Learning and Teaching Literature:
A Curriculum Development Perspective[1]

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Abstract

This paper attempts to critique the quality of experience which many
students (at secondary and tertiary levels) have as a consequence of
studying literature within the present educational system. It is argued
that if the study of literature is to include a qualitative literature
learning experience, the development of the English language
curriculum needs to move beyond a dialogue about the change of the
content and the 'Africanisation' of the curriculum. If the purpose is to
enhance the quality of the readership of students, then the project of
social redress should include the reading of and the leading into a
critical dialogue with any available text. Such a critical dialogue will
both engage the cultural and ideological assumptions and values of the
text and in the process reconceptualise the function of literary studies,
methodologies of teaching, learning and study, the process of
examination and aim to better prepare future teachers for their task. It
will also contribute to the liberating of the creative and critical
potential of learners.

1 Curriculum as commodity

If you and I were asked to develop a curriculum for English language studies
at either secondary or tertiary level, perhaps the first questions that would
spring to our minds would be: 'which particular literary texts should we
prescribe for study within the schools or lecture halls?'; 'which particular
texts are no longer appropriate in terms of the kind of ideologies we wish to
develop amongst the student generation of new South Africans?'; 'which texts
must go?'. If we do question ourselves only narrowly along these lines, we
soon realise that we have a limited understanding of the process of
development of a qualitative curriculum for a new South Africa.

Our questions and actions are perfectly understandable given the desire
to leave behind the biased selection of literary texts which served to construct
particular cultural ideologies during apartheid education. However we would
still be trapped within a conservative view of what curriculum reconstruction
entails: i.e. merely the replacement of one set of content material with
another. All that our classwork would end up doing would be merely
reflecting the dominant ideologies and value systems of those who select the
items of cultural content deemed worthy of study.

Unfortunately much of the discussion about curriculum development of
English language courses has taken on this flavour, focusing on what content
has been included or excluded from the selection for formal study in the
classroom/lecture hall. A tacit view emerges from this over-emphasis on the
content of the English curriculum: that the curriculum is a 'package of

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information' which learners need to be exposed to. Such a preoccupation with the content of the curriculum treats the curriculum as a 'product'—a commodity to be dispensed to the uninitiated learner population (Grundy 1987). It has been argued that this concept of 'curriculum' is synonymous with the concept 'syllabus'. It is therefore believed that curriculum reconstruction/development is about syllabus reduction, syllabus editing, syllabus revision, syllabus expansion .... Within the context of a highly restrictive education system it is inevitable that the dominant definition of curriculum has been equated with 'syllabus mastery'. Students who succeeded in obtaining better results were those who were able to recall the already constructed knowledge packages that the so-called experts (teachers) have formulated. The schooling system, was seen as an agent for delivery of particular parcels of cultural knowledge. The successful learner was one who could show evidence of adequate mastery of the information deposited in his/her memory store. The role of the student of English literature was therefore seen as serving one of the underlying consequential goals of the schooling system, namely to develop memory capacities. Paulo Freire (1972) called this process 'banking education': the depositing and retrieving of information. Surely this is not the kind of learner that the new South Africa wishes to produce?

2 An extended notion of curriculum development

Our point of departure should be a wider conception of the notions 'curriculum' and 'curriculum development'. Reconstruction of the English language curriculum needs to include a redefinition of the content of what is studied, as well as a redefinition of how literature is taught and learnt within a qualitative educational process.

Qualitative education aspires to soar beyond the confines of learners' ability to recall interpretations already formulated by the curriculum constructors. Within qualitative education the learner is not seen as a passive recipient of knowledge but as an active agent who constructs and reconstructs the totality of experience within the teaching and learning environment. The learner is seen as individual agent who is simultaneously a product and a shaper of the social circumstances which surround him/her. Therefore, the development of a qualitative education recognises the need to affirm the social background of the learner as well as extend the learner to explore different and varied possibilities within and beyond his/her own horizons. A qualitative education therefore aims to liberate the individual learner beyond the possibility of the here-and-now and instead equip him/her to shape a world using hitherto unrealised creative and critical potential (see Schubert 1987:32). In this formulation of the concept 'curriculum', the learner is therefore seen as a conscious constructor of the curriculum in that s/he shapes the way in which the syllabus information is mediated. This is a more accurate picture of what student involvement in curriculum construction entails. It also replaces simplistic historical notions of studying literature in terms of questions such as 'who wrote/teaches what to whom and when?'. The focus of a qualitative education therefore needs to be directed towards

both the processes of how the syllabus content is constructed during the engagement of teaching and learning as well as the quality of learner involvement in these processes. The starting point is therefore to encourage the proliferation of alternative conceptions of what education is. The learners (with all their unique and collective thoughts about 'education') are at the centre of qualitative education. Within the English language classroom, the focus is on developing their abilities to engage creatively and critically with the medium of language.

3 Will Africanising the literature curriculum develop critical and creative readership?

In the present South African education system the vast majority of learners are still marginalised within their learning context by virtue of the manner in which education is mediated within the schooling system. Given the need to affirm the value systems of the oppressed sectors of the South African community as part of the attempt to redress the historical distortions perpetuated by a racist, sexist and classist education system, it is easy to agree that the curriculum reconstructors will need to focus on 'Africanising' or 'South Africanising' the curriculum. A qualitative (if not liberatory) education system needs to allow all its learners to find their voice being heard, read, debated and discussed in the English language classroom (see Freire 1972). Of course, this poses a serious challenge to the average pupil-reader of English literature—namely that s/he becomes an active reader of literature. Since the majority of pupils are English second language users and since there is not enough material available, this challenge is undoubtedly not easy to meet. From my own experiences of working within the secondary school system, there does not seem to be any significant reading culture within most secondary schools irrespective of whether the learners are first or second language users. How does one initiate the critical and creative growth of learners who have not developed a positive experience of reading literature? If anything, the schooling system has taught learners to be distrustful of the engagement with written texts. For many pupils (besides those who go on to read for a degree in English literature studies) the last 'literary text' that they engage with, is the one studied for their last school examination. In the light of the poor provision of library facilities and the lack of access of most secondary school students to literary texts—especially within the 'African schooling system'—it is understandable that a significant reading culture has not emerged here. Also, it might appear to many that reading is a cultural activity that only those who can afford the luxury of purchasing literary material can engage in. However, in the light of the fact that reading (e.g. bedtime stories to children) does not occupy any significant place in the cultural pattern of Black middle class homes, this argument seems to be flawed. Is the reading of books a cultural pattern confined to Western family life? Moreover it seems that despite the availability of and access to literary resources in westernised family contexts, English language teachers still complain that their pupils 'just don't read'. Within this context

one wonders whether the goal of developing critical and creative reading skills is not just another unattainable dream and that what teachers need to expend their energies on is simply developing a basic reading culture first.

In order to develop such a reading culture, it is argued that if one attempts to cultivate a reading culture one would need to work with texts with which pupils can easily identify. This identification is believed to proceed from the principle that pupils work from the known to the unknown. It is therefore concluded that 'Africanising' the literature curriculum is the solution to developing a culture of readers.

That this approach has merit is certainly true. Some caution, however, should also be exercised. I reflect on Rachel Wright's (1993:3) caution when examining the Africanising process of University of Sierra Leone's English literature curriculum. She argues that the danger of focusing only on the West African art forms is that it becomes 'too indigenous, too inbred, and loses reader appeal'. Since modern African students have significantly widened their perspectives beyond rural life and traditions, a wider approach is necessary. She also quotes Bright (1988) who recalls that the texts produced by earlier writers of West African English literature—and which were used as part of the 'Africanisation' programme—were written with Western or European readers in mind. These texts are not necessarily more easily mediated by African readers today. The modern (perhaps only urbanised) student has developed new preoccupations as a consequence of living in a growingly multinational, multicultural and multilinguistic environment. If the education system is to reflect this growing tendency then it should reflect this new emerging 'Africanisation' and not an 'Africanisation' based on a romanticised western perspective of Africa.

Let us examine more widely what 'Africanising' the language curriculum in the South African context could entail. What exactly are South African pupils reading and enjoying? Perhaps the question that teachers need to ask is not why their pupils are not reading but what it is that they are 'reading' within the everyday South African cultural context. This may necessitate a redefinition and expansion of the teacher's conception of 'literary texts' beyond the written textual materials contained on library shelves or within classrooms. It is possible that second language pupils in South Africa experience the mediation of English language through the lyrics of popular music rather than literary texts. This music is enjoyed in even the remotest of rural settings. The radio as a prime means of mediating the English language has not been significantly incorporated into language classrooms. Perhaps we need to extend our definitions of literature to include the 'reading' of cultural forms such as posters, placard sloganeering, public signboards and the reading of visual media such as photographs, films, TV programmes, newspapers. Perhaps we need to develop a wider understanding of 'Africanising' to include a more specific focus on how the English language is being mediated to the average user of English in everyday South African life.

Contrary to this approach, 'Africanising' the English curriculum is

seen by some as entailing a rather narrowly defined rebaptism into the days of yore, a romanticising of an era gone by. To these, the term 'African culture' usually connotes a looking back over the shoulder to see where we from came and a hearkening back to traditional values. To others, the concept of 'Africanisation' incorporates a vivacity that embraces the complexity of the African in the present South African context. The concept 'African' therefore cannot belong to any one separate cultural group (within the apartheid-driven conception of separatist cultural groups). Alexander (1991:14) argues that it is even possible to conceptualise a national South African/Azanian culture that transcends language boundaries. Our very existence as Africans has been denied us as part of the shackles of oppression. A truly liberatory education system will seek to remove these barriers of division. Any literature curriculum will therefore need to reflect this diversity emerging from the varied cultural, linguistic, socio-historical political experiences of the South African community. What is more significant is not merely their representation within the curriculum, but how this cultural richness and variety is critiqued, challenged and extended within the classroom. John Gultig (1993) argues that the recognition of the parallel, though separated cultural concerns of the various groupings constituting the South African fabric should not be wished away in the desire to appear politically correct. The colonial heritage of South Africa as well as the resistance to such colonial oppression are as much a part of South African society as 'braaivleis, sunny skies and ... Toyotas(!)'. The modern South African is therefore a rich conglomeration of many intersecting, complex and often contradictory values, brimming with diversity. All of this is the African experience, ranging from colonial racist thinking to euphoric liberationist radicalism.

The goal of the language teacher is therefore to mediate this rich tapestry for his/her students, recognising the particular subjective authorial stance of the writers in relation to their subject matter. Any text therefore might be considered for inclusion within a South African curriculum provided that the learners and teachers engage in a critical dialogue with the author/s, his/her views, as well as the text's cultural and ideological bearings. If this approach is pursued, I believe that we will serve the goals of developing critical and creative readership.

The process of merely introducing 'Africanised texts' into the curriculum will therefore not automatically result in the development of critical and creative readers. The responsibility for such a development will rest largely with the teacher of literature. S/he will have to cultivate the necessary culture of reading through the processes by which cultural (including literary) texts are mediated to, for and by the learners.

4 Inside the English second language classroom
Let us look at how far away we are from realising this goal within the English language classroom. The key figure in the development of a qualitative reading experience with English literature is the teacher himself/herself. The previous education system failed to develop the potential

of the teacher to act as a curriculum developer. Instead, the teacher was deprofessionalised in order to serve the ends of the apartheid ideologies. To this purpose the teacher was perceived as a syllabus implementor, a role that is/was willingly accepted by many teachers because they could abrogate the responsibility of thinking what and how to teach, to some external force—the state education department (which ironically was the target of teachers' criticisms). The result was that the study of literature was/is perceived as serving utilitarianist aims. The 'magic of enjoyment of texts' (Wright 1993:4) was/is seen as of secondary importance (if at all). Within the second language context the teaching of literature was/is seen only as serving as a tool for the development of a new or more comprehensive vocabulary, a tool for language analysis and dissection rather than as a tool for extending critical or creative thought. The focus on studying the diction of a poem, for example, was seen as an end in itself rather than as a means of addressing the subject matter and social, existential and political experiences which the author grappled with. The experience that students imbibe as a consequence of this rather mechanistic approach to literature is that literature is not seen as a means of communicating thoughts, ideas, fears, dreams .... Rather, literature is like an unearthed mine full of diamonds: you have to tunnel deep into the bowels of the earth in order to retrieve one gem. Is all the darkness worth the effort?

The marginalised status of literature within the second language curriculum can be seen in terms of the number of lessons that teachers accord to the study of literature within the English second language classroom. Many teachers see the study of literature as a luxury. They assume that the only means of developing competence in the second language English is through a significant concentration on structuralist grammar. This approach is based on the mistaken belief that since pupils do not have a significant grasp of English grammar, they cannot read well and that the study of literature is therefore of secondary importance. In view of this belief, one can understand why the introduction of literature studies very often meets with resistance. If the teacher does use literature in the course, s/he resorts to translation practices focusing on the interpretive content which the student has to master for examination purposes. For example: the text is read aloud in English and the teacher then explains or paraphrases 'what it means' in the mother tongue. The result of this 'method' is that the disempowered learners within such a classroom develop an over-reliance on the teacher's interpretation of the text. They then regard a good teacher of literature as one who is able to neatly package the necessary content information which will be regurgitated in the examination answers. The second language literature classroom is usually characterised by marked learner passivity. This confirms teachers' belief that they cannot embark upon a more extended reading of English literature. They complain that they follow this method because 'pupils don't understand English'. Perhaps the difficulty lies not with the study of literature *per se*, but with an ossified and outdated curriculum practice and teachers' misconceptions about how second language learners (should) acquire reading competence.

5 The tail that wags the dog

Second language teachers of literature often argue that their primary task is to prepare students to pass the term and examination papers. They therefore concentrate only on what the students need to master. The examination system seems to require only superficial analysis of the literature which pupils study: if a student is able to reproduce the banked knowledge, s/he passes the paper. Moreover, it is argued that it is beyond the competencies of second language learners to provide analyses of literature which tap appreciative and evaluative responses. Hence the examination is characterised by uninspiring questions which do not require the learner to reveal his/her creative or critical skills. The examination system thus becomes the tail that wags the dog: classroom practices seem to be geared to a large extent towards mastery of the examinations and not necessarily to the development of the pupils' appreciation of literature.

A reconstruction of the English language curriculum should therefore extend to the manner in which that curriculum will be examined, the kinds of examination questions students will be expected to answer and the levels of reading analysis that will be expected. This will necessitate that teachers examine their conceptions of how second language learners acquire competence in a second language. They will have to focus on how the skill of developing reading proficiency should be tackled. This in turn would lead to a requestioning of the entire theoretical pedagogical rationale underlying the English second language learning and teaching process. Curriculum development therefore includes not only syllabus revision, but also the retraining of existing teaching staff in relation to better informed theoretical and practical views about English second language acquisition, a reconceptualising of classroom practices and a reconceptualisation of the examination system. All these parallel concerns are contributory shaping factors which may enhance the quality of the engagement of learners with the literary syllabus.

6 English teachers in the making

Let us examine the way in which teachers of the English language are currently being trained/developed within the tertiary education system. Most students do a four year course in English. At the University of Durban-Westville the minimum requirement to become an English language teacher is a two year course in English. These courses consist largely of literary textual analysis. Only in the final (or fourth) year of study do students engage in a course of English teaching and learning methodology offered by the Faculty of Education.

I do not think that I am too bold if I say that despite the supposedly liberatory content of what university or college students engage in during their study of the English language, the dominant pedagogical engagement with that content still reflects a generally passive, uncritical and uncreative learning character. The student's own experiences during the twelve years of pedagogy within the secondary school system inculcate a particular static

view of knowledge—i.e. as being merely packaged products of information. Students thus attend the lectures and tutorials to become *au fait* with the appropriate package of knowledge that particular lecturers produce. When they have to write an examination, the students select for regurgitation the appropriate content which lecturers have presented within the lecture halls. Students are not necessarily able to extend these critiques to inform the way in which they read other texts. Hence one might see a student display a detailed Marxist critique of a particular text simply because the lecturer concerned had presented this kind of analysis within the lecture hall. Yet, the student is unable to provide alternate readings, for example a feminist reading of the same text, because the lecturers had not dealt with the text in this manner of analysis. This kind of response from students is the result of seeing the curriculum as a commodity external to their own personal frame of reference. After all, it is argued that simply passing the course is the aim of the student. A more rigorous engagement and critical dialogue with a variety of texts and authors exploring several readings of texts from different theoretical perspectives is seen as a luxury reserved for the over-diligent student. In addition to the student's own schooling experience, the university experience finally cements the process of how content is mediated and disseminated in the student's and future teacher's mind.

The curriculum of current courses of English study also leaves much to be desired. Within the current courses of English language study, little attention is given to theories of language learning, language acquisition and creative writing in English. The study of the English language seems to be concerned primarily with the already constructed products of the English language, namely printed texts. When analysing the quality of the curriculum in preparing teachers of English, the most significant shortcoming is that virtually no attention is paid to developing students' own writing potential, i.e. to become producers of literature in the English language themselves. It appears that curriculum developers believe that the analyses of others' literary products provides enough motivation and expertise for future authors.

The result of present practices related to the teaching and learning of English teachers is that students emerge from courses in English literature at tertiary level with only a piecemeal and fragmentary knowledge and inadequate skills. These do not provide an adequate basis for the complexities of critical writing and reading in which the teacher has to engage. Since the traditional departments of English do not conceive of their role as serving a pedagogical function, they do not engage in activities which prepare and develop their students to become analysts of the processes of developing products of literature. Hence, when students are introduced to their role as teachers of the English language (in the final year of study within the Faculty of Education), they bewail the fact that they are unable to get their pupils to develop their skills of critical, engaged reading and writing. After two and often three years of study, they feel that they just do not have the competence to teach their pupils. Instead, they mechanistically offer their pupils reams of literary theoretical jargon gleaned from university or college note or

handbooks. This obviously fails to provide an adequate basis to pupils for a tangible and qualitative involvement in the reading and production of literature. Students consequently argue that the kind of literary analysis gained at tertiary education is irrelevant for the secondary school system and far too complex for the level of reading capability of secondary school pupils. Therefore, when they become teachers, they either fall back on the banking education system or resort to processes of superficial textual analysis. And so the cycle perpetuates itself .... One of the ways to break the cycle would be to equip prospective teachers both with the necessary theories of language acquisition and with the practical expertise of reading and producing literature during the first two or three years of study.

7 Qualitative reading: designing clusters and ladders

The rest of this paper addresses the development of qualitative reading skills within the English second language classroom. Krashen's (1981) conception of 'focused reading' provides a possible initial step for readers who are unskilled in qualitative reading. He suggests that the reader initially needs to be presented with extracts from different texts which share a particular commonality. This commonality may be reflected in the theme, the genre, the common author, etc. of the different texts. Protherough (1983:169-200) refers to these commonalities or focused units as 'clusters' of reading material chosen to match the learners' current level of reading competence. In mediating the cluster, the teacher may provide a variety of critical comparisons between the way in which the different texts treat a particular theme or genre or differences in the author's approaches in the texts. The teacher here shows pupils practically the means by which critique of literary material is constructed. The intention is not to memorise the teacher's particular critique of the given texts, but to see the texts as vehicles for the study of 'how to read'. The text therefore merely becomes a means to an end; the end being the ability to read creatively and critically.

Protherough further argues that the teacher of literature should exercise his/her role as a curriculum developer by constantly upgrading the nature of the engagement with the particular clusters of texts. He refers to the progressive developmental clusters as 'ladders' which need to be organised over an extended period of involvement with the learners. This approach to clustering and laddering requires that the teacher himself/herself is a sophisticated and advanced reader of literary texts of various kinds.

Since each teacher will develop the appropriate level of curriculum for his/her particular learners, the choice of appropriate texts need not be centrally determined for all schools uniformly. This approach requires a major decentralising of the choice and design of curriculum material and can only be accomplished with the necessary retraining of the teacher of literature. The retrained teacher must be able to reconceptualise the role and function of literature within the education system. Furthermore, the cluster approach does not require that students be introduced to complete texts. Initially, only extracts may be provided. This requires that teacher educators

spend more time in preparing and empowering teachers to become curriculum developers in their own right. The creative production of unique materials for particular, localised learning environments (which may be done in cooperation with pupils) will be one of their main objectives. The other is to assist, enskill and empower pupils to creatively and critically interact with the clusters of material. The intention is not that pupils should engage with all the texts to the same level of analysis. The schools should be able to choose different clusters of texts and selectively design appropriate levels of engagement with the cluster in relation to their pupils' interest and language proficiency. This may take the form of using extracts from texts during the introduction of this programme and later moving on to complete texts.

I provide a brief example of how such a cluster syllabus may function in a grade eleven (standard nine) class.

1 *Group 1* may explore the various interpretations of the concept 'teenage love' as conceptualised by texts chosen from a variety of historical periods;

2 *Group 2* may explore newspaper clippings related to the differing political parties' views on the concept 'democracy' prior to or during the 1994 South African elections;

3 *Group 3* may examine an anthology of South African short stories with a view to writing a short story that fills a gap which the students think the compilers of the edition have not addressed;

4 *Group 4* may choose an author whom they think represents the aspirations which they themselves have for a new South Africa; their study will involve explicating the socio-historical circumstances which gave rise to the author's views.

It is evident that the emphasis has moved away from the selection of particular single texts to the development of the learners' engagement with a variety of texts and themes. It also stands to reason that this approach will be more effective in facilitating qualitative and focused engagement with texts. The objective of 'understanding a whole text and nothing but the text' is hereby decentred. The learning experience is directed towards different levels of critical engagement with texts in relation to target purposes. As such, pupils engage in a range of reading experiences which centre on 'how to live' and 'how we communicate using language as a means of negotiating thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences'.

8 The teacher as a curriculum developer

Since didactics and teacher development courses do not concentrate on enskilling the teacher to become an in-the-situation curriculum developer, teachers may feel themselves inadequately prepared for the task. Some teachers may also argue that curriculum development is not part of their

professional duties. Moreover, many student teachers are trained within the framework of a 'Didactics' course aimed at classroom management and the implementation of syllabi designed by higher departmental authorities. Since traditional courses in 'Didactics' at university and college level do not include the enskilling of prospective teachers to become curriculum developers, many faculties and departments have replaced this course with 'Curriculum Studies'. This, however, usually merely reflects a name change instead of a reinterpretation of the process of developing a prospective teacher to realise his/her potential as an active constructor of the pedagogical engagement of his/her learners.

Within the English language teaching course at the University of Durban-Westville, there have been conscious attempts to prepare student teachers to realise their role as curriculum constructors. During school-based teaching practice, the student teachers, together with the resident teachers within the school and the supervising lecturer, work jointly on an action research project. This project is intended to focus the team's efforts on the specific localised problems relating to English language teaching within the school. The student teachers are then expected to develop a workbook of implementable strategies which will attempt to address this perceived problem. The team is then engaged during school-based teaching practice to test the workability of their draft workbook and to make further recommendations as to how to address the problem. This form of teaching practice requires student teachers to work in collaborative teams and to use the approach of concentrated clusters in realising the aim of integrating the development of the basic language skills of reading, speaking, writing and listening. The choice and order of presentation of the material in the workbook is expected to take on a progressive developmental nature. By working together with the resident teachers in the schools, the teaching practice functions as both a pre-service and in-service training of participants: pre-service for the student teachers and in-service for the resident teachers. For all participants in the collaborative team it becomes a useful means of interrelating theoretical and practical knowledge in a dialectical way. This programme has only recently been introduced at the University of Durban-Westville. Despite participants' differing levels of the comprehension, participation in and realisation of the possibilities of the programme, the benefits of the programme will hopefully be evident at a later stage when we measure the degree to which both prospective and resident teachers have mastered their roles as curriculum developers.

9 Addressing some of the constraints on qualitative curriculum development

In order to realise the goals of implementing a qualitative curriculum aimed at developing critical and creative readership, several constraints need to be addressed: the examination system, budget constraints, the establishing of curriculum development resource centres and teacher commitment.

9.1 The examinations

The examination system will have to be changed so that critical reader abilities can be assessed adequately. Brumfit and Killam (1986) provide examples of the kind of examination paper that may be used. Centralised curriculum developers need only prescribe the broad guidelines of how critical readership will be examined. Particular schools will be given the freedom to select texts appropriate to the experiences and contexts of their unique corpus of pupils. For example, the senior secondary 'syllabus' may suggest that,

9.1.1 grade ten (standard eight) pupils engage with texts which reflect a clustered *thematic* concern such as 'traumatised South African youth'. The department only provides a list of possible texts which pupils/teachers could use as a guideline to explore this theme.

9.1.2 the grade eleven (standard nine) syllabus comprise a cross section study of a variety of texts from different *historical periods*. The choice of texts is left to the individual language departments of each school.

9.1.3 national examination at the end of the final year of schooling (grade twelve/standard ten) reflect a freedom of choice of material to be studied. To ensure that pupils are exposed to *a variety of genres, cultural perspectives and linguistic styles*, the curriculum may limit the number of projects in some or all the categories. The examination questions should therefore not be of the recall variety dominant in present examination papers. Instead, the student will be asked to use the different texts studied during the literature lessons and to explore a particular generally framed question. For example,

> i Arising out of your analysis of the portrayal of South African women in the texts you have studied, identify one literary character who stands out in your mind as an individual who embodies the spirit which you think should characterise women in the nineties. Argue critically why you have chosen this particular character in comparison to the other characters you have 'met' during your literary survey. Also show how the author is able to evoke your identification with this particular character.

> ii A significant characteristic of colonial literature is that it portrays the colonised as 'the alienated other'. Through a sample of the texts you have studied concerning European colonisation, show whether you agree with the above statement.

Certainly, these questions reflect a sophistication that current pupils will not be able to engage with given the manner in which texts are analyzed within our current literature classrooms. But if it takes the tail to wag the dog, maybe the development of such examination questions would begin to reshape

the way in which teachers and learners engage with texts within their language/literature classrooms. Similar questions may also be developed for the other grades/standards in the school system.

9.2 The budget

Another obstacle to realising the goal of extensive critical reading is the perceived inflated costs that such a system may bring about. However, if this approach is compared with the current system where millions of rands are being spent on providing copies of individual single texts for uniform use, the curriculum development approach might be more cost effective. I say 'might' because it will have to be assessed properly. If the new approach is more expensive, then we will have to measure the spending of the money with the results it brings about and compare it with the results of the old system. Even though schools will have the autonomy to decide which particular texts they wish to prescribe, the important element in this approach is not the texts in themselves but the quality of the critical readership which it brings about. The same budget may be used to provide a range of different sets of texts. Pupils may then change texts after using certain sections in a text for particular projects. This may also ensure that teachers design the curriculum in more creative ways, e.g. in terms of group work, peer development tutorials and parallel group work sessions. It is expected of junior primary school teachers to function in this way. Secondary school teachers may follow suit. All of these issues point to the need for teachers to be trained to realise their truly professionalised role as curriculum developers rather than functioning merely as syllabus implementors.

9.3 The resource centre

To enhance the goals of qualitative critical reading, library and curriculum resource centres (where they exist) must become engaged in the development of an active culture of reading amongst disempowered teachers and pupils. The development of school and community libraries and resource centres is vital to the establishment of a cognitively developed and intellectually active society. However, the provision of these resources will not guarantee the output desired for a quality education system. Librarians, teachers and learners must work hand in hand in shaping the quality of the engagement expected of learners when working with the texts available in the resource centres.

9.4 Teacher commitment

It is evident that qualitative language curriculating involves sincere dedication, time management and curriculum planning by language/literature teachers. The temptation to resort to talk and chalk transmission education must be resisted by those who see teaching as a vocation and not only as a job. A developed literature curriculum serving the goals of liberatory education requires whole-hearted commitment. Within the context of schooling where the culture of teaching, learning and reading have all but

broken down, these goals may seem beyond the scope of what teachers or learners would want for themselves. Apartheid education has made many individuals come to accept substandard education. The need to redevelop a sense of excellence, the improvement of the quality of the curriculum of English language literature teaching and learning as well as a commitment to our own history, contexts and experiences will inevitably involve serious self-reflection from all concerned. If we commit ourselves to the task of true qualitative education now, we ourselves as well as future generations of South African learners, may reap the benefits.

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