned that Xhosa's traditional food is umqusho and umphokqo. I also learned about Xhosa ladies wear traditional dressing called umbatho. This is a type of dressing mostly for married woman. It is worn by the bride and is a respectful dress code. I feel so good as I got to learn about other cultures and love them more.</i>
Afrikaans	Learner 16: <i>I have been to a Muslim celebration before. My friend is a Muslim and I once attended this cultural ceremony called the Zakat. People hand out gifts and donate to the poor once a year. I felt so happy that they love even the poor people. From that day, I wished all religions can do the same.</i>

4.3.2.3 Lesson 3: Issues of social justice

Lesson 3 was based on issues of social injustice. The aim of the lesson was for learners to become aware of social injustices. After the lesson, learners reflected on the following questions:

4.3.2.3(i) Lesson 3 - Question 1 (a and b)

1. Write two paragraphs beginning with the words:

a. To be fair is to be ...

b. To be unfair is to ...

Summary of learner responses to lesson 3 - question 1 (a and b):

For question 1(a), some learners expressed that for them fairness means to treat others in an acceptable way and to be nice to others (L3; L10). For other learners, fairness means being conscious and aware of how people feel and treating them equally by giving everyone a chance in life (L8; L16).

In answering question 1(b), most of the learners wrote that being unfair means having no kindness and treating people unequally in society (L5; L8; L15). Some of the learner responses are presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: A selection of learner responses to lesson 3 - question 1

To be fair is to be ...	To be unfair is to:
Learner 1: <i>mindful of others.</i> Learner 2: <i>thoughtful about how other people feel.</i> Learner 3: <i>mindful of our actions.</i> Learner 10: <i>doing right things to other people.</i> Learner 15: <i>kind.</i> Learner 8: <i>treating people the same way you want them to treat you. Some people treat others badly and they do not want others to treat them the same way. I think it's bad.</i> Learner 16: <i>treating people equally give equal opportunities. Like in our class having equal chances to learn.</i>	Learner 15: <i>treat people unkindly and being rude.</i> Learner 16: <i>treating people without love and care. When parents beat their kids when they do wrong, I think it's unfair.</i> Learner 10: <i>like (sic) 'making racists comments' about other people because, I think we are all equal.</i> Learner 5 and Learner 8: <i>to treat people unequal and not being nice [to] others.</i>

4.3.2.3(ii) Lesson 3 - Question 2

For this question, learners were asked to: *Write a paragraph beginning with the words: For me social justice means...*

Summary of learner responses to lesson 3 - question 2:

Most learners said that for them social justice means equality, freedom, and dignity (**L9; L5; L3**). Other learners explained social justice as having access to equal opportunities in education and treating each other fairly (**L15; L10**). Some of the learner responses are catalogued in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: A selection of learner responses to lesson 3 - question 2

Learner responses on what social justice means to them.
Learner 9: <i>For me social justice means the equal distribution of wealth and having equal opportunities in society. Social justice also means that people access to political, social and economic rights and opportunities.</i>
Learner 10: <i>For me social justice means treating each other fairly and sharing things equally. For example, if I have two toys, I have to share with others who do not have, that is social justice for me.</i>
Learner 8: <i>For me social justice means, people in a community coming together to address a common problem collectively for example fighting drugs in our community.</i>
Learner 5: <i>Social justice means living peacefully together in harmony, not what happened to Nelson Mandela who was arrested and stayed in prison for fighting for freedom.</i>
Learner 16: <i>Social justice for me means fighting for what you believe is right for you and others.</i>
Learner 4: <i>Social justice to me is like living in a free country and whites and black people live together.</i>
Learner 15: <i>Social justice for me is when all people are equal, they go to school together, play nicely together and share things. Like if I have food, my friends give me.</i>
Learner 3: <i>For me social justice means people's rights and freedoms are respected. Everyone has their rights and that people must respect each other's rights and enjoy their freedom.</i>

4.3.2.4 Lesson 4: Social movements and social change

Lesson 4 was based on social movements and social change. The aim of this lesson was for learners to understand the role of social movements in South Africa and how iconic figures fought for liberation and for social change. After the lesson, learners reflected on the following questions:

1. *Which social activist most inspires you?*
2. *What social cause has this activist fought for?*
3. *What benefits do you now enjoy in your life today that were fought for by this activist?*

Summary of learner responses to lesson 4 - questions 1, 2, and 3:

The learners answered three questions. Firstly, they chose an activist who inspired them the most. Most of the learners chose Nelson Mandela (L5; L7; L8; L12) as the activist who most inspired them. They also acknowledged Winnie Mandela's role in supporting Nelson Mandela while he was in prison. Other learners chose Mahatma Gandhi and Hector Pieterse as social activists who inspired them. Secondly, learners identified the cause that these activists fought for. Learners stated that Nelson Mandela and Winnie Mandela both fought against Apartheid laws and inequality in South Africa, while Mahatma Gandhi joined the struggle against Apartheid using nonviolent means, and Hector Pieterse fought for a fair and equal education system. Thirdly, the learners listed "freedom" as the overwhelming benefit they enjoy today because of the sacrifices made by these social activists. Table 4.8 presents a selection of learner responses.

Table 4.8: A selection of learner responses to lesson 4 - questions 1, 2, and 3

Activist	Social cause fought for	The benefits enjoyed today are because of the sacrifices they made
Nelson Mandela	Freedom, justice, and democracy	Learner 2: <i>We are free today, Mandela fought against Apartheid in South Africa. He was jailed for us to be free. Now we go to places that Black people were not allowed to go in the past.</i> Learner 5: <i>Nelson Mandela fought for freedom of Black people, and he stayed in prison for 27 years for his community to get freedom and equal justice.</i> Learner 7: <i>I am thankful because I have a roof under me, I have food and better houses.</i> Learner 12: <i>Mandela fought for freedom and</i>

		<i>justice for black people. Today we are all equal, for me that's the benefits I enjoy.</i> Learner 8: <i>Nelson Mandela changed South Africa to a better place. He was a very loving man, and we are living peaceful today because of him.</i>
Hector Pieterse	End of Bantu education	Learner 9: <i>Hector Pieterse died because he wanted Bantu education to stop. Today we are all taught in the Languages of our choice. I thank him for that.</i>
Mahatma Gandhi	Rights and equality for Indian people in South Africa	Learner 16: <i>Mahatma Gandhi fought against racial discrimination laws, when he refused to go in a second-class train and pushed out of the train. Today we choose to take whichever ticket class we want.</i> Learner 10: <i>Mahatma Gandhi fought for our rights to be equal. He believed in using non-violent ways to get change and his methods promoted human rights. Today we go into trains, and we are not separated, we go to the beaches mixed Black and Whites, no White only places.</i>
Winnie Mandela	Freedom and justice for Black People	Learner 14: <i>Supported the struggle and a call to end Apartheid alongside her husband utata Nelson Mandela. Because of them Black kids are now allowed to go to private schools.</i>

4.3.2.5 Lesson 5: Raising awareness

Lesson 5 was based on raising awareness of social justice. The aim of this lesson was for learners to become agents of social justice by raising awareness of social justice issues. After the lesson, learners reflected on two questions.

4.3.2.5(i) Lesson 5 - Question 1

Why did your group choose the social justice issue that you did?

Summary of learner responses to lesson 5 - question 1:

Learners discussed issues of social justice in groups of four. The group responses are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: A selection of learner responses to lesson 5 - questions 1

Group	Social justice issue	Learner responses to why they chose to discuss their social justice issue.
A	Child abuse Bullying	Learner 8: <i>We have seen how children are physically and emotionally abused, and we want to raise awareness to stop it.</i> Learner 4: <i>Many children face violence at home and bullying at school which can affect their well-being.</i> Learner 10: <i>We chose these topics because some of us or our friends have experienced bullying or have been abused before.</i>
B	Animal freedom and rights	Learner 16: <i>We chose social justice for animals because animals should be treated the same way as we treat people, animals have rights too.</i> Learner 9: <i>I see a lot of animals killed by people; some people don't feed their dogs that's why we chose animal rights.</i>
C	Environmental pollution and degradation	Learner 1: <i>We chose to write about environmental awareness because people are polluting the environment, they are killing the plants and cause damage to the environment.</i>
D	Kidnapping	Learner 3: <i>We have heard stories about children who were kidnapped on their way from school.</i>

4.3.2.5(ii) Lesson 5 - Question 2

Why do you think it is important to create an awareness in others about the social injustice that you identified in question 1?

Summary of learner responses to lesson 5 - question 2:

Question 2 was a follow-up to question 1. In question 2, the learners stressed the importance of raising awareness among other learners about social justice issues. Some learners stated that it would help victims learn how to respond to issues of injustice (**L5; L8**). Most learners shared personal stories, expressing concern about the impact of bullying and the need for mutual support (**L 10**). Other learners wrote about the importance of protecting animals from mistreatment and the need for taking care of the environment to prevent harm to people and animals (**L9; L16**), and the planet, whereas some stressed the need for education and reporting cases of injustices (**L1**).

Table 4.10: A selection of learner responses to lesson 5 - questions 2

Summary of learners' responses to why they think it is important to raise awareness about issues of social justice.
Learner 5 and 8: <i>so that other learners know what to do when they are abused or bullied.</i>
Learner 10: <i>I don't want others to experience what I went through when I was bullied.</i>
Learner 9 and 16: <i>Animals like humans need freedom and have rights just like all of us and need to be protected. It is important because if all animals are killed, we will not have animals left, they become extinct.</i>
Learner 1: <i>If the environment is damaged, people and animals suffer and die and that people can get sick and climate change will cause more problems for us.</i>
Learner 3: <i>It is important to raise awareness about kidnapping so that kids can always walk in groups and be safe all times.</i>

4.3.2.6 Lesson 6: Social action

Lesson 6 was based on social action. The aim of this lesson was for learners to participate in social action and confront injustices in their lives. After the lesson, learners reflected on the following questions:

4.3.2.6(i) Lesson 6 - Question 1

Do you think social action campaigns can bring about change in our society?

Summary of learner responses to lesson 6 - question 1:

Most of the learners agreed that social campaigns can bring about change in society. They highlighted that social campaigns can bring freedom, infrastructural maintenance and can make the community cleaner (**L3; L8; L16**). Only a few did not agree, and two learners expressed that it depends on what the people are fighting for or against (**L7; L1**). A selection of the learner responses is presented in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: A selection of learner responses to lesson 6 - question 1

A summary of learner responses on whether social action can bring about change in society or not.
Learner 3: <i>Yes, I think so because Mandela led a protest and today we are free.</i>
Learner 8: <i>Yes, I think social action campaigns can bring change but it is not easy like it took 27 years for Mandela to get us freedom and sometimes people go on protesting, burning tyres and burning things but still no changes so sometimes there is change, for me it's 50;50.</i>
Learner 16: <i>After the Clean Masiphumelele campaign people are now afraid to dump garbage everywhere so I think social campaigns can bring change in society.</i>
Learner 7: <i>No, I don't think so because sometimes there is no change after people protest.</i>
Learner 1: <i>No, I don't think so because sometimes people protest, and nothing happens.</i>

4.3.2.6(i) Lesson 6 - Question 2

Write a paragraph about one social action campaign that you know of that brought about change in your community.

Summary of learner responses to lesson 6 - question 2:

In answering this question, the learners wrote about various social campaigns that have occurred in Masiphumelele, a township where they reside. Among the popular issues written about were social campaigns for better housing, youth empowerment, after-school programmes, sustainable living, and campaigns against crime and drug abuse.

Table 4.12: A selection of learner responses to lesson 6 - questions 2

Social action	Social action campaigns that brought change to the community.
campaign	
Better Housing	Learner 1: <i>Yes, campaigns for better housing in my community have helped reduce overcrowding and made a huge difference to people's lives. Everyone in our community now has an RDP house, this housing protests has improved living conditions in Masiphumelele.</i>
Youth Empowerment	Learner 10: <i>The Masiphumelele Get Up Movement has helped many young people get involved by giving them education on how to start their own businesses and find jobs, as well as providing guidance on avoiding drugs.</i>
Community clean-up projects	Learner 2: <i>Through campaigns like the 'Clean Masiphumelele', the community is proud of their environment. People are more involved in keeping their surroundings clean, which has helped reduce health risks and made our community a better place to live.</i>
After-school Program	Learner 6: <i>Rainbow' and 'Masicorp' NPOs provide after-school care and educational support to local children. Now, a lot of kids are staying in school.</i>

Sustainability and environmental awareness	Learner 12: <i>The environmental campaign for sustainable living has really made a difference”.</i> Learner 11: <i>I used to see a lot of plastic waste in our streets and in the ocean when I went to the beach, but now people are more aware of recycling and using less plastic. The change has made Masiphumelele a cleaner, healthier place to live.</i>
Gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy	Learner 12: <i>Gender-based-violence and teenage pregnancy awareness campaigns educate people about these issues and help victims of violence get the support they need. An organization called Girl Pride Africa holds marches every year to create awareness.</i>
Healthcare awareness	Learner 9: <i>I think the GET TESTED by the Desmond Tutu Foundation campaigns has been life-changing. This campaign teaches people why they should get tested for TB and HIV and educates us on how to take care of our health and prevent diseases.</i>

4.3.4 Data set 3: Researcher’s reflection on the intervention

Data set 3 describes the researcher’s reflection on the intervention. The intervention was based on Picower’s six elements of social justice. Each element was taught in one lesson. For each lesson, I reflected on the element of social justice taught. The first lesson focused on self-love and self- awareness. This lesson discussed identity and encouraged learners to be aware of themselves in order to be more conscious of others. The second lesson focused on respecting others. It is built upon the first and promoted an appreciation of diversity and respect for individual differences. The third lesson educated learners about what social justice is and raised their awareness of various social injustices. In the fourth lesson, I discussed the role of social movements in South Africa and their contribution to social transformation. The fifth lesson was on raising awareness about social justice. This lesson was to make learners aware of injustices and empower them to act. The sixth lesson focused on social action, empowering learners to take action against injustices. After the intervention, I reflected on all six lessons and their activities. My reflections were guided by ten questions (see Appendix I). A summary of my reflections is presented below.

4.3.4.1 Lesson 1: Self-love and knowledge

The first lesson was foundational to the intervention, setting the tone for the exploration of social justice by emphasising self-love and self-awareness. I began by introducing the concept of self-love, explaining its importance in fostering self-worth and building empathy for others. The aim was to ensure that learners could begin to understand how their personal identity and self-perception become important as they relate to larger social issues.

This lesson began with a brief introduction to the concept of self-love. In introducing this lesson, I shared stories of historical figures who exemplified self-love in the struggle for social justice, using examples such as Nelson Mandela. This was a strategy to help learners connect their own personal sense of worth with broader social movements. The lesson introduced learners to the importance of self-love, knowledge about self, and how these eventually connect to the broader society.

The learners were receptive, and many engaged eagerly. There were some moments of silence as they reflected on the examples I shared. They seemed to be reflecting on their own self-image, and I could tell this lesson sparked a lot of internal thought and dialogue. I used journaling as a technique to encourage self-reflection, asking learners to write positive things about themselves and their friends to affirm the concepts of identity and culture, and to help them accept themselves for who they are. Many learners wrote good, positive things about themselves and their friends, which was encouraging.

One positive aspect of this lesson was the level of engagement. The learners were open and willing to share, which created a safe and inclusive environment, which forms the core of social justice. However, some learners appeared hesitant to fully embrace the idea of self-love, possibly due to insecurities or a lack of exposure to the concept. The lesson was a success in setting the foundation for understanding the fundamentals of social justice, which begins with self-love. In retrospect, I should have spent more time deconstructing the doubts learners had about self-love and exploring cultural variations to avoid

any discomfort or misconceptions.

4.3.4.2 Lesson 2: Respect for others

The second lesson was built upon the first by expanding the notion of self-love to include respect for others. Here, the goal was to encourage learners to see respect as essential in creating a harmonious and just society. I discussed the importance of understanding cultural differences, perspectives, and experiences, and how respect is foundational to resolving conflicts and fostering social cohesion.

I began with a brief activity where learners discussed different cultures in South Africa and why it is important to preserve our cultures and identity. Learners shared stories about their own cultures and expressed their feelings about their heritage. For this lesson, I brought posters to class showing images of different cultures (Figure 4.1) to acquaint learners with the differences in cultures and the uniqueness of each. During this lesson, we discussed the importance of respecting people and their differences. As an extension activity, I gave learners an opportunity to share stories of times when they felt disrespected or when they felt respected. This exercise immediately sparked deep conversation and enabled learners to see the subjective nature of respect and how it is part of a broader concept of social justice. It also helped set the stage for later discussions about social justice issues.



Picture A. Ndebele culture
Pierre André Leclercq (2007)



Picture B. Afrikaans cultural attire
Whippedhusband (2011)



Picture C. *wikipedia file:Xhosa amaKwetha*

Figure 4.1: Cultural diversity

The class was engaged with learners eager to share both personal and academic perspectives of respect. I noticed a lot of back-and-forth dialogue, particularly around questions of how respect is exhibited in different cultures and contexts. Some learners mentioned that they had never before considered respect in such a nuanced way, which I took as a sign that the lesson exerted its intended impact. Most importantly, learners did not know that laughing at other people's food, way of dressing, or language amounts to an injustice as respecting others is pivotal in realising the principles of social justice.

What went well during this lesson was the interactive nature of the activities, which encouraged active participation. It was a challenging task to reduce the meaning of respect to the understanding of the learners, yet the learners understood what respect is and how it relates to social justice. Some learners struggled with the idea that respect could mean different things depending on the context or individual preferences. It became clear that given time and opportunity, I may need to continue emphasising the cultural complexity of respect when discussing issues like power and privilege or social justice.

4.3.4.3 Lesson 3: Issues of social justice

Lesson 3 focused on identifying and discussing contemporary issues of social justice. This lesson aimed to connect the foundational concepts of self-love and respect to broader societal concerns. The lesson embedded themes of social justice such as inequality, fairness, racism, gender discrimination, and poverty. I asked learners to reflect on how these issues intersect and manifest in their own lives.

The class began with brainstorming and a discussion about life under Apartheid. Prior to the lesson, the learners had an opportunity to ask their parents what life was like during Apartheid. The learners thus had a prior preview of what it was like attending school, restaurants, or even going to the beaches during Apartheid. The assignment provided learners with vital information about people's rights and how these were subjugated under Apartheid and thus exposed a lot of social justice issues. Learners listed various social justice issues they felt were most pressing. I was impressed with how quickly they generated a wide range of issues, from climate justice to rights to education disparities. We then discussed these issues in more depth, examining their root causes and societal impacts.

The engagement was elevated during this session. Learners eagerly volunteered to share their thoughts, and there were some lively debates about the different causes of social inequality. I noted that some learners felt particularly passionate about issues like racial injustice and economic inequality, which was encouraging as these are often the topics that can lead to a deeper understanding and advocacy of social justice.

One aspect that was encouraging during this lesson was the learners' ability to articulate the issues with clarity and confidence. They seemed to have a good grasp of the topic, and I believe the prior lessons on self-love and respect helped them approach these topics with more empathy. The challenge, however, came when trying to facilitate the conversation around systemic issues. Some learners appeared overwhelmed by the scale of the problems we discussed and

felt uncertain about how they could contribute to addressing them. In hindsight, I realised that social justice is a very broad term and the themes I covered in this lesson were equally broad. Given time and the opportunity, each element may need several lessons focusing on smaller, tangible steps that learners could take to make a difference in order to help them understand the concepts even better.

4.3.4.4 Lesson 4: Social movements

Lesson 4 was designed to explore the history and impact of social movements and how they can help to advance social transformation. We discussed key historical movements, such as the June 16 Soweto Uprising, the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign and various social protests that the learners knew about, emphasising their successes and ongoing struggles in society. The class was engaged from the beginning, and I could see how much they appreciated learning about these movements. I structured the lesson around case studies of prominent figures and events that played pivotal roles in shaping the history of our country (South Africa) through these movements. This included analysing speeches, writings, and videos of activists such as Hector Petersen and Nelson Mandela. This approach seemed to resonate well with the learners, sparking interesting discussions about the relevance of these movements today. Learners wrote *Thank You Letters* to their heroes for the roles they played in shaping and ushering in the freedom and liberation that learners enjoy today.



Figure 4.2 Thank You letters

What went well during the lesson was the diverse perspectives learners brought to the discussions. It was clear that many were inspired by the stories of resistance and the victories won through collective action. The learners had a deep respect for the legacy of these movements, and some expressed a desire to learn more about ongoing struggles for social justice.

One challenge I encountered, however, was that some learners had difficulty connecting historical movements to current-day activism. Whereas they could see the relevance of historical figures and events, they were less clear on how these movements have shaped today's social landscape. To amplify learners' understanding, more time is needed to highlight contemporary movements and their roots in historical struggles, which would allow for a smoother transition from past to present. Overall, the lesson was a success, judging by the quality of input from the learners during and after the lesson.

4.3.4.5 Lesson 5: Raising awareness

In Lesson 5, learners explored the critical role of raising awareness in social justice work. The lesson aimed to advance learners' advocacy for social justice and conscientise them about social injustice and how to raise awareness in others. We discussed various methods of spreading awareness, ranging from traditional media to social media campaigns, and considered the ethical implications of communicating social justice issues.

The lesson was introduced using a case study titled *From Victim to Victory* aptly echoing the power of raising awareness and how it can have tremendous social change. The lesson detailed how learners can stand up against any form of injustice and discussed ideas on the steps they can take when they are being unfairly treated and the role they can play in conscientising others. This lesson built upon lesson 4, so I continued with the examples of successful social awareness campaigns introduced in lesson 4. These were the June 16 Soweto uprising and the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign exploring their successes in driving social change and what they achieved in the democracy we live in today.

After that, learners were asked to brainstorm potential awareness campaigns and design posters that addressed social justice issues they cared about.

The learners demonstrated high creativity during this lesson. They came up with unique campaign ideas, such as awareness campaigns for drug and alcohol abuse, environmental justice, gender equality, and racism. I was impressed with the learners' understanding of how media and communication strategies can mobilise people and bring about change. The energy in the room was positive, and the learners engaged enthusiastically.

The lesson was a success, though there were mixed opinions among learners on navigating the ethics of raising awareness. Some learners argued that there is a need to balance attention with respect for the people and communities at the centre of social justice issues. Most learners argued that when people vandalise properties while protesting, it yields results. This highlighted a gap in understanding the potential harms and ethical issues that could arise from oversimplifying sensitive topics. I recognised the importance of ensuring that future lessons address these ethical considerations more directly.

4.3.4.6 Lesson 6: Social action

The final lesson focused on social action and what it means to take concrete steps toward addressing social justice issues. The goal was to inspire learners to move from awareness to action, encouraging them to get involved in activism in ways that align with their values.

The lesson was charged with probing questions on why people protest, whether picketing could be a solution for social change, and whether learners consider taking part in a protest for something they believe in. This lesson served as a barometer, testing the learner's mastery of the causes of social justice and the practical steps and sacrifices people could take to achieve it. The lesson addressed the cost and benefit of social action. I began the lesson by discussing various forms of social action, ranging from grassroots organising to legislative advocacy to direct action like protests. I also invited a guest speaker

(parent volunteer) who was involved in social justice work in Masiphumelele township, where the learners lived, to share her experiences and insights. This brought a real-world perspective to the classroom, which helped ground our discussions in practical knowledge.

The learners responded positively to the guest speaker, and a noticeable shift in their thinking was evident. Many seemed motivated by the idea that activism is not always about grand gestures, but it can also be about small, consistent actions within one's community. After the presentations, the learners were encouraged to create a social action campaign, identifying an issue in their classroom they wanted to work on and the steps they could take to contribute, providing them a real-life opportunity to address real-life issues.

The learners were inspired by hearing real-life examples of social action that they were eager to find ways to channel their knowledge, addressing issues of injustices in their lives. This was evidenced by the discussions they had with peers outside the classroom after their lessons. However, some learners appeared uncertain about where to start or how to get involved. As this was a challenge I had anticipated, I advised them that they could start by standing up for one another, reporting injustices such as bullying, showing empathy for others, and taking responsibility for their actions.

Overall, the intervention provided rich ground and engaging exploration of social justice themes. The learners were deeply involved throughout, contributing thoughtful insights and perspectives. There were challenges along the way, particularly in helping learners navigate complex and sometimes overwhelming topics, but these moments also offered opportunities for growth and reflection. In future lessons, I aim to allocate more time when delivering social justice content, as it is a broad and complex subject, considering the learners' age.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in this study was carried out using thematic content analysis (TCA), as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.7.2.3). Data analysis interprets the

participants' views. For this reason, all data that was generated and analysed from this study was in written format to eliminate any fabrication of data and to present the participants' views and opinions authentically. After completing the data generation process, I spent several days reading and re-reading the participants' responses, noting patterns in their reflections. These patterns were recorded as codes, which were then merged to form themes. This study identified 11 themes, which are analysed and interpreted to yield the study's findings.

4.4.1 Research site

The research site in this study refers to the physical location where the study was conducted. The data were collected from one primary school, which has a total of 189 learners. Learners attending the school who participated in the study are exposed to overcrowding, service delivery problems, and violence, which are some of the socioeconomic issues that makes this research site relevant to explore social justice issues. For this reason, the learner's lived experiences may have impacted the richness of data obtained. Figure 4.3 shows the distribution of the participants' residential profiles.

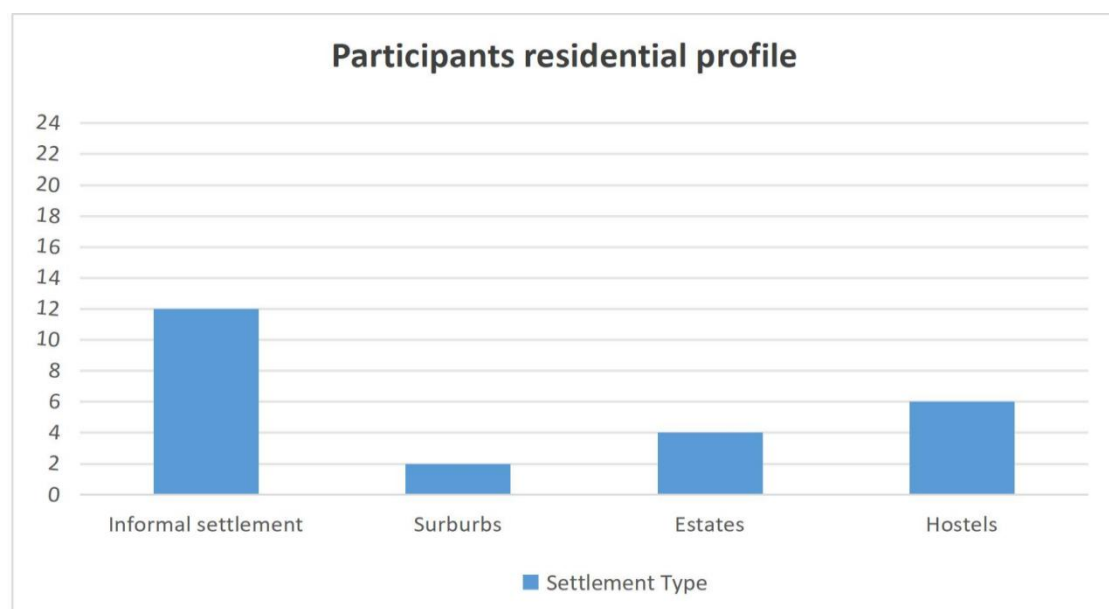


Figure 4.3: Participants' residential profiles

4.4.2 Profile of the participants

The participant profiles describe the characteristics of the individuals who participated in the study, including demographics like gender, age, and ethnicity, providing context. Participants come from different multi-racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Participants in this study consisted of learners in one Grade 5 class of ages between 11 and 12 years. There were 9 boys and 15 girls (Figure 4.4).

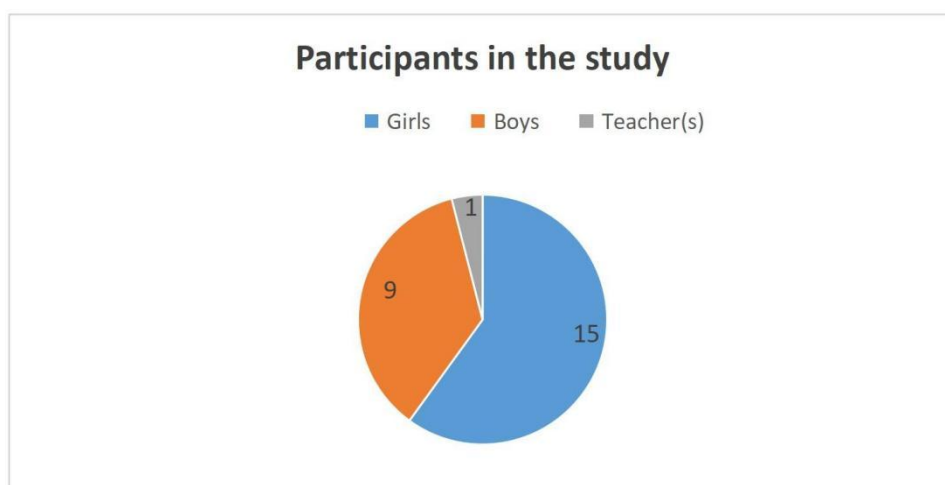


Figure 4.4: Participant profiles

4.5 THEMES, DATA ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

This section documents the analysis and interpretation of the learners' responses to the intervention, as well as the researcher's observations before and after the intervention. The intervention was part of the participatory action research (PAR) cycle. The intervention consisted of six lessons that incorporated Picower's (2012) six elements of teaching social justice, where each lesson explored a different element. After each lesson, the learners critically reflected on various questions, an action which encouraged their critical literacy skills and ultimately their social justice awareness. The learners' responses were analysed to answer the main research question of this study: *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in an English classroom?* The analysis of the intervention delves into the learners' responses recorded in

their reflective diaries, examining how the intervention influenced their responses and raised their awareness of social justice issues. Table 4.13 presents Picower's six elements used for the six lessons, along with the learners' reflective questions for each lesson.

Table 4.13: Picower's six elements and the reflective questions in each lesson

LESSONS	PICOWER'S ELEMENTS	REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS
Lesson 1	Self-love and knowledge of self	1. What makes you proud of your culture? Begin with these words: Today I am proud to be a because 2. Choose another culture that you heard about in class (different from your own) and write a paragraph on why you think that culture is special.
Lesson 2	Respect for others	1. What does respect for people mean to you, and how do you see it reflected in your classroom, school, or community? 2. Share an experience where you learned something new about a cultural tradition or celebration different from your own. How did this experience make you feel and what did you learn from it?
Lesson 3	Issues of social injustices	1. Write two paragraphs beginning with the words: a. To be fair is to be ... b. To be unfair is to ... 2. Write a paragraph beginning with these words: For me social justice means...
Lesson 4	Social movements and social change	1. Which social activist most inspires you? 2. What social cause has this activist fought for? 3. What benefits do you now enjoy in your life that was fought for by this activist?

Lesson 5	Raising awareness	1. Why did your group choose the social justice issue that you did? 2. Why is it important for you to raise learner's awareness of this social justice issue?
Lesson 6	Social action	1. Do you think social action campaigns can bring about change in our society? 2. Write a paragraph about one social action campaign that you know of that brought about change in your community.

After analysis of the intervention and the researcher's observations before and after the intervention, the following themes and sub-themes were identified:

4.5.1 Theme 1: Self-love as the foundation of social justice discourse

Self-love emerged as an overarching theme. As discussed in Chapter 2, the idea of *love* is embedded in the Christian values attributed to Gutierrez, who is believed to have coined the term social justice. Though not explicit to self-love, the idea of love as a premise of social justice is evident in Christian values and how it has shaped Gutierrez and Niebuhr's views on social justice (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.1). In this study, the learners expressed self-love by aligning it with what makes them proud, for example, one learner shared that "...During 'dare fire,' the father or older brothers tell stories to the young ones, stories of courage, and hard work" (L4). Here, the learner refers to the practice of sitting around the fire (dare) in his culture as what makes him proud of who he is. Learners also came to understand the complexity of not having a single definition of what constitutes self-love or a clear-cut definition of what it entails. For some learners, self-love is about embracing who they are, as one learner expressed, "I am a Xhosa girl, I am proud to be black and beautiful. This is who I am, I won't change" (L12). The learners are who they are, relating to their identity, making self-love and identity intricately close in meaning. Learner 16 described self-love through the lens of loving his culture and traditions, "I love my culture because in our culture we respect our history and tradition. Our traditional clothing for men is knee socks and shorts and women wear bonnets

and long dresses and our special food includes bredie (meat stew), potjiekos (meat and vegetable stew)". He further expressed love for the Afrikaner values, saying, "As Afrikaners, we have a very strict upbringing. We also love each other" (L16). The values, traditions, and cultures described by Learner 16 are what the learners love about themselves (identity), and loving what makes them who they are is an exercise in self-love. Social justice is about love and in the learner's responses, love of the *self* is internalised through culture, values, and traditions. In analysing the learners' responses, I came to understand that by loving themselves, learners are prepared for the essential values of social justice. This understanding supports the narrative that loving others begins with loving yourself first.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Identity as an expression of self-love

Learners demonstrated that the love of self cannot be achieved without realising who they are, or what makes them who they are. So here, the learners were talking about identity as an expression of self-love. Chapter 2 is not explicit in referencing identity as an expression of self-love but broadly refers to *respect for diversities* (see section 2.2.2). The learners believe that identity is an expression. One learner said, "I think the Sotho culture is a special culture. I like Sotho culture because my grandmother is Sotho" (L8). Learners discussed cultural pride, traditions, and values as key elements of personal identity. In support of this, Learner 3 posited that, "Ndebele people are very proud of their tradition", further showing how proud they are by wearing "beautiful and colourful clothes" (L3). In the same vein, Learner 16 expressed appreciation for identity by stating, "Xhosa girls are taught to look after themselves until they are old enough to get married." In the above responses, learners expressed self-love through the lens of culture and tradition as markers of identity. The learners' statements, "I am proud of my culture because as a Zimbabwean boy we are taught to be respectful" (L4) and "Tswana people have a beautiful culture and I am happy to be part of it" (L5), projected a sense of connection between the learner's culture and how this was tied to their self-worth, personal identity, and the values that identify who they are as individuals. It was clear in

the learner's reflection that self-love cannot be achieved without acknowledging one's cultural pride and respect for values and traditions that shape their identity of *self*.

Sub-theme: Culture as an extension of self-love and identity

The learners' pride in their respective cultures can be seen as an extension of self-love. The learner's responses underscore the significance of cultural ceremonies, customs, and practices in shaping a profound sense of personal identity. One learner said, "I am proud to be Xhosa because I love my tradition. Xhosa boys go to the mountain to be initiated into becoming men. When they come back from the mountain, they are now called 'men,' and everyone respects the initiates. I also like the fact that, when the boys come from the mountain, the parents slaughter a cow and give presents, new clothes to the initiate. That's why I am proud to be a Xhosa boy" (L3). In this response, we can see that the learner expresses self-love by embracing his cultural traditions. This appreciation amplifies the notion that self-love can be expressed through an appreciation of what defines our identity.

Cultural practices and traditions are identity markers through which people can express self-love. Self-love begins with self-awareness. By acknowledging their cultures, learners demonstrate a good sense of self-awareness. A Zulu learner said, "I am proud to be a Zulu girl. I think the Zulus have the most special and beautiful culture. I love the fact that as a Zulu girl, we have to keep ourselves respectful to the elders and don't get married at a young age. Zulu girls perform the umemelo, a ceremony when girls are initiated into womanhood, assuring the parents that a girl child is a virgin. This is very important in Zulu culture. A cow is slaughtered, and gifts are handed out" (L8). These cultural remarks allow the learners to express self-love by defining themselves through their cultural pride. The learners' (L3 and L8) mention of the cultural traditions of Xhosa boys' and Zulu girls' initiation ceremonies show that these are not only practices that connect them to their heritage but also act as mirrors of identity, helping learners to understand who they are in relation to their culture and society. This pride is seen as an extension of self-love through the cultural lens.

Sub-theme: Respect as an extension of self-love and identity

Learners also demonstrated self-love and identity through respect for values and traditions. One learner said, "For me, I am proud of herding cattle as a Zulu boy; we play different games that teach us to be strong when we grow up. If you do this, you will grow up to be a respected man who is responsible" (L12). This statement illustrates how the Zulu tradition of herding cattle plays a central role in shaping a young boy's identity and the respect they receive when they participate in such traditions. Therefore, respect becomes the lens through which the learner expresses self-love. Herding cattle in Zulu culture is not just a chore but a tradition that prepares young boys to be respectable and responsible men. This tradition, therefore, becomes a rite of passage and a deeply ingrained practice that conveys respect and acknowledges the boy's transition into manhood. The respect received by men who participate in these traditions reinforces the boy's self-esteem, creating a clear connection between pride in culture, respect, and self-love. From a gender socialisation perspective, this practice reinforces patriarchal norms by socialising boys into identities that emphasise authority, responsibility, and leadership. The exclusion of girls from these practices further reinforces male dominance and may perpetuate gender inequalities. Feminist perspectives Walby (1998) and Adichie (2014) argue that such exclusion contributes to the reproduction of a gendered social order in which power and recognition are unevenly distributed. While the tradition encourages cultural pride and self-love, it simultaneously consolidates patriarchal structures by embedding gendered expectations into social identity from an early age, which conflicts with a social justice perspective.

Another learner demonstrated love and respect for the Tswana tradition, stating that "I am proud of my Tswana culture, in my culture, we have respect for marriage and having a family. A woman is respected when they get married, and this is important to girls" (L15). Here, the learner expresses a strong sense of pride in Tswana tradition, particularly the values of respect for marriage and family that are emphasised in her culture. Cultural pride is closely tied to a

strong sense of self-respect, as learners view their cultural identity as an integral part of who they are. By reflecting on the values and traditions that bring them pride, they also reinforce their worth.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Appreciating diverse cultures

Across the various cultures mentioned, the learners exhibited a sense of pride and admiration for cultures other than their own. This appreciation is reflected in their descriptions of cultural practices, clothing, dances, and values. Learners' appreciation of cultures other than their own demonstrates a high degree of respect for cultural diversity, which is essential to understanding the complex and diverse societies in which we live. Social justice is built on the foundation of appreciating diversity and accepting differences. To illustrate this, one learner said, "I think Ndebele culture is special, Ndebele people wear colourful clothes with beads" (L1). The appreciation of colourful clothes by the learner can be interpreted as the learner recognising something special about the Ndebele culture. The colourful beads in Ndebele costumes are symbolic of the rich culture of the Ndebele people. Another learner also highlighted the pride Ndebele people take in their traditions, "I think Ndebele people are very proud of their traditions, boys and girls undergo initiation ceremonies to transition into adulthood" (L3). These traditional practices reinforce a sense of community and cultural preservation for the Ndebele people. The learner's responses (L3; L1) showed an appreciation for cultures and traditions other than their own. This level of appreciation and acceptance aligns with the practices and values of social justice. It is important to note that these initiation practices have increasingly become sites of exploitation due to their growing commercialisation. Families who cannot afford to pay the cost to participate risk having their children excluded, thereby reinforcing social injustice through economic marginalisation. These practices have also been criticised for endangering initiates, particularly those with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes, and in some cases have resulted in fatalities. Nevertheless, the practice remains widely observed among Ndebele communities and continues to be venerated (Kepe, 2010).

The appreciation of cultural diversity is further shown in the remarks on the respectful behaviour of young children in Shona culture. Learner 5 noted that in Shona culture, "Young kids are taught to be respectful; they kneel when they greet elders". Being respectful reinforces the role of social values in shaping the learners' understanding of their own and other cultures. The idea of appreciation is further strengthened in this statement: "I think the Shona culture is special because Shona people are kind and helpful. Shona people are taught to help each other and be kind to other people" (L9). This statement acknowledges the kindness of the Shona people, which is viewed as a sacred value that extends to a communal obligation in Shona culture.

One of the fundamental principles of social justice is the acceptance of diversity, and this was vividly reflected in the learners' responses, indicating a level of social justice consciousness. The intervention was geared towards appreciation of diverse cultures; hence, it is worth mentioning that appreciation could also imply *appreciating for lack of choice*. The rationale behind the questions asked in this intervention was to encourage learners to reflect on the positive aspects of each other's cultures, thereby increasing their awareness of social justice. The learners' responses show that all cultures are special and unique. This understanding by learners is critical, as it enables them to be more respectful and accepting of other cultures; this acceptance is essential for an inclusive and just society.

4.5.4 Theme 4: Values and practices that learners experience as respectful

Learners referenced the importance of tone of voice, helpfulness, and inclusivity as qualities that constitute respect for them. One of the learners highlighted the significance of communication, stating that respect involves "using a low tone of voice when communicating," (L1), while another learner emphasised kindness, noting that respect means "being kind and helpful to one another" (L5). These responses suggest that learners associate respect with some level of politeness (low tone) and being kind to others. From these responses, I could infer that learners have empathy and are conscious of other people's feelings. In Chapter

2, the values and practices of social justice were discussed, though not explicitly in the terms used by the learners, but the importance of dialogue was emphasised (see section 2.3.3).

Some learners identified specific actions that show respect in their community, such as "greeting and giving elders way to pass when walking past the elders" (L4) and "...treating poor people and disabled people with dignity" (L9). These actions highlight an awareness of values and practices that learners experience as respectful. Greeting elders is considered a sign of respect in most African cultures. Learners demonstrated that respect can be shown in various ways and may have different meanings in different cultures. One learner's statement, "we do not laugh at people in the street" or mock people with disabilities, further articulates their awareness of social inequalities and the need to treat all people with dignity, regardless of their physical differences. These insights align with the principles of social justice, as they reflect a concern for marginalised groups in society and the importance of empathy in creating a more equitable society. Learner 16 supported learner 9 by stating that, "We don't bully each other, and we also don't want to be bullied." (L16). For these learners (L9; L16), respect is demonstrated when you show empathy towards others. Furthermore, the learners' understanding of respect aligns with the Freirean perspective on culture, which emphasises respect for cultural differences and argues for "education practices that foster dialogue and cultural inclusivity" (Guilherme, 2017:2). Being respectful to one another is important in creating a population that is conscious of social justice.

Sub-theme: Respect in the classroom

In the classroom setting, learners noted a variety of behaviours that demonstrate respect. Some of the learners' opinions on respect are centred around cooperation and emotional support, "such as sharing food" (L9) and "comforting classmates who are sad" (L11). Learners expressed that respect can also be seen as a caring responsibility, involving coming to each other's rescue when others are in need or at their lowest. By sharing food and comforting each other, learners exposed the subtleties and complexity of

respect through caring. Equally so, social justice is a mandate that requires coming together to help the voiceless, the vulnerable, and the marginalised. In the same vein, learners view sharing food as sharing pain, and more importantly, the understanding of *lack* (inequality).

Learners understand respect as being supportive and compassionate, where people can rely on one another. Learner 12 noted that respect in the classroom is shown in attentiveness to the teacher, saying, "In our classroom, we show respect by staying quiet when our teacher is talking and other learners." This reinforces the idea that respect in the classroom also means giving others space to express themselves, whether it be the teacher or other learners. Another learner emphasised the importance of following classroom rules, particularly raising hands to speak. This learner said, "We raise our hands to speak. We respect our classroom rules and raising hands is one of them" (L2). This demonstrates that respect is not only about emotional support but also about adherence to policy and rules that ensure fairness and order in the classroom. An understanding of how rules and policies operate in the classroom is important because, in society, people need to exercise their rights responsibly, following rules and policies to ensure a functional democracy that protects the rights of all.

Sub-theme: Respect at school

In the broader school setting, learners associate respect with creating an environment of safety, inclusivity, and equality. On this note, Learner 16 expressed that respect involves "treating one another equally, without bullying, and ensuring everyone feels safe and accepted". This response reflects the principles of social justice, as learners recognise the importance of equality and inclusion within their school community. Learner 7 demonstrated a sense of responsibility towards younger peers, stating that older learners show respect by "looking after the younger kids and protecting them." This highlights the importance of taking care of vulnerable individuals. Social justice is about extending care to others who may not be in a similar position of strength, power, or status.

Sub-theme: Respect in the learners' communities

In the community, Learner 16 noted that respect involves having empathy for people with disabilities, stating, "We must have respect and empathy, especially to individuals with disabilities." Similarly, Learner 9 emphasised that "respect means not mocking or laughing at poor people or beggars on the streets" (L9), demonstrating an awareness of how social status can impact dignity and an understanding of the need to counter stigmatisation towards people who may look different. These responses enhance learners' understanding of the values and principles that guide social justice. The learners' responses were critical and highlighted values and principles people need in society to ensure the dignity of all individuals. Laughing at people's status or poverty undermines one's dignity and projects an unemphatic stance on the less privileged. Learner 10's reflections on respect within the community point to the need to foster respect and reverence for adult citizens, which is recognised as a morally respectful gesture. Learner 10 stated, "We show respect by greeting elders" (L10). This illustrates a cultural practice of reverence for older individuals, emphasising the role of social norms in maintaining respectful behaviour towards elders.

Learners also expressed that respect in the communities can be seen by respecting other cultures. In an illuminating response, Learner 9 said, "I feel so good as I got to learn about other cultures and love them more". In society, respecting other people's cultures promotes a more democratic and equal society. The learner understands that, in a socially just society, people must respect each other's religion, culture, or way of life. These views are supported by Learner 16's response about another religion, "People hand out gifts and donate to the poor once a year. I felt so happy that they love even the poor people. From that day, I wished all religions could do the same." From these responses it appears that this learner respects different religions based on how they showed their love and care for others, which is an extension of respect.

4.5.5 Theme 5: Equality as a social justice factor

Inequality is a pervasive issue that affects people across different sectors of life

and in various spheres of society. The learners discussed equality and inequality as fundamental issues of social justice. One of the learners described equality as "the equal distribution of wealth and opportunities and in society" (L9). As discussed in Chapter 2, the learners also viewed social justice as the equitable distribution of opportunities and resources (see section 2.2.3.4). Although the learner's responses did not include distribution of *society's burden*, it was sufficient at their level to think of the positive only, considering the complexity of the subject and their level. Learner 9 associated equality with access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges. By linking equality with access to resources and opportunities in society, learners demonstrated the complexity of what social justice is about. Social justice does not have a fixed definition, as indicated by different learners expressing it through different lenses. In other words, what constitutes social justice is culturally, politically, and historically different. Learner 9 expressed equality as a key principle of social justice. Social justice can thus not be understood without looking at equality—politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Equality thus borders on the core tenets of what constitutes social justice. This study under my supervision, provided learners with a rare and critical opportunity to access videos and pictures of Apartheid, after which they were able to discern and relate to broader themes of social justice, such as equality, as described above. (See Appendix G).

4.5.6 Theme 6: Fairness as a tenet of social justice

Fairness is another key tenet of social justice. To describe fairness, learners viewed social justice as encompassing fair treatment of people in society. Given this definition, learners described fairness and social justice as interwoven, saying "social justice is about fairness and that describes 'fairness' as being 'thoughtful about how other people feel'" (L2). The learners described fairness in terms of how people's actions affect others and ultimately how they feel or are impacted by such actions. Chapter 2, section 2.2.2, paragraph 3 supports this response citing that social justice means to have a concern for others. This definition means that learners need to think about how other people will feel and do what is good for society (Robison, 2010). The learners' critical alignment and understanding speak to critical awareness and the power of

critical literacy in realising social justice objectives. One learner expressed fairness as an exercise that requires "kindness" (L15), and another expressed fairness as "doing right to other people" (L10).

Fairness is a crucial element of social justice and a guiding principle for a socially just society. In the above responses, the learners referred to "kindness" and "doing good things to others" as acts of social justice. The learners expressed what fairness means to them, and interestingly, they exposed the view that social justice is multifaceted and intertwined with fairness, with different people attaching different meanings to it according to their experiences and contexts.

Some learners believe that "treating people unkindly and being rude" (L15) is a retrogressive act that can hamper social justice practices. In Learner 15's response, it is clear that the learners refer to being "unkind" and "rude" as not conducive to achieving social justice. By referring to rudeness and unkindness, learners highlight the need for human traits that promote social justice, as social justice thrives in a world where people are kind and polite to one another.

Sub-theme: Inclusion as an extension of fairness

Some learners identified inclusion as an extension of fairness. In the classroom and at school, inclusion is seen as important. Inclusion as a fulcrum of social justice can be shown "by looking after the younger kids and protecting them because we are older than them" (L7). This learner understands that younger children need to be part of the school, and looking after them and making sure they are safe is an endorsement of inclusivity. He further noted that inclusion can be expressed by "... show[ing] love". Although this learner's response may not directly address "loving" as a key aspect of inclusion, exercising love highlights that someone is valued, and thus they are included.

4.5.7 Theme 7: Empowerment as a tool for social transformation

Paulo Freire refers to empowerment as a key to necessitate social transformation. He argues that people need to be empowered, and for that, he

advocated for problem-posing education to enable learners to reflect on their social reality. Empowerment comes in many forms, through knowledge (formal knowledge), resources, or access to empowering tools or opportunities. In this study, learners were exposed to empowerment through a discussion of non-violent resistance, focusing on Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent methods. Through non-violent resistance, learners are empowered to challenge power structures and use alternative methods of resistance, which may minimise the risks associated with resistance. Through their reflections on Gandhi's approach, learners came to understand how social change can be achieved without violence, as seen in one learner's reflection: "Mahatma Gandhi fought for our rights to be equal. He believed that change can be achieved using non-violent ways, his methods encouraged human rights and responsibilities" (L10).

The understanding of non-violent resistance as a powerful tool aligns with the critical pedagogy goal of empowering learners to thoughtfully and peacefully challenge oppressive structures. By learning about non-violent activism, learners recognised that they too could engage in social justice efforts without resorting to aggressive tactics. This promotes not only intellectual empowerment but also the practical skills necessary for becoming active participants in creating social change. Some learners further expressed empowerment by referring to community campaigns or social campaigns. Community campaigns play a crucial role in empowering young people and promoting social change. In line with these views, learners referred to youth empowerment and after-school programmes championed by local organisations as pivotal in promoting social change. One of the learners said, "The Masiphumelele Get Up Movement has helped many young people to get involved by giving them education on how to start their businesses and find jobs" (L10). This learner lauds the organisation for uplifting and empowering the youth. This statement reflects the empowerment model emphasised in Freire's critical pedagogy, where empowerment is seen as critical to social transformation (Garcia, Dias, Jardim, da Silva, de Mello, Vieira, de Araujo, Magalhães, Neto, Araújo & de Toledo, 2025). Hooks (1994) in *Teaching to Transgress*, views education as a radical act that allows learners to critically

engage with the world and challenge systems of oppression. When people are empowered, they have a means to change their status, voice their opinions, and participate in the social justice discourse.

In addition, another learner referred to the after-school programmes as empowering initiatives. He added that "These organisations help kids with after-school programs and to encourage all kids to go to school", noting that "a lot of kids are staying in school" (L6). Providing educational support and care, these programmes enable children to stay in school and build a foundation for their future opportunities.

The learners' responses align strongly with the principles of critical pedagogy, which emphasise the need to be critical of power structures and societal inequalities. Critical pedagogy, as espoused by Freire, stresses the importance of dialogue and critical thinking in the educational process (Guilherme, 2017). To advance the discussion on social justice, teachers should encourage dialogue and critical thinking practices in their classrooms, thereby better preparing learners for social justice discourses. In her book, *Teaching Other people's children*, Delpit (2006) advances liberatory pedagogy but emphasised that learners should be given access to the 'codes of power' which are (standard language, conventions and explicit skills) before they can critique effectively and challenge the system (Delpit, 2006).

4.5.8 Theme 8: Learners becoming aware of social justice

Creating an awareness about social justice issues is important in conscientising learners about their rights and the rights of others. Learners need to be aware of when their rights are violated and to know how to defend them. Freire, a prominent advocate of conscientisation and awareness against oppression, contended that both the oppressor and the oppressed require liberation, as he believed that true liberation necessitates a comprehensive overhaul of the entire social structure, not just the oppressed (Freire, 1970). This is why raising awareness for social justice is needed; not just targeting the plight of the oppressed, but rather aiming to transform the entire society of which the

oppressor is also a part. My learners come from previously and still marginalised population backgrounds. They discussed issues that affect them and created awareness of these issues as they affect them at school or in their communities. Some of the issues the learners discussed included child abuse and bullying. In a statement, one learner expressed, "... children experience child abuse, so we decided to write about it to stop it" (L8). The learner showed concern about children being abused, much like Learner 5, who said, "We have seen how children are physically and emotionally abused, and we want to raise awareness to stop it" (L5). The learners' concerns were highlighted in their remarks, showing how these issues affect them in their daily lives. Most learners live in communities where child abuse is rampant and, therefore, awareness about these issues can increase the chances of victims reporting these incidents.

Creating awareness can help learners understand where to seek help and what to do if they feel they have been violated. Learners described "The Safety in Our Community campaign" and efforts to combat gender-based violence as successful awareness campaigns. The campaigns raise awareness about critical issues, they "provide victims with support, and educate the community on how to prevent and respond to violence" (L9). Another learner observed that "These awareness campaigns educate people about issues of violence and help victims get the support they need" (L12). The learners' responses highlight how social justice campaigns can intersect with education to empower individuals with knowledge on how to respond to violence and where to seek help if needed.

Some of the learners live in townships or informal settlements where violence and crime are a daily experience. These learners pointed to the violence children are exposed to at home or school. In their responses, learners emphasised concerns over violence against children, saying "many children face violence at home and bullying at school, which can affect their well-being"(L10). The learners' interest in this cause was "because some of [their] friends have experienced bullying or have been abused before" (L4; L10). The

learners chose to create awareness of causes to which they felt personally connected. This shows that they are equally affected by these issues, and their responses were empathetic. Thus, these personal connections not only show empathy but also serve as a catalyst for action. In this case, the learners raised awareness. Social justice awareness involves spreading the message to people about issues of injustice, enabling them to be better informed and promoting conscientisation, which is one of the tenets of critical pedagogy. Proponents of critical pedagogy view awareness as crucial in conscientising the mind, enabling the oppressed to act against injustices. If people are aware of social injustice, they are more likely to take action against it.

Social justice awareness is not limited to the rights of people alone but also encompasses the rights of animals and environmental justice. In the same manner as human beings should be treated equally, animals also have rights and awareness about these rights should be equally promoted. This is why some learners discussed "...social justice for animals [citing] animals should be treated the same way as we treat people [because] animals have rights too" (L16). In this response, the learner is motivated by the animal abuse that he may have witnessed and chose to create awareness about animal rights. Expanding the knowledge beyond human rights to include animal rights and environmental justice demonstrates that learners are more aware of what *justice* entails and highlights the importance of advocating for the voiceless and marginalised groups in society. Animals are voiceless, and as people, we must defend and speak for the voiceless. As part of raising awareness, learners designed posters to convey their messages, and one poster read, "Feed It Don't Eat It!" The learner's message was clear: animals should be treated with love and kindness, and their rights should be respected.

In support of animal rights, another learner added, "I see a lot of animals killed by people; some people don't feed their dogs, that's why we chose animal rights" (L9). The learners were very specific in their reflection; they argued that animals, like people, must not be killed at random, and they have the right to be fed. These learners' reflections not only showed comprehension of social

justice but a profound comprehension of complex issues of social justice.



Furthermore, learners discussed the need for environmental-issues awareness, citing the relationship between people, animals, and the environment. In their responses, learners explained that environmental degradation can be a disaster for humankind, hence the need to value, protect, and care for the environment. The learners argued that "people are polluting the environment, they are killing the plants and causing damage to the environment" (L1). The learners recognised the environment as a shared resource that affects all living beings, and this prompted them to advocate for its preservation. By doing this, learners are exercising critical thinking, a skill essential for addressing social justice issues.

Some learners focused their attention on pressing issues like kidnapping, highlighting that as citizens, they have the responsibility to protect others, especially children. The learners argued that "It is important to raise awareness about kidnapping so that kids can always walk in groups and be safe at all times" (L3). Taking responsibility is key to social justice, and these learners felt they had a duty to raise awareness of kidnapping so that children are not victims of kidnapping. It can be surmised that the learners value raising awareness as key to fighting crime and see it as a measure that can be taken to prevent it. The recognition of the need to educate others about the dangers of kidnapping and the importance of safety demonstrates how critical literacy can empower learners to advocate for the rights of vulnerable members of society.

4.5.9 Theme 9: Social action as a goal for critical pedagogy

Social action is the prime goal of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy scholars such as Freire, Apple, and Shor, among others, believed that social action is the result of conscientisation. These scholars believed that once oppressed people are conscientised, they can stand up against any form of oppression, thus they believed in collective action in confronting social injustice. In this study, learners identified various community-driven campaigns that have had a discernible impact on local issues. In line with tenets of critical pedagogy, particularly social action (*praxis*), the learners pointed to the effect of *praxis* by referencing the ongoing fight for better housing, with one learner stating, "Campaigns for better housing in my community have helped reduce overcrowding and made a huge difference to people's lives. Everyone in our community now has a house under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)" (L1). The RDP aims to address socio-economic imbalances of the past. The learner made noticeable reference to the efficacy of social action and how it was applied to achieve social change, in this case, living conditions. This aligns with what is stated in Chapter 2, section 2.2.3.9, referring to *praxis* as the result of complete reflection and action that leads to transformation. As stated in this Chapter 2 section, Freire argued it is not enough for people to know the injustices and fail to act on it, maintaining that social action is the goal for critical pedagogy. When people in the community come together, organise, and demand government intervention, the community can achieve significant improvements in housing. This demonstrates how organised protests and collective action can result in meaningful policy and infrastructural changes.

Social action may require the effort of more than one person, but it often involves a group of people and community involvement. When the community protests in one voice, it is more likely to yield results. In the case of the "Clean Masiphumelele initiative", learners reflected on the power of collective responsibility in addressing environmental degradation. They said that "Through campaigns like the 'Clean Masiphumelele,' the community is clean, and people are now proud of their environment" (L2). The learner's response indicates that

they understand the impact of collective action and what happens when people come together to address a societal problem. In the examples provided by learners, mobilising residents of Masiphumelele to take care of their environment also contributed to a shift in attitude, encouraging responsible citizenship in the form of cleanliness and sustainability. Thus, social action is crucial for encouraging responsible citizenship, which is important to achieve social justice in society.

Another notable social action campaign discussed in the learners' responses aimed to reduce crime and violence in the community. Again, in this case, the role of collective action was deemed important in addressing public safety. One learner remarked: "It is difficult to live in a community where crime is so high (L5). The learner further argued that "social action campaigns created safer spaces for us, and people can now walk around freely and feel safe" (L5). Again, learners expressed strong opinions about the value of collective action and how it can transform communities by addressing underlying structural problems such as crime. These opinions align with Freire's notion of *emancipatory education*, wherein individuals are empowered to become agents of social change as these campaigns are not just about improving immediate living conditions, but also about creating a culture of collective action against issues of injustice.

4.5.10 Theme 10: The power of social action

Social action is a powerful tool that can be used effectively to bring about social change in society. Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argued that social action can be a crucial tool to achieve human liberation and social change. Social action requires that those who are oppressed actively participate in the struggle for their liberation. In line with this Freirean perspective, learners also expressed a belief in the potential for social action campaigns to bring about significant social change. This optimism was articulated through reference to historical examples of successful social movements. One learner stated, "Yes, I think so because Mandela led a protest and today, we are free" (L8), reflecting the understanding of social action campaigns as pivotal in achieving freedom and justice. The learner's reference to Mandela highlights the connection

between protests and historical transformation. Mandela's leadership helped to broaden the liberation struggle, which led to the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. The learner showed an optimistic belief in social campaigns as a tool for addressing systemic issues of social justice, not only in the South African context, but also globally.

In support of the above view on the power of social action, another learner noted that "After the Clean Masiphumelele campaign, people are now afraid to dump garbage everywhere, so I think social campaigns can bring change in society" (L16). In this response, the learner provided a pragmatic example of what happened in their community, where dumping was an issue, when the community came together for a clean-up campaign. There is hope in the power of social campaigns, as reflected in the learners' optimistic sentiments expressed in their responses. Community social action campaigns help to drive change in social behaviour and foster community responsibility where people take responsibility for cleaning their environment. Such responsible action taken by a community reflects Freire's perspective that those who are oppressed should actively participate to liberate themselves. The learners' references to local campaigns, indicated that they are aware that social justice campaigns are not limited to large-scale political movements, but can also lead to incremental, community-based transformations. In a nutshell, the learners believed in the capacity of collective action to generate visible improvements in the environment and social order, thereby reinforcing the argument that social campaigns can bring about change at multiple levels of society.

4.5.11 Theme 11: The role of social movements in the social justice discourse

Social movements refer to collective actions by large groups of people aimed at achieving specific social or political change. Social movements have the power to influence policy direction and political change. Social movements thrive in a democratic space where freedom of expression is respected and where people or organisations may have a voice to be critical of the government. Social

movements are important in influencing social justice discourse as they use different measures, such as massive protests and stay-aways to put pressure on governments or people to transform by advocating for the rights of people or other social causes (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.3.6). Social movements have been at the heart of the struggle for justice and human rights in South African history. The learners reflected on the importance of respecting rights and the role of social movements in fighting for justice, referencing Nelson Mandela's imprisonment for freedom and the struggle for equality in South Africa. From their responses, it appears that the learners understood that social movements are at the heart of advancing social change. Learner 5 noted, "Nelson Mandela fought for the freedom of Black people, and he stayed in prison for 27 years for his community to get freedom and equal justice" (L5). This reference to Mandela's imprisonment recognises the impact of his struggle and shows the importance of personal sacrifices in the fight for justice. One learner said, "Hector Pieterse died because he wanted Bantu education to stop. Today we are all taught in the languages of our choice. I thank him for that" (L9). This response indicated that the learners acknowledged the activists' struggles and related them to their own lives. Similarly, another learner expressed that "Mandela fought for freedom and justice for black people. Today we are all equal, for me that's the benefits I enjoy" (L12). In all the responses provided by the learners, they demonstrated an understanding of the role of social movements and activism in combating oppression.

Learners internalised the struggles for rights, freedom, and justice through the lens of the activists' sacrifices. In recognition of the activists' sacrifices, the learners wrote Thank you letters to show their awareness of the sacrifices made by the activists. In one of the letters, one learner said, "Thank you, tata Madiba, for fighting for the rights of all people; it would not have been possible without your fight and your sacrifice" (L1). This letter shows that the learners engaged deeply with historical events to understand the social, political, and cultural contexts that have shaped their world. Through their reflections, the learners showed not only an understanding of the past but also a personal connection to the value of the social justice that these activists fought for. There is also

evidence of a degree of conscientisation as the learners became more aware of social justice issues and the need to make others aware of social justice.

Becoming more aware of social justice issues resulted in one learner stating, "I am thankful because I have a roof over me, I have food and better houses" (L7). This statement reflects an understanding of the historical struggle for human rights, where the learner connects Mandela's fight for freedom to their sense of freedom and the rights they enjoy today. The learners' reflections revealed that they are not merely absorbing historical facts but are using these stories to understand and appreciate their position within the struggle for justice in their lives.

Sub-theme: The effectiveness of social movements

In as much as social movements are important in influencing social change, their success is not always guaranteed and at times comes at a price. For example, people may get arrested or killed if social action turns violent. It is for this reason that the successes of these movements are not guaranteed. In support of this view, some learners equally expressed scepticism regarding the effectiveness of social campaigns. One learner remarked, "No, I don't think so because sometimes there is no change after people protest" (L7), signalling a sense of doubt about the effectiveness of protest actions and their concrete results. From this response, it can be inferred that social movements are not always successful. From the learners' responses, it was evident that some learners believed that protesting does not guarantee quick results or social change. In the same vein, one of the learners said, "No, I don't think so because sometimes people protest and nothing happens" (L1), further illustrating a perception that social movements can be ineffectual or fail to generate tangible, lasting change. In the real world, social movements may or may not yield results; therefore, it can be surmised that sometimes protest actions do not result in immediate political or social responses.

Some learners expressed scepticism about the efficacy of social movements. This scepticism can be justified by authorities using a heavy hand to

neutralise people taking in protests, for example. During protests, some people risk being killed or arrested, something that instils fear in the masses. In the same view, one learner expressed that the nature of the cause significantly influences the potential for success in social movements, stating, "I think it depends on what they are fighting for" (L16). The argument submitted is valid; the nature and cause of the fight dictate the success of the movement. Where power and influence are threatened, change will take a long time, or it may never happen. In support of this, Learner 16 further said, "If it is freedom, it takes long, but if it is water or sewage leaks, it takes shorter, maybe fixed quickly" (L16). The learners understood that certain issues, particularly those requiring systemic change or long-term struggle, are less likely to yield immediate results in comparison to local issues such as public infrastructure or basic services, that may be fixed quickly, reflecting the efficacy of social movements and the time it takes to address these issues. This understanding of the learners aligns with a realistic perspective on the pace of social change, acknowledging the challenges inherent in transforming entrenched social structures. Although social movements can be effective, they may not always achieve the desired results for various reasons. It is thus essential for learners to understand the costs and sacrifices made in social movements, as exemplified by Nelson Mandela and other social justice activists, both in South Africa and worldwide, who strive to make the world a better place for all.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings of this study confirm that social justice remains a topical and controversial issue in societies today. The data showed that social justice is current and continues to evolve. As society evolves in the context of the *knowledge economy*, and the world becomes more emancipated, empowered, and conscious about issues of social justice, a critical literacy approach to text is a plausible way of viewing the world and understanding text. The study further confirms that social justice has no finite definition as what is just to one, may not be just to others. This is because social justice knowledge evolves over time

and every person or generation may have beliefs, views, experiences, and circumstances that shape their views on what must count as social justice. In this study, the learners defined social justice according to their experiences, perspectives, and how they interact with their environments. However, it is objectively fair to submit that, although social justice may mean different things or be viewed and experienced differently, this study found that there are certain fundamental principles of social justice (love, kindness, respect, diversity, empathy, and equality) and these principles shape a *just* society. These fundamentals (values and practices) remain universally relevant in the discussion of social justice. Through the learners' reflections, I was able to see the process of thought they applied to arrive at certain conclusions in their responses. This provides evidence that the learners were not just giving responses at face value but with connotative alignment to their daily experiences and history, as well as to the hidden meaning in texts. The learners' responses pointed to the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes they may have gained during the intervention in this study, which sought to investigate how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice. The learners' responses suggest a deeper understanding of complex issues of social justice, power, and the force of social movements and social action in driving social transformation. This demonstrated the role of critical literacy in shaping perspectives and conscientising the mind. Based on these findings, I can conclude that critical literacy empowers the mind and creates a sense of urgency to act for social change.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented findings based on the empirical research conducted in this study. The research processes, data presentation, and analysis were discussed. This chapter explored the findings from the intervention, as well as the researcher's observations before and after the intervention. The intervention was based on Picower's six elements for teaching social justice in the classroom. The findings from the observations, the intervention, the learner diaries, and the researcher's journal were critically reflected upon and described

in terms of themes. The next chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study aimed to explore how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom. Critical literacy and social justice, therefore, form the core of this research. Guided by critical pedagogy, the study examined how social justice principles and values can be integrated into the teaching of English. This chapter provides a summary of the scholarly review findings and the empirical research conducted to address the study's research questions. It also outlines the recommendations, limitations, avenues for further research, and the study's conclusions.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section synthesises the key findings derived from both the scholarly review and the empirical investigation that informed the response to the main research question.

The scholarly review addressed the main research question:

- How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom in South Africa?

The empirical investigation addressed the following research sub-questions:

- What critical literacy skills can be taught in an English classroom?
- What social justice principles can be taught in an English classroom?
- What teaching strategies and lesson activities support the promotion of social justice through critical literacy?

5.2.1 Scholarly review findings

A review of the literature shows that there is extensive writing on critical literacy but there is scant literature on how it can be applied in the classroom to promote social justice (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.3.7). As reviewed in Chapter 2 section 2.2.3.8,

most of the literature discusses what critical literacy is and its relevance in promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Many scholars, as discussed in Chapter 2, views critical literacy as text meaning-making and a process of social construction with a critical eye towards the various historical, social, and political contexts involved (Norris et al., 2012).

In a similar study to this one, Vasquez (2001; 2004) worked with children between the ages of three and five in Canada and the United States, encouraging them to question issues of social justice and equity using children's literature and texts from everyday life such as food packaging, media ads, and popular culture (Vasquez et al., 2019). Whereas Vasquez's study demonstrates that even very young learners can critically question issues of power, representation, and equity, the present study differs in terms of participant demographics, socio-cultural backgrounds, and social positioning. Unlike Vasquez's participants, the learners in this study are situated within the South African context, where the enduring legacy of Apartheid, racial profiling, and persistent educational and social inequalities shape their lived realities. As a result, while both studies show the potential of critical literacy to promote social justice, this study highlights how such practices unfold in a developing country context, offering insights into how historic and structural injustices uniquely inform classroom experiences and learner engagement with critical literacy.

In other studies, Janks (1993) developed strategies that promoted language awareness through critical literacy, empowering young adults and adolescents to resist the oppression faced by the black majority. The participants in Jank's (1993) study were directly affected by social injustice, in Apartheid South Africa, because education and policy were still very much aligned to the interests of the colonisers in the early 1990s. As a result, the interpretation of justice and the strategies employed to promote social justice in Jank's study differed contextually from those used in this study. Unlike Jank's (1993) study, this study was conducted in 2024 in a free, democratic South Africa, where teachers and learners alike have the freedom to openly discuss sensitive issues, which may have been impossible to do during Apartheid. This is because social injustice

was rampant during Apartheid, providing theoretical relevance for the use of critical pedagogy in this study. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, section 2.3.9 and 2.3.6.2, the critical pedagogy theory supports social justice. Supporting the same views, Chapter 4 section 4.5.7 discusses hook's views, highlighting the role of critical pedagogy as an empowering tool that helps learners to challenge oppressive systems. Although the studies reviewed had some ideological similarities with this study, the focus of this study is distinct. Previous studies focused on the *what* of critical literacy, whereas this study focused on the *how* of critical literacy and aligned critical literacy with social justice to answer the main research question: *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom?*

5.2.2 Key empirical findings

This study used the participatory action research (PAR) design, which consists of four iterative cycles, as described in Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.1. The second cycle was an intervention (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.2(ii)) that utilised Picower's six elements of teaching social justice to design six lessons aimed at addressing the problem identified in Chapter 1, section 1.5: a lack of critical literacy in the teaching of English that promotes social justice. The intervention used critical literacy lesson activities and strategies as empowering tools to promote social justice in the classroom. Each lesson focused on a specific element of social justice, utilising various texts and strategies that demonstrated how critical literacy can be applied to teach social justice (refer to Chapter 3, Table 3.1 and Appendices B–G). The following findings have emerged as the key empirical findings for this study:

5.2.2.1 The influence of self-love, identity, and culture on social justice

This study found that learners understood social justice through the lens of self-love, identity, and culture (Chapter 4, Table 4.2). The learners referred to social justice as having its roots in self-love, which enables one to love others. This idea was also advanced in Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where the "theory of love is central and considered as a necessary pre-requisite in the pursuit of full humanity" (Shober, 2010:2). The learners identified that to love

who they are, they need first to identify who they are. The learners argued that who they are forms their identity. The learners believed that they must love themselves in order to love others. They viewed identity as the genesis of consciousness of why they should love others. Freire believed that “love is a requirement of the learner and argued that without love of self and others, learners deny their own perspective, view themselves as inferior, and become over-reliant on the perspective of the teacher” (Freire, 2000, cited in Haris & Roter, 2024:119). The study also found that what learners refer to as *identity* is shaped by their cultures, and that they cannot draw a distinct line between identity and culture. It is here that the learners viewed culture as an identity marker. In support of this statement, Freire argued that, in the quest for social justice, “the issue of cultural identity cannot be ignored” (Freire, 2007:41). Having realised this, the learners argued that they should be proud of their culture because culture is an expression of self-love and identity.

5.2.2.2 Learning to respect others and appreciate diversity

The learners viewed respect for other people and appreciating diversity as important goals in realising social justice objectives. They explained that respect can be shown in various ways, including treating all people with dignity. The learners also emphasised that appreciating the diversity of cultures in society can foster social justice and promote peaceful coexistence. Social justice is built on respect for others and is anchored in kindness, as well as an appreciation of differences (see Chapter 4, Table 4.4). Freire posited that “respect and dignity of every person is an ethical imperative and not a favour that we can bestow on others or withhold” (Freire, 1998:39). Freire’s assertions suggest that respecting others is a social imperative that society should practice. The learners’ arguments provided insights into the fundamental elements of social justice, which are respect and diversity. These elements of social justice are also enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of South Africa under Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights, section 10 and section 31 sub section 1(a).

5.2.2.3 Equality, fairness, and inclusion as markers of social justice

The learners viewed social justice as the practice of fairness and equality. They

believed equality means having equal access to the economy, politics, and opportunities, and fairness as treating all people equally irrespective of their colour, creed, or religion. Learners described fairness as the right to be oneself, the freedom to move around without segregation, and having equal access to education (see Chapter 4, Table 4.6). In support of the view of equal education, Freire proposed that “the education system must be flexible and adapt to the needs of each learner and promote learning that is based on their life experiences” (de Mello et al., 2024:120). In view of inclusivity towards a just society, the learners believed that all people should live in the same area without being divided by race or social status (see Chapter 4, Table 4.7). Most of the learners who participated in this study live in informal settlements, and they view the separation of people by class as a perpetuation of segregation. The learners’ views are supported by World Bank (2018) statistics, which rank South Africa as one of the most unequal societies in the world. The World Bank further highlights that the legacy of apartheid continues to exacerbate economic disparities in South Africa (World Bank, 2018). The learners believed that inclusion could lead to social justice.

5.2.2.4 The importance of raising awareness of social injustice

The learners explained that raising awareness of social injustice is important because it empowers them to recognise and address social injustices. They referred to various awareness projects in their communities that had empowered the youth and society to participate in civil discourse, as well as in economic, social, and political affairs within their communities (see Chapter 4, Table 4.9) Empowerment is strengthened when people have knowledge and access to resources that enable social change, therefore, raising awareness through education is essential. When learners possess knowledge, they are empowered and can critically engage with social justice issues. This study used critical literacy to empower learners to address social justice problems. By using critical literacy, the study aligns with Apple and Smith’s (2017) views that education can serve as a powerful tool for social transformation (Apple & Smith, 2017). The learners believed that through education, people should be made aware of what social injustice is. They believed that raising awareness of social

injustice was an essential step that could help them speak against injustices. These views are supported by Freire (1970), Ngugi Thiong'o (1986), and Steve Biko (1960), who argued that consciousness, especially among the oppressed, serves to decolonise the mind and prompts one to act. The awakening of the mind — consciousness — can be attained by raising awareness and giving people access to knowledge and resources to be able to act against social injustices.

5.2.2.5 Social action and social movements can bring about change

The learners believed that social action and social movements have the potential to bring about social transformation. This idea aligns with the views of Freire (1970) and Apple (1993), who argued that collective action against dominant forces can lead to meaningful social change (Apple, 1993 ; Freire, 1970 Subagyo, 2022). As discussed in Chapter 4, and reflected in Table 4.11, the learners expressed a shared belief that when society or communities are mobilised, they can effectively protest to voice their grievances, particularly in situations where dialogue has failed. In support of the learners' perspectives, Freire (1970) contended that activism without thoughtful reflection and action is merely *naïve activism*. Freire urged people to employ tactics and strategies that effectively instigate social change (Ollis, 2014).

5.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

This study was guided by the central research question *How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English Classroom?* To address this overarching question, three research sub-questions were formulated. The answers to these sub-questions and the main research question, drawn from the evidence presented in Chapter 4, constitute the research conclusions of this study.

5.3.1 Research Sub-question One

What critical literacy skills can be taught in an English classroom?

This sub-question examined the critical literacy skills that can be meaningfully integrated into the English classroom. Grounded in the framework of critical

pedagogy, the study identified dialogue, criticality, critique, praxis, and reflection as central critical literacy skills. These skills, when integrated into classroom practice, can encourage social justice-oriented teaching and learning.

5.3.1.1 Critical literacy skills taught in the classroom

(i) Dialogue

In this study, classroom discussions were used to encourage dialogue. Freire (1970) conceptualises dialogue as emerging when individuals engage in shaping the world they want to live in. In a democratic space, dialogue means that everyone has the right to express their thoughts on matters that affect them. These classroom discussions were also inspired by Bhaktin (1981) who argues that education transforms society not by transmitting fixed knowledge, but by creating dialogic spaces where multiple voices interact, challenge authority, and produce new meanings (See Chapter 2 section 2.3.6.1). In their work, Ball and Freedman (2004) argue that learning is inherently dialogic, shaped by the interaction of multiple voices within the classroom. This suggests that education can be a tool for social transformation when it values linguistic and cultural diversity and challenges dominant discourses. By allowing learners to discuss issues that affect them, both in the classroom and in their lives outside of school, I intended to equip them with effective dialogue skills. During the lesson, the learners demonstrated their ability to critique each other. Comber (1994) and Janks (2014) support the idea that critical inquiry, as well as fostering dialogue and collaboration, can help teachers develop critical literacy skills in the classroom.

(ii) Criticality

For learners to engage in sound discussions, there is a need for critical thinking, which means not accepting perspectives at face value. In the view of Freire (1970), criticality means that the learners are consciously aware of the power structures that can shape the individual and the world around them. In this study, criticality was deliberately promoted through discussions on social justice issues

and the creation of awareness about these issues. Freire (1970), a proponent of critical pedagogy, posited that critical thinking and conscientisation would lead people to act against injustice.

(iii) Critique

Although criticality and critique are related terms, in this study they have been used differently. In this study, learners were empowered to be critical and conduct a detailed analysis of texts and their meanings. Learners worked with various texts during the study, honing and sharpening their critical thinking skills. Learners were able to ask thought-provoking questions on issues of power and inequality, which are central to social justice discourse.

(iv) Praxis

The focus of the intervention was to empower learners to be aware of forms of injustices and ultimately act against them as envisaged by Freire (1970). In this study, this was achieved by allowing learners to take a stand and speak against any form of injustice they feel or experience in the classroom. One notable example of learners using praxis in the classroom was when they raised concerns about what they believed was unfair treatment by the class monitor. I believe this display of collective action and involvement was a result of the lessons we learned on social justice and the power of social action. Having seen the learners collectively acting together was evidence that they understood the essence of praxis and the call to act when they feel unfairly treated. The intervention emphasised social action as a vital critical literacy skill for addressing social injustice. This is because the goal of critical literacy is not just to critique the world, but to encourage social action and praxis. Social action and praxis are terms used synonymously in this study to refer to an exercise rooted in “anti-oppressive principles and the notion that people can gain collective strength through working in groups” (Aubrey, 2004:12).

(v) Reflection

Other important tenets of critical pedagogy, as described by Bercaw and

Stooksberry (2005:1), include “reflection, development of voice and active participation.” To support this assertion, learners had the opportunity to reflect in their diaries at the end of each lesson. Reflective learning is considered a key strategy for teaching critical thinking (Faridah, Muhammad & Wirawan, 2017). Through this reflective practise, the learners reflected on various issues of social justice and were able to assert their voices, question societal structures and historical imbalances, and appreciate their background as well as diversities in society. During these critical reflections, learners were empowered to have a voice, encouraged to adopt a multi-perspective approach to societal issues, and become more conscious of social justice principles.

5.3.2 Research Sub-question Two

What social justice principles can be taught in an English classroom?

The study also explored social justice principles that can be taught in an English classroom. Following the observations, the intervention, and the discussions I had with the learners in the classroom, the following principles of social justice emerged as dominant:

- i. equality,
- ii. freedom,
- iii. democracy,
- iv. diversity, and
- v. respect.

During my observations, I noted learners' interactions with one another and observed how the principles of social justice play out in their daily lives, both in the classroom and outside. These observations are crucial for assessing the intervention's impact and effectiveness in promoting the principles of social justice.

As presented in Chapter 4, section 4.3.4, I observed a significant shift in the learners' awareness of social justice and how they applied its principles, such as

kindness, empathy, respect, and appreciation for one another. There is no clear definition of the key principles of social justice. Social justice principles are commonly believed to revolve around equality, equity, rights, and participation (Kechen, 2023). It was rewarding for me to see the learners articulating with confidence what is *just* and *unjust*, demonstrating their new understanding of what constitutes social justice.

5.3.3 Research Sub-question Three

What teaching strategies and lesson activities support the promotion of social justice through critical literacy?

As discussed in Chapter 3, the lesson activities were based on Picower's six elements of teaching social justice. The six lessons employed various critical literacy activities, including debates, a dress-up activity, poster design, writing appreciation letters, group work, and inquiry-based activities.

5.3.3.1 Lesson activities

(i) Debates

To encourage learners' critical literacy skills and promote social justice, they participated in classroom debates. Debates provide learners with an opportunity to critically defend their opinions on issues they experience in their lives. The activity aimed to provide learners with a voice of advocacy, an essential aspect of social justice. The use of debates encouraged learners to express themselves freely, as argued by Freire, who viewed education as "the practice of freedom" (Freire, 1970:71). This also aligns with Apple (1993) and Freire (1970), who both supported a dialogical approach to teaching by allowing learners to participate in discussions on matters that involve them (cited in Seyyedi, 2025). Facilitating debates in the classroom on social and political topics helps develop learners' critical consciousness and their ability to engage in democratic dialogue (Seyyedi, 2025).

(ii) Dress-up activity

The dress-up activity aimed to encourage learners to showcase and take pride in their identity, as well as appreciate others, by dressing up in their cultural attire. This activity encouraged learners to be socially conscious of aspects that influence and affect social justice, such as culture. “Cultural invasion is, on the one hand, an instrument of domination, and on the other, the result of domination” (Freire, 1974, cited in Guilherme, 2017:10). Activities like dress-up aim to reinforce self-identity and an appreciation of diversity, which are important values in building a socially just society. Freire further argued that we should not just preserve culture, but should also have respect for indigenous culture and not confine it to islands or historical-cultural ghettos (Freire, 1995). These assertions validate the need for activities such as cultural dress-up in classrooms and caution teachers not to overlook the issue of cultural identity (Guilherme, 2017).

(iii) Poster designing

For this activity, learners designed posters about a particular social justice issue of their choice. The activity aimed to promote a sense of advocacy and agency about issues that are close to their hearts. The activity also aimed to inspire Freire’s praxis ideology. Designing posters encourages a spirit of action, as posters convey the learners' thoughts and feelings on various issues. This type of praxis is called *healthy praxis* as it is not violent but peaceful. Creative activities, such as poster design, are considered a means of expression for learners to visually articulate and display complex issues (Walsh & Sutherland, 2025).

(vi) Writing positive affirmations and letters of appreciation

Learners wrote positive statements about themselves and about others. This writing activity encouraged them to develop a sense of self-love and foster a sense of identity, while appreciating others. Through reflecting on what makes them proud of their culture, the learners engaged in a critical literacy exercise. Learners also wrote letters of appreciation to their liberation heroes and activists. This activity helped them draw inspiration from those who came before them, as

social justice is a generational cause. By writing these appreciation letters, the learners were able to reflect on the pain and sacrifices of those who fought for freedom and liberation, which are essential aspects of social justice. The letter-writing activity also aimed to inspire learners to communicate their feelings and to ignite a spirit of activism within them. The Nelson Mandela Foundation supports letter writing, stating, “Mandela’s letters to his comrades and old acquaintances were infused with optimism and a steely resolve to stay the course” (Nelson Mandela Foundation Press Release, 2018). This statement suggests that writing letters helps to communicate feelings and experiences, carrying a message of hope to oneself and others. Writing letters to appreciate the fight for social justice helped learners reflect on the suffering of others, stay motivated, and awaken to continue the fight for social justice. Ronald Reagan, the former President of the United States of America, supported this statement in his inaugural speech, adding, “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction” (Reagan, 1976), which necessitates the need for every generation to defend and protect it.

(vii) Group work

Learners were assigned to groups to discuss social justice issues of their choice. Group work fosters a sense of community and collectivism. Social justice is a collective endeavour, and people can achieve their social justice goals by uniting and working together. The group work was also a compatible teaching strategy aligning with Picower’s fourth and sixth elements of teaching social justice. According to this framework, learners were introduced to social movements as avenues through which they could learn to organise themselves to advocate for or protest any form of injustice, thereby raising their concerns. Reference was also drawn to local examples where community organisations or individuals have raised concerns through social movements. Learners watch videos of social campaigns such as the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign.

(viii) Inquiry-based activities

Another teaching strategy employed in the intervention was the inquiry-based learning method. Inquiry-based learning can facilitate the process by which

learners develop critical thinking skills and a critical consciousness, enabling them to take necessary actions to build a more just and equitable society (Serekoan et al., 2022). To implement this strategy in my intervention, I gave learners a task to go home and conduct research and enquire from parents or relatives who lived under apartheid or had knowledge of what life was like in Apartheid South Africa. Research is an integral part of finding and forming knowledge; inquiry aligns intricately with critical literacy.

5.3.4 Main research conclusions

How can critical literacy be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English Classroom in South Africa?

Critical literacy can serve as an effective tool for teaching social justice. For this study, I utilised a range of texts, including historical documents, literary works, and learners' daily experiences, to promote social justice education (refer to Chapter 2, section 2.2.3.7). Critical literacy is based on a multi-perspective worldview, and using different texts provides learners with an opportunity to access various perspectives and meanings from these texts. The meaning embedded in the text is influenced by culture, experience, and knowledge. Learners need to have access to a variety of texts from different genres, cultures, and histories to better position themselves for a diversified approach and a deeper understanding of the texts. This diversified approach to analysing and understanding texts will also enlighten learners on how power relations are portrayed in different texts, thereby broadening their critical literacy skills.

As discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.7, critical literacy is closely tied to the concept of *enlightenment* and the ability to exercise critical thinking about everyday texts. Learners should understand the meaning of texts beyond the literal meaning to encompass everything one sees, feels, touches, and experiences in their everyday lives. When learners understand text beyond the literal meaning, they can uncover the influence of texts on social justice. This is because texts may have hidden biases that may promote certain ideologies, which, if consumed as *formal knowledge*, will change the views of a person.

Freire asserted that education is a “political act,” arguing that it is not neutral, and cautioned about the forms of knowledge, its interests, and purpose (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.7, paragraph 2).

Critical literacy is thus important in teaching social justice. During the intervention, learners read and analysed different texts. The act of analysing texts aimed to encourage learners to exercise critical thinking and uncover hidden biases that may have been embedded in the text. For learners to uncover the bias in texts, they should be aware of their own biases to provide a more *just* interpretation of the text. The ability of learners to read texts with criticality when decoding their meaning is a *social justice* principle. Social justice principles require one to be objective and have a multi-perspective approach to thinking and viewing the world, as discussed in earlier chapters. It is for this reason that when the learners discussed historical events that happened during Apartheid, I emphasised emotional neutrality. I encouraged them to understand the injustices of the past and the need to identify the influence of power and how it was used to subvert the wills of others in favour of a few.

A synopsis of the literature review in Chapter 2 suggests out that critical literacy plays a pivotal role in promoting social justice in the classroom. However, this largely depends on teachers' abilities to integrate critical literacy into their teaching and purposefully use lesson activities and teaching strategies that promote social justice values. The literature has highlighted that critical literacy promotes awareness and consciousness of social issues (Freire, 1972). Teachers, as brokers of knowledge (Comber, 2014), must employ critical pedagogies in their classrooms to foster learners' consciousness of social justice issues.

Critical literacy not only promotes communication skills but also uncovers biases in texts, enabling learners to challenge the status quo. Blixen and Pannell (2020:3) have pointed out that “teachers [must] employ dialectical thinking, as a mode of critique and social inquiry”, which can engage learners in deep thinking. This would enable learners to critique power because “power is both an

enabling and constraining force” (Blinken & Pannell, 2020:3). Based on these assertions, as supported by literature reviewed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.6.2 and evidence gathered in this study through learner reflection (Chapter 4, section 4.3.2), this study concluded that critical literacy can be used as a tool to promote social justice in the classroom.

This study employed Picower’s six elements of teaching social justice as a framework for teaching social justice through critical literacy (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2.2, Table 3.1). Such tested frameworks as Picower’s not only help teachers to have a blueprint to follow but also allow for adaptations to suit different subject objectives, while maintaining the principles of social justice as ultimate objectives and interdisciplinary compatibility.

Using culturally relevant texts and media contingent upon a learner’s history is essential in building knowledge. Comber (2015) argues that “social justice curriculum must be designed with knowledge of the history of a particular people, place, or the environment” (Comber, 2015:362). To the contrary, this may not be the reality. In its preamble, the CAPS document makes this pronouncement but does not provide clear guidelines on how to make this possible, thereby undermining the sense of urgency surrounding the issue of social justice in the education arena. This study thus concludes by making a call to use resources (textbooks, media, texts, stories, and case studies) that are culturally and historically relevant to the learners to gain “valued knowledge” (Comber, 2015:359) as what counts as official knowledge (Apple, 1993). Adhering to Comber’s (2015) and Apple’s (1993) assertions, this study used culturally relevant stories and local case studies (see Chapter 3, section 3.5.2.2(i). Knowledge is constructed to serve the interests of those who construct it — those in power. If not contested, or if teachers blindly use any text without a critical eye, they may, in subtle ways, perpetuate the subjugation of the masses. This is what Freire criticised in his call for critical pedagogy in the classroom, refuting the banking education model. In this study, critical thinking was employed to encourage learners to develop critical thinking skills and become effective problem solvers, thereby enhancing their awareness of social

justice issues. This was promoted through the use of reflective diaries (see Chapter 4, section 4.3.2) and inquiry-based lesson activities (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.3.1)

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proffered to policymakers, curriculum developers, schools, and teachers, based on the study's findings and conclusions. Social justice is a national cause that extends beyond the classroom walls to the enclaves of power. As such, an inclusive approach will make these recommendations feasible and achievable.

5.4.1 Recommendations to government or policy makers

- Provide explicit guidance on the integration of critical literacy into the CAPS.
- Recognise critical literacy as a fundamental part of language and literacy education with practical guidance to implement it in classrooms.
- Train teachers in critical pedagogy and make the training compulsory for all teachers.

5.4.2 Recommendations to curriculum developers

- The term social justice must be explicitly explained in the curriculum and aligned to the content of the curriculum.
- Develop specific policies that enforce and encourage the use of local texts, media, and learner experiences to explore social justice, particularly in historically marginalised communities.

5.4.3 Recommendations for school principals and school management

- Promote a school-wide culture of social justice.
- Schools, with a particular focus on teachers and head teachers, must create

an environment and school climate that encourages dialogue, freedom of expression, empathy, and respect across classrooms. Schools must celebrate cultural diversity through regular school events such as cultural dress days, storytelling circles, and learner-led presentations to incorporate the ideals of social justice at the school level.

5.5 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study employed PAR, a design characterised by four iterative cycles, each repeated with problem redefinition at the end of the cycle. Given the time constraints and the length requirements for a master's thesis, I was able to do only one cycle. Further research could be based on a second cycle of PAR to see how critical literacy and social justice can be enhanced in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The study highlighted the need for practical steps in teaching social justice in the classroom, while also revealing the complexity of social justice. Further research could be conducted on the feasibility of implementing practical steps to teach social justice principles in South African schools. Further studies could also be conducted in primary schools and high schools, investigating the role of critical literacy in teaching social justice.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study has its limitations, which are potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Limitations appear as shortcomings, conditions, or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher, which place restrictions on the methodology and conclusions. Any limitations that might influence the results should be mentioned. This research is based on an exploratory case study in my own classroom, which may present as a limitation but is mitigated by the fact that I have full control of the classroom variables, giving me full access to do an in-depth study. Further, this research does not claim full applicability to broader generalisations but rather to similar contexts and situations. This limitation is acknowledged but outweighed by the insights gained from detailed exploration found in single case

studies, which allow for rich and contextual understanding that can inform future research.

Delimitations are choices made by the researcher, which should be mentioned; they are the limitations consciously set by researchers themselves (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Delimitations describe the boundaries that the researcher sets for a study. This study was conducted in one school serving learners from a historically disadvantaged background. The historical background of the school and the learners may shape the general critical awareness of the participants and may affect the results of the study. Conducting a study of this nature may have benefited learners if they had visited historical sites, like Robben Island and the Hector Pieterse Memorial, because these sites carry a rich history of South Africa and a reminder for social justice in the South African context. By visiting these sites learners could see firsthand the cost of oppression and the experiences of those who fought for justice. These trips are expensive, and as a result, this limitation affects the study.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Social justice is a sensitive and contentious topic in the world today. South Africa's constitution promulgates clearly on social justice and vehemently rejects the segregation of one person by another. Issues of injustice have plagued all sectors of life, and people continue to make efforts to conscientise both the oppressed and the oppressor towards a *just* society. Social justice cuts deep from our daily experiences, education, access to health, employment, and politics.

As a teacher myself, doing research in my classroom, I observed and experienced both power and oppression. As a teacher, I have the power to influence and facilitate my learners' conscience on issues that affect them beyond the content I teach. Learners respect authority, and a teacher has it in the classroom. On the contrary, I have also been at the receiving end of powerlessness, whereupon, as an employee, I must respect and be subservient to those in authority above me. Such is the way power operates, and perhaps

the beginning of the need to ask: What can one do to voice if they feel they are being treated unjustly? Coming from a disadvantaged background myself, I understand the pain of being powerless, voiceless, and helpless. It is from this understanding that my passion for this research was born.

Society needs people who are conscious and who hold those in positions of power accountable. I firmly believe that critical consciousness should be a fundamental aspect of every citizen's ability to bring about social transformation and change. So, I looked at where I am: a teacher in a classroom, surrounded by people who are learners and the leaders of this country, who will, of course, have to safeguard the gains of liberation and ensure that the past does not repeat itself. I examined how I make the most impact and contribute to the quest for social transformation by utilising my classroom as a space for dialogue and practice, thereby empowering my learners through critical pedagogy, which serves as a guiding framework for the principles of social justice.

I gained insights, new experiences, and perspectives on what social justice is, especially from the learners' lenses. Yet, these illuminated the complexity and the very nature of social justice, showing how it is different for everyone. What is social justice and does it mean the same to everyone? These questions led to informed conclusions and a pathway to what I may call *social justice* of the disadvantaged. This is because those in a position of power or privilege have a different interpretation of what constitutes social justice. This realisation goes back to Freire (1970), who argued for the need to liberate the oppressor from their oppression.

I view this study as one that contributes to opening up discussions in the social justice discourse and continue to aid in advocacy for social justice and social transformation. My particular focus is on schools as avenues that impart knowledge and empower learners who are citizens of this country and future leaders.

Through this study, I developed the patience to listen to others and consider

their perspectives. Every response I received during the study and analysis, therefore, opened new horizons and awakened perspectives I would have never gained if I had not conducted this study. For me, it has been a chance for personal growth, but equally important as a teacher, an opportunity to reflect on my classroom practices. It has been a rewarding exercise that has renewed my commitment to social justice and rejuvenated my sense of purpose as both a person and a teacher.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: RESEARCHER OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Phase 1 - Diagnosis [To be completed over a one-month time frame]

Phase 1 - Diagnosis
1. Did the learners communicate with each other kindly and respectfully? Reflection: Did learners communicate with each other kindly and with respect? • Prompts: Did the learners use appropriate language when they communicated with each other? • Did the learners share resources with one another, e.g., food? • Were the learners helpful to each other when they did not understand the content of the lesson?
2. Did the learners express themselves freely in the classroom? Reflection: Did I give learners sufficient opportunities to express themselves freely in the classroom? • Prompts: What opportunities did learners have to express themselves freely in the classroom? • How did they use these opportunities to express themselves? • What challenges did they experience with expressing themselves freely, if any?
3. Did all the learners have equitable opportunities to participate and succeed in learning activities? Reflection: Did I give all the learners the same opportunities to learn and participate in the process of learning? • Prompts: How were the learners who are academically challenged catered

for? • How were the gifted learners catered for?
4. Did learners demonstrate respect for each other's diverse background? Reflection: Did the learners show any sense of appreciation of diversity and tolerance to learners of different backgrounds? • Prompts: Did the learners respect each other's cultural difference in the classroom? • Were the learners tolerant of each other's cultural difference?
5. Were learners encouraged to explore and express their identities in a positive and affirming way? Reflection: Did I encourage the learners to appreciate themselves and their background? • Prompts: Did the learners speak positively about themselves?
6. Were there mechanisms in place for learners to participate in the decision-making process in the classroom? Reflection: Did I give learners opportunities to get involved in decision-making processes in their classroom? • Prompts: Were the learners involved in negotiating classroom rules? • Were the learners involved in choosing their classroom monitors?
7. Did learners demonstrate an awareness of social justice issues, social injustices, and inequalities in their classroom? Reflection: Did the learners demonstrate a level of awareness and consciousness on issues of social injustice and inequalities in their classroom? • Prompts: How did learners respond when they felt they were being unfairly treated? (by teacher or peers)

8. Did learners understand their rights and responsibilities in the classroom?

Reflection: Did the learners understand their rights and responsibilities in the classroom?

- **Prompts:** Did the learners understand their rights in the classroom?
- Did the learners understand their responsibility in the classroom?

9. Did the learners understand how to confront issues of oppression in the classroom?

Reflection: Did the learners know the steps and procedures to confront issues of injustice?

- **Prompts:** Were learners able to recognise oppression in the classroom?
- How did they confront this oppression?

10. Did the learners know who to report to when their rights are infringed by learners or teachers?

Reflection: Did the learners know who to contact at the school should they need to report an incident of the infringement of their rights?

- **Prompts:** Did the learners report on the loss of their belongings?
- Did the learners report any bullying incident?

APPENDIX B: INTERVENTION LESSON 1

LESSON 1

Date:	Time: 45 minutes
Grade:	5
Subject:	English
Lesson Type:	Writing
Topic:	Self-love and knowledge
Type of text:	Visual / Audio Text
Themes:	Identity and self-love

Resources / Media: The following resources will be used in this lesson:

- CAPS document.
- Selfie pictures—encourage learners to reflect on their image.
- Video: Affirmation song by Snoop Dogg (*Today is gonna be an amazing day*).

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

- Love themselves more.
- Appreciate who they are.
- Celebrate their identity.

Introduction to the lesson:

The teacher introduces the lesson by playing the video of a song by Snoop Dogg, an American rapper, titled: *Today is gonna be an amazing day*. The song encourages individuals to be positive about themselves. It empowers them to see themselves in a positive light. Using the song will help the teacher to create a relaxed yet engaging learning atmosphere by using easy to remember lyrics in the song that relate to them as individuals. After watching the song, the teacher asks the learners what they think about the song? The teacher then discusses the themes of the song which are optimism, empowerment, and positivity. These themes align with the focus of the lesson which is positive self-affirmation.

During the lesson:

The teacher explains in detail:

- Self-love.
- Why self-love is important.
- How learners can love themselves.
- The need to appreciate diversity.

Activity:

Learners write 10 positive affirmation statements about themselves and their culture.

Learners also write 5 positive qualities about the person sitting next to them and their culture.

Conclusion:

The lesson ends with learners reflecting in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. What makes you proud of your culture? Begin with the words: Today I am proud to be abecause.....
2. Choose another culture that you heard about in class (different from your own) and write a paragraph on why you think that culture is special.

APPENDIX C: INTERVENTION LESSON 2

LESSON 2

Date:	Time: 45 minutes
Grade:	5
Subject:	English
Lesson Type:	Oral
Topic:	Respect for others
Type of text:	Visual
Themes:	Respect for self and others

Resources / Media: The following resources will be used in this lesson:

- CAPS document.
- Posters showing different cultural ceremonies.

Pierre André Leclercq (2007) available at:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AMapoch.-_Ndebele_Cultural_Village_%281%29.jpg?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Whippedhusband (2011) available at:
<https://kevdienglesman.wordpress.com/2011/08/17/boer-attire-the-lowdown/> (accessed 27:06.2025)

Xhosa amaKwetha (young men in initiation blankets. available at
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Abakwetha_in_the_forest.jpg
(Accessed on 27.06.2026)

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

- Respect each other.
- Appreciate other people's cultures.
- Celebrate diversity.
- Be tolerant of each other's differences.

Introduction to the lesson:

As an introduction to the lesson, the teacher displays posters of different cultural backgrounds in South Africa. This helps the learners to identify that South Africa is a diverse society with different people from different backgrounds. Through these pictures, learners are acquainted with and

encouraged to appreciate each other and their differences. The teacher asks leading questions to discuss why it is important to respect each other.

During the lesson:

The teacher explains in detail:

- The concept of culture.
- What respect entails.
- How one can show appreciation of each other's different cultures.
- The need for tolerance and acceptance of differences.

Activity:

This activity is an oral activity. Learners will be asked to come to school dressed in their cultural attire and prepare a show and tell about a celebration in their culture. The aim of this lesson is for learners to experience different cultures and gain a better understanding of these cultures. An activity like this encourages an appreciation of diverse cultures and respect for one another.

Conclusion:

The lesson ends with learners reflecting in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. What does respect for people mean to you, and how do you see it reflected in your classroom, school, or community?
2. Share an experience where you learned something new about a cultural tradition or celebration different from your own. How did this experience make you feel, and what did you learn from it?

APPENDIX D: INTERVENTION LESSON 3

LESSON 3

Date:	Time: 45 minutes
Grade:	5
Subject:	English
Lesson Type:	Whole class discussion/ Oral
Topic:	Issues of social injustices
Type of text:	Visual
Themes:	Fairness and Inequality

Resources / Media: The following resources will be used in this lesson:

- CAPS document.
- Posters used during Apartheid in South Africa. The posters will be used to stimulate discussion and curiosity about life during Apartheid compared with life today — post-Apartheid.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

- Identify and recognise acts of injustices such as inequality and unfairness.
- Recognize the importance of addressing social injustices.
- Value fairness, equity, and human rights.

Introduction to the lesson:

Prior to this lesson, I asked learners to talk to their parents, guardian, aunts, or uncles to find out if any of them had lived during Apartheid. Asking their parents what it was like to go to school, hospital, restaurants, and beaches during Apartheid. The purpose of this task was for learners to have a better understanding of social injustice before I taught it using Apartheid as an example. Members from these multi-generational homes were encouraged to use their home language to explain their experiences, making it easy for learners to understand.

During the lesson:

The teacher explains in detail:

- What is social injustice? – refer to the examples of Apartheid.
- Examples of injustices (discrimination, racial inequality, unequal access to education, bullying, etc.).
- The importance of social justice (fairness, equality, freedom, rights, tolerance, etc.).

Activity One:

To teach this activity, I had a class discussion on the concept of fairness and equality. As a stimulant for this lesson, I showed learners images of posters reading ‘Whites Only’, No Blacks Allowed” in trains, at beaches, in restaurants, etcetera. After viewing the posters, I asked learners to share what they thought about the posters. I also asked learners to tell the class their families first-hand experience about Apartheid and the injustices they experienced.

Activity Two:

This activity was a debate on inequality. For this activity I used the discussion in activity one about inequality and engaged learners in a debate. The topic for the debate was “Black and white people should live separately. Do you agree?” This activity encouraged learners to be conscious of multiple perspectives on issues of justice and to understand what social justice means in their lives.

Conclusion:

The lesson ends with learners reflecting in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Write two paragraphs beginning with the following words:
 - a. To be fair is to be...
 - b. To be unfair is to be...
2. Write a paragraph beginning with the words: For me social justice means...

APPENDIX E: INTERVENTION LESSON 4

LESSON 4

Date:	Time: 45 minutes
Grade:	5
Subject:	English
Lesson Type:	Listening
Topic:	Social movements and social change
Type of text:	Literal text
Themes:	Activism, empowerment, solidarity

Resources / Media: The following resources will be used in this lesson:

- CAPS document.
- Newspaper articles, videos.
- Pictures of iconic South African political figures.

<https://www.google.com/url?esrc=s&q=&rct=j&sa=U&url=https://www.youtube.com/watch%3Fv%3DIsGC5Bwxv6o&ved=2ahUKEwjE87iG3aKUAXV3W0EAHThQEIAQtwJ6BAgFEAE&usg=AOvVaw2P9ynksdfM8E8tQUfIQ5FH>

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

Understand social movements and social change in South Africa, focusing on iconic figures who played a key role in bringing about positive political transformation.

Introduction to the lesson:

As an introduction to this lesson, learners watch a video on 2015#FeesMustFall to give them an insight into real life social movements. Through watching the video, learners are empowered and conscientised on the role of social movements to realise social change. After watching the video, learners read the excerpts from the newspaper articles on the arrest of Nelson Mandela after he led a protest in the 1960s.

During the lesson:

The teacher explains in detail:

- What social change entails.
- What social movements are.
- Why social movements and social justice are important.
- The results of activism.

Activity:

Learners write *thank you letters* to any anti-apartheid activists or present-day social activists to thank them for the sacrifices they made. The learners then display these thank you letters in a *gallery walk* for all learners to view. Writing these letters served as a way of honouring those who sacrificed their lives and those that continue to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of others.

Conclusion:

The lesson ends with learners reflecting in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Which social activist most inspires you?
2. What social cause has this activist fought for?
3. What benefits do you now enjoy in your life that were fought for by this activist?

APPENDIX F: INTERVENTION LESSON 5

LESSON 5

Date:	Time: 45 minutes
Grade:	5
Subject:	English
Lesson Type:	Oral and Visual
Topic:	Raising awareness
Type of text:	Posters
Themes:	Activism, empowerment, awareness

Resources / Media: The following resources will be used in this lesson:

- CAPS document.
- A3 size White Paper.
- A4 size White Paper.
- Case study handout: *From victim to victory*

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

- Advocate for social justice.
- Raise awareness about social justice.
- Be conscious of social injustice.

Introduction to the lesson:

To introduce the lesson, the teacher used a case study to stimulate the learner's curiosity on the topic. The case study is about a young girl who defied all odds after being bullied by a fellow student and became an advocate for social justice.

Case Study: From Victim to Victory

Jaylen Arnold's story

Jaylen Arnold is another young person who has changed the world by advocating for bullying prevention. As a child, Jaylen was diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Asperger's

syndrome. Owing to his differences, he was often bullied by other learners at his school.

Jaylen decided that instead of fighting back, he could stand up for other children who are bullied because they are different. He started the Jaylen's Challenge Foundation, a nonprofit organisation that educates children across the United States about how they can prevent bullying. In 2014, Jaylen was named a World of Children award honouree for his work as an anti-bullying advocate.

Story adapted from Waterford.org. Accessed 08/05/2024

Story accessible at Challenge Foundation website

During the lesson:

The teacher discusses the following questions with learners:

- What can you do to create awareness on issues of social injustice?
- What steps can you take if you are being unfairly treated?
- If you see another person being bullied, would you stand up to the bully?
- What role can you play to conscientise others about social injustice?

Activity:

Learners design a poster in groups to raise awareness about any one social justice issue that they had learned about in a previous lesson, such as equality, tolerance, or diversity. After designing the posters, each group presents their poster to the class. This provides learners with an opportunity to teach each other what they know and have learned about social justice.

Conclusion:

The lesson ends with learners reflecting in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Why did your group choose the social justice issue that you did?

2. Why is it important for you to raise learners' awareness of this social justice issue?

APPENDIX G: INTERVENTION LESSON 6

LESSON 6

Date:	Time: 45 minutes
Grade:	5
Subject:	English
Lesson Type:	Visual and discussion
Topic:	Social Action
Type of text:	Visual Text
Themes:	Activism, empowerment, advocacy

Resources / Media: The following resources will be used in this lesson:

- CAPS document.
- Video - June 16, 1976, Soweto Uprising.
- DVD video player / TV.

<https://www.gettyimages.com/videos/apartheid>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOU15CQL2Mc>

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson the learners should be able to:

- Organise and participate in social action campaigns.
- Confront issues of social injustice happening in their lives.

Introduction to the lesson:

To introduce the lesson, I showed learners clips of social action in real life. These included the Soweto Uprising of June 16, 1976, and the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign. I provided the context and background in which these uprisings transpired. The reason for showing these videos was to make learners see how learners can stand together against forms of injustice. The videos were important because they show real life examples of learners collectively taking part in addressing issues of injustice. After watching the videos, I introduced the terms *protesting* and *picketing* and explained how these terms can be used as a tool in social action.

During the lesson:

Questions for discussion:

- Why do you think people protest?
- Do you think protesting or picketing could be a solution for social injustice?
- Would you consider participating in a social action campaign for something that you believe is unjust?

The discussion aimed to critically prepare learners for the costs and benefits of embarking on social action. I explained to them that social action means people coming together to tackle an issue of social injustice at their home or in their community.

Activity:

Learners choose one aspect of social injustice from their classroom or community that affects them and plan a social action campaign that will bring about social justice for that issue. This activity will give learners an opportunity to participate in a social action campaign in real life.

Conclusion:

The lesson ends with learners reflecting in their reflective journals by answering the following questions:

1. Do you think that social action campaigns can bring about change in our society? Explain why you say this.
2. Write a paragraph about one social action campaign that you know of that brought about change in your community.

APPENDIX H: LEARNERS' REFLECTIVE DIARIES

Lesson 1 - Reflection

At the end of lesson 1, learners reflect on the following questions:

1. What makes you proud of your culture? Begin with the words: Today I am proud to be abecause.....
2. Choose another culture that you heard about in class (different from your own) and write a paragraph on why you think that culture is special.

Lesson 2 - Reflection

At the end of lesson 2, learners reflect on the following questions:

1. What does respect for people mean to you, and how do you see it reflected in your classroom, school, or community?
2. Share an experience where you learned something new about a cultural tradition or celebration different from your own. How did this experience make you feel, and what did you learn from it?

Lesson 3 - Reflection

At the end of lesson 3, learners reflect on the following questions:

1. Write two paragraphs beginning with the following words:
 - a. To be fair is to be...
 - b. To be unfair is to be...
2. Write a paragraph beginning with the words: For me social justice means...

Lesson 4 - Reflection

At the end of lesson 4, learners reflect on the following questions:

1. Which social activist most inspires you?
2. What social cause has this activist fought for?
3. What benefits do you now enjoy in your life that were fought for by this activist?

Lesson 5 - Reflection

At the end of lesson 5, learners reflect on the following questions:

1. Why did your group choose the social justice issue that you did?
2. Why is it important for you to raise learners' awareness of this social justice issue?

Lesson 6 - Reflection

At the end of lesson 6, learners reflect on the following questions:

1. Do you think that social action campaigns can bring about change in our society? Explain why you say this.
2. Write a paragraph about one social action campaign that you know of that brought about change in your community.

APPENDIX I: RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Phase 1 - Diagnosis
Reflection: Did the learners communicate with each other kindly and with respect? • Prompts: Did the learners use appropriate language when they communicated with each other? • Did the learners share resources with one another, e.g., food? • Were the learners helpful to each other when they did not understand the content of the lesson?
Reflection: Did the learners express themselves freely in the classroom? • Prompts: What opportunities did learners have to express themselves freely in the classroom? • How did they use these opportunities to express themselves? • What challenges did they experience with expressing themselves freely, if any?
Reflection: Did all the learners have equal opportunities to participate and succeed in learning activities? • Prompts: How will the learners who are academically challenged be catered for? • How will the gifted learners be catered for?
Reflection: Did the learners show any sense of appreciation of diversity and tolerance to learners of different backgrounds? • Prompts: Did the learners respect each other's cultural differences in the classroom? • Were the learners tolerant to each other's cultural differences?
Reflection: Were learners encouraged to explore and express their identities in a positive and affirming way? • Prompts: Did the learners speak positively about themselves?
Reflection: Were there mechanisms in place for learners to participate in the decision-making process in the classroom? • Prompts: Were the learners involved in negotiating classroom rules?

• Were the learners involved in choosing their classroom monitors?
Reflection: Did learners demonstrate an awareness of social justice issues, social injustices, and inequalities in their classroom? • Prompts: How did learners respond when they feel they are being unfairly treated? (by teacher or peers).
Reflection: Did learners understand their rights and responsibilities in the classroom? • Prompts: Did the learners understand their rights in the classroom? • Did the learners understand their responsibilities in the classroom?
Reflection: Did the learners understand the steps and procedures of how to confront issues of oppression in the classroom. • Prompts: Did the learners understand how to confront issues of oppression in the classroom?
Reflection: Did the learners know who to report to when their rights are infringed by learners or teachers. • Prompts: Did the learners report on the loss of their belongings? • Did the learners report bullying?

APPENDIX J: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 12 June 2024

Decision: Ethics Approval form

Ref: 2024/06/12/00000021/01/RB

Name: Chibayo Muudzwa

Student No.: 53712064

Dear Chibayo Muudzwa

Researcher(s): Name: Chibayo Muudzwa

E-mail address: 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Telephone: 0725175983

Supervisor(s): Name: Mrs Katharine Naidu

E-mail address: naiduk1@unisa.ac.za

Telephone: 0124292840

Title of research: Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a grade 5 South African English classroom.

Qualification: Master of Education Curriculum and Instructional Studies

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/06/12** to **2029/06/12**.

*The **write risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **12 June 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2029/06/12**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 2024/06/12/00000021/01/RB should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof RB Monyai
Acting Head: CEDU Research
monyarb@unisa.ac.za



Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean: CEDU
gakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved – decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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APPENDIX K: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

27 January 2026

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: Confirmation of editing of MEd dissertation

Title of dissertation:

Using Critical Literacy to Teach Social Justice: A Case Study of a Grade 5 South African English Classroom

Author:

Chibayo Muudzwa

Academic Institution:

University of South Africa

This letter confirms that the dissertation detailed above has been edited for spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, phrasing, language, readability, and consistency.

The intended meaning of the content has not been altered by the editing process. The dissertation was edited using the MS Word Track Changes tool enabling the author to reflect on and accept or reject the suggested changes.

Yours faithfully,



Glynnis Carter

Professional academic editor

Freelance specialist editor: CACTUS Communications

Freelance researcher, writer, and editor: Aquila Life Sciences

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082 364 3589

APPENDIX L: TURNITIN REPORT

Similarity Report	
PAPER NAME	AUTHOR
COPLETED DISSERTATION.docx	CHIBAYO MUUDZWA
WORD COUNT	CHARACTER COUNT
55771 Words	318254 Characters
PAGE COUNT	FILE SIZE
202 Pages	488.2KB
SUBMISSION DATE	REPORT DATE
Feb 4, 2026 9:35 AM GMT+2	Feb 4, 2026 9:40 AM GMT+2
● 22% Overall Similarity	
The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.	
• 13% Internet database • 19% Publications database • Crossref database • Crossref Posted Content database • 13% Submitted Works database	
● Excluded from Similarity Report	
• Manually excluded sources	
Summary	

APPENDIX M: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Date 07/ April 2024

Title: Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a Grade 5 South African English Classroom.

DEAR PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT

My name is Chibayo Muudzwa, am doing research under supervision of Mrs Katharine Naidu, a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies in the college of education towards a Master of Education (MEd) degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding from UNISA's bursary department. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a Grade 5 South African English Classroom."

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is expected to collect important information that could lead to solutions to how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in classrooms.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited because you because I hope this study will benefit your child and his/her learning at school and also contribute towards the development of his/her career one day, but we cannot guarantee this. There are no financial benefits to this study.

I obtained your contact details from the school under strict directive

that the information shall solely be used for the purpose for which it was requested and that I shall at all times adhere to “The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act, no. 4 of 2013 that ensures that the right to privacy is taken seriously and includes participant's right to be protected against any unlawful collection, retention, dissemination and use of their personal information. In light with that, the data obtained and collected shall solely be used for this study and will not be disseminated or given to other parties other than the researcher and the University of South Africa (UNISA). This study will comprise of 16 learners and one teacher as the sample size for the study.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Describe the participant's actual role in the study.

The purpose of this project is to teach your child to be conscious of social justice and to help them deal with the question of justice, at school, at home or in a broader society. The aim of the study is to equip learners with critical literacy skills that would help them confront issues of social injustices in their daily experiences and foster responsible citizenship. The study will also try to help the child deal with daily challenges in their life and gain knowledge of self and respect for others as well as their identity.

The study involves audio recording learners' discussions on social justice in class. learners will be asked, thought provoking questions on social justice. The following questions during the discussions will be asked: 1. What do you understand by fairness? 2. How can you exercise fairness towards your friends. This study is expected to be

completed in 6 weeks, during which learners will complete a series of activities immersed in their daily learning routines.

CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?

Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written assent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

By participating in this study, there are no physical and material benefits to the participants. However, learners can benefit by gaining knowledge and skills that they will use in the learning and an after-school life. It is worth mentioning that, even the consciousness benefits are not guaranteed as a benefit as these may as well depend on the

participant's eagerness and general learning abilities. On this note, I believe that not all participants will benefit equally. It is still my strong submission that, all participants will benefit in differently one way or another.

ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?

There are no foreseeable harm or negative consequences that may be as a result of participation. Participants in this instance are

learners who are learning in their normal learning classroom environment. Any harm or injury that may occur to the participants will not be in anyway attributable to their participation or the environment but will be seen as an unfortunate accident that was going to happen whether the learners are participating in the study or not. Having said that, all precautionary measures are taken to make sure that the classroom is a safe environment where learners are safe and protected from physical and emotional risk or harm. In extreme unfortunate incidences where a participant (learner) gets injured, the necessary procedure of attending the participant and establish the best response as per the injury, communicate and report the injury to the interested parties who will then jointly discuss the causes and the necessary interventions thereof. It is important to that when accidents occur at school, the school has a special emergency response from CMR medical response, who are qualified doctors attending to the scene and carry the learner to medical hospital of choice. The CMR costs are covered by the school and not the parent. The presence of CMR medical response aid a layer of guarantee to saving lives should a life-threatening injury happen while the learners are at the research site.

WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

You have the right to insist that your name will not be recorded anywhere and that no one, apart from the researcher and identified members of the research team, will know about your involvement in this research (this measure refers to confidentiality) OR Your name will not be recorded anywhere and no one will be able to connect you

to the answers you give (this measure refers to anonymity). Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings (this measure refers to confidentiality).

In the case where the data is shared with an external coder or transcriber, these individuals will be forced to sign a confidentiality form to pledge their subscription to confidentiality and protection of participant data. This study will neither share data with the coder nor the transcriber. Should this change, the changes will be communicated and procedure will be completed, and the confidentiality form agreement will be sent to the research Ethics Committee for further review and consideration. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

The data gathered from participants will be included in study and form part of the article that will be submitted for publication. Your data will be treated with highest degree of privacy, no real names shall be posted, and individual participants cannot be identified as pseudonyms shall be used, thus identity and privacy will be protected. There is a maximum guarantee of privacy of information and data, as this study does not involve focus groups where more than one person may have access to information and working with that information in which case it may be passed by one part or another.

HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After a period of 5 years, the data may in hard copies may be destroyed by any of the means shredding or burning and electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a special software programme or made available under the strict accessibility protocols of the data curator as embargoed data or closed data.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There are no costs, rewards offered, finance or otherwise. If participants incur costs owing to their participations, that will be reimbursed. This study will however not accrue any costs of any nature on the part of a participant.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the college of education (CEDU) at the University of South Africa (Unisa). A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?

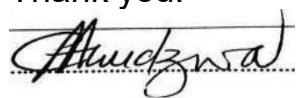
If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Chibayo Muudzwa on 0725175983 or email at 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za or website <https://uir.unisa.ac.za>. The findings are accessible for five years.

Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Chibayo Muudzwa on 0725175983 or email 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za .

Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact Mrs Katherine Naidu on 0124292184 or email at naiduk1@unisa.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Thank you.



Chibayo

APPENDIX N: PERMISSION LETTER FROM WCED DBE



Directorate: Research

Audrey.wynngaard@westerncape.gov.za

tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITHIN THE WESTERN CAPE

Note

- This application has been designed with students in mind.
- If a question does not apply to you indicate with a N/A
- The information is stored in our database to keep track of all studies that have been conducted on the WCED. It is therefore important to provide as much information as is possible

1 APPLICANT INFORMATION

1.1 Personal Details		
1.1.1	Title (Prof / Dr / Mr/ Mrs/Ms)	Mr
1.1.2	Surname	Muudzwa
1.1.3	Name (s)	Chibayo
1.1.4	Student Number (If applicable)	53712064

1.2 Contact Details		
1.2.1	Postal Address	BOX 300 Noordhoek Capetown 7979
1.2.2	Telephone number	0725175983
1.2.3	Cell number	0725175983
1.2.4	Fax number	N/a
1.2.5	E-mail Address	53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za

APPENDIX O: ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY (Return slip)

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the observations and my classroom activities during the study. I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Participant Name & Surname (please print) _____

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher's Name & Surname :

Chibayo Muudzwa



07/04/24

Researcher's signature

Date

Principal
researcher's Cell:
+27 725175983
Email: 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za



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APPENDIX P: LETTER REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Dear Parent

Your child is invited to participate in a study entitled *"Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a Grade 5 South African English Classroom."*

I am undertaking this study as part of my Master's research at the University of South Africa. The purpose of the study is to find out how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in an English classroom and the possible benefits of the study are the improvement of conscientization of learners on issues of social justice. I am asking permission to include your child in this study because they are part of the class in which the research will be conducted, and that the learner may be empowered stand up for what is right and encourage responsible citizenship and morally conscious citizens. I expect to have sixteen other children participating in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

- Take part in a focus group interview, in class discussions, and participant in group work in small groups of 4 learners in each group. The tasks will take about 30 minutes each.
- Complete class activities, which will take place in class.
- Complete reflective questions in the learner's diary. This will take 10-15 minutes in class at the end of the lesson.
- Other, no video recording shall be recorded but some discussions will be audio recorded in which case consent will be sought from parents and participants.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

There are no foreseeable risks to your child by participating in the study. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefits to education are improved awareness on social justice issues and empowerment to be critical learners. Neither your child nor you will receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

The study will take place during regular classroom time with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. However, if you do not want your child to participate, an alternative activity will be available for your child.

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study and you, and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form which accompanies this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

The benefits of this study are empowerment and critical awareness of social justice to the participants. There are no potential risks that may be associated with participating in this study, however in the rarest of occasions, some participants may feel uncomfortable discussing social justice as this may be a sensitive topic. Participants can choose to withdraw, should they feel uncomfortable at any time of the study.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.
If you have questions about this study, please ask me or my study supervisor, Miss Katharine Naidu, Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, College of Education, University of South Africa. My contact number is 0725175983 and my e-mail is 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za. The e-mail of my supervisor is naiduk1@unisa.ac.za

Permission for the study has already been given by and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

Name of child: _____

Sincerely

Parent/guardian's name (print) Parent/guardian's signature: Date:

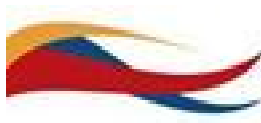
Chibayo Muudzwa



07/04/2024

Researcher's name (print) Researcher's signature Date:

Principal
researcher's Cell:
+27 725175983
Email: 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za



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APPENDIX Q: LETTER REQUESTING ASSENT FROM LEARNERS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Date 07/04/24

Dear learner.....

My name is Mr Chibayo Muudzwa your teacher and would like to ask if you would be interested in participating in research activities that will be completed during class time. I am trying to learn more about how critical literacy can be used to teach social justice in a Grade 5 English classroom.

If you say YES to do this, you will complete a series of in-class activities in your English books and your diaries. We will have some classroom discussions, role play, comprehension, debates, writing, and reading during the duration of the study.

I will also ask your parents if you can participant in this study. If you do not want to participate in this study, it will also be fine with me. Remember, you can say yes, or you can say no, and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop. You can ask any questions that you have now. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, ask me next time you come to school.

Please speak to your mommy or daddy about participating in this study before you sign this letter. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. A copy of this letter will be given to your parents.

Kind Regards

Chibayo Muudzwa (Teacher)

Your Name	Yes, I will take part 	No, I don't want to take part 
Name of the researcher	Chibayo	Muudzwa
Date	07/04/2024	
Witness		

Principal

researcher Cell:

+27 725175983

Email: 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za



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APPENDIX R: LETTER TO THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION METRO SOUTH EDUCATION

Muudzwa C. (Mr)
P.O. Box 300
Noordhoek
7979
07 March 2024

District Director of Education
Metro South Education
District Private Bag X2
MITCHELL'S PLAIN
7785

Att: Paulina Redelinghuys

R.E: Request for permission to do research at [REDACTED] and Primary school.

Dear Sir/Madam

I am Master of Education (M.Ed.) student at the university of South Africa (UNISA) doing my Research in Curriculum Studies. My research topic is "Using critical literacy to teach social justice in an English classroom." I am writing in to request permission to conduct my research at a school, situated in Lekker-water road outside Masiphumelele in Fishhoek. I am contactable on 0725175983 or via email on 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Chibayo (53712064)
Muudzwa

Principal researcher
Cell: +27
725175983
Email: 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za



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APPENDIX S: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Request for permission to conduct research at [REDACTED] Primary School

Title: Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a Grade 5 South African English classroom.

Date: 07 April 2024

The Principal

[REDACTED] School

Tel: 0027603910276

Email: [REDACTED].org.za

Dear Mrs [REDACTED]

I, Chibayo Muudzwa, am doing research under supervision of Mrs Katharine Naidu, a lecturer in the Department of Curriculum and Instructional Studies in the College of Education towards a Master of Education (MEd) degree at the University of South Africa. We have funding from UNISA's bursary department. **We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled "Using critical literacy to teach social justice: A case study of a Grade 5 South African English classroom."** The aim of the study is to investigate how critical literacy can be used in an English classroom to teach social justice.

Your school has been selected because I teach at the school. The study will entail a series of observations to observe learner's understanding the concept of social justice. After that, a teaching intervention will be implemented to help learners understand the importance of being conscious of social justice issues.

The benefits of this study are that learners will better understand what social justice is and be able to act against injustices, at home, at school or later in life.

Potential risks are that I will be working with young children who may not necessarily understand issues of social justice and being a sensitive subject that may trigger emotional responses. However, all these factors have been considered, and consent will be sought from all parents and learners.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research. Feedback procedure will entail class discussions of social justice issues that affect learners.

Yours sincerely



Chibayo Muudzwa

Principal Researcher

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Email: 53712064@mylife.unisa.ac.za



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