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Mediating knowledge and constituting subjectivities in South African teacher education materials

Yvonne Reed
Applied English Language Studies, School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg   email: yvonne.reed@wits.ac.za

Abstract
This paper presents work in progress which aims to bring together a linguistic analysis informed by systemic functional grammar, a semiotic analysis informed by a grammar of visual design (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006), an analysis of the selection and presentation of subject and pedagogic content knowledges and an analysis of the tools and strategies used to mediate these knowledges. Tentatively, I give the name 'critical pedagogic analysis' to this attempt to understand how designers of distance learning materials imagine South African language teachers as students and as teachers. Norton (2000) and Pavlenko (2003) suggest that 'identity investment' in an imagined community is likely to influence students' engagement with the learning opportunities available to them. In distance education programmes these opportunities are predominantly text-based. I use examples of my analysis of extracts from two course books to argue that critical pedagogic analysis could be of interest to materials designers whose concerns include offering students identity options to which they respond positively.

1. Introduction
Registering for a programme of study is likely to open up new possibilities for pre-service and in-service teachers' ongoing 'process of becoming' (Hall, 1996:4). However, by taking this action, teachers also 'symbolically submit to their positioning, disciplining and shaping by the subjectivities projected in the curriculum and the pedagogy' (Doherty, 2005:3). In South Africa, more teachers study through distance education than 'contact' programmes for both initial and professional development qualifications (Glennie, 2003) and print is still the most widely used medium for mediating the distance between teacher-educators and teacher-learners. It is principally through this medium that designers and producers of course materials make available particular subject positions to teachers as students and to teachers as teachers.

Findings from research in the field of language and literacy learning (Norton Peirce, 1995; Angelil-Carter, 1997; Norton, 2000, 2001; Cummins, 2003) suggest that a learner's 'investment' in particular identities influences his or her achievement. For Cummins, 'the ways in which identities are negotiated between educators and students is at least as fundamental in determining student achievement as any of the myriad techniques for teaching reading or any other academic content' (2003:51). When Pavlenko investigated the impact of the perspectives and theories encountered in an MA TESOL programme on students' future identity as teachers, she found that exposure to contemporary theories of bilingualism 'opened up an alternative imagined community' for some student teachers for whom English was an additional language. They were able to

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imagine themselves and their future students as multicompetent bilinguals and as 'legitimate L2 users rather than failed native speakers of the target language' (Pavlenko, 2003:251). The work of these researchers suggests that the ways in which designers of distance learning materials for teacher education constitute the identities of readers as students and as teachers may influence their investment in their studies and their work in classrooms.

This paper presents work in progress towards the development of a 'critical pedagogic analysis' of distance learning materials designed for teacher education programmes which includes:
- linguistic analysis informed by systemic functional grammar;
- semiotic analysis informed by a grammar of visual design;
- analysis of the 'content' informed by conceptualizations of knowledge for teacher education programmes;
- analysis of the mediation of 'content' informed by social constructivist theory.

The first part of the paper outlines key features of each of the four elements of the analysis. The second part aims to demonstrate how each element contributes to a critical pedagogic analysis of passages from two South African teacher education texts.

2. Key features of four elements of a critical pedagogic analysis of distance learning materials designed for teacher education programmes

As it is not feasible, within the limits of a paper, to describe each element in detail, sections 2.1 to 2.4 outline some of the key features of each of the four which, it is argued, are productive, individually and collectively, for a critical pedagogic analysis of teacher education materials.

2.1 Using systemic functional grammar to analyse language

The analysis of language is informed by the model of language in social context developed within the field of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978; 1985; Gee, 1999; Martin and Rose, 2003). Halliday argues that 'language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives' (1978:4). The model recognizes three general social functions for which speakers or writers use language: (i) to represent experience to one another – the experiential or ideational metafunction; (ii) to enact social relationships – the interpersonal metafunction; (iii) to organize these representations and enactments as meaningful text – the textual metafunction.

Questions addressed in an analysis of clauses in written texts include the following:
• With reference to the experiential: What participants are included and excluded? How are they named? What types of verbs are used? What is the function of any examples of passivisation?
• With reference to the interpersonal: What is the mood of the clause (declarative / interrogative / imperative)? What subjects (topics) and objects have been chosen for each clause and how do these choices shape a reader's negotiation with the text? How are the resources of appraisal (e.g. polarity, modality, modulation) used to express attitude, strength of feeling or judgement?

• With reference to the textual: What has been chosen as theme and rheme in the clauses? What information is foregrounded and asserted? What is backgrounded and assumed? How does cohesion work in the text to connect or fail to connect pieces of information and to what communicative ends? How has nominalization been employed?

2.2 Using a grammar of visual design to analyse images and compositions
The analysis of the 'complementary contribution' (Macken-Horarik, 2004) of image and verbal text to the meanings made available to readers, draws on the grammar of visual design developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) and on Macken-Horarik's summation and application of features of this grammar. Kress and van Leeuwen argue that visual communication has several resources for constituting and maintaining the interaction between the producer and the viewer of an image. They describe three systems of interactive meaning: contact, social distance and attitude. The system of **contact** is used to understand the ways in which an image acts on a viewer either by demanding a response or by offering information. The system of **distance** is used to understand the imaginary relation between represented participants and the viewer and can be considered along a continuum from close up (intimate or personal social distance), to arms' length (social distance), to the public distance of strangers. Macken-Horarik describes two systems within the system of **attitude** outlined by Kress and van Leeuwen. In an image there is 'a horizontal dimension, which creates viewer involvement (through frontality) or detachment (through obliqueness), and a vertical dimension, which creates a relation of power between viewer and represented participants (hierarchical or solidary)' (Macken-Horarik, 2004:12). In the same way as the clause fulfils three functions simultaneously, so too does an image: 'any image must either be a ''demand' or an 'offer' *and* select a certain size of frame *and* select a certain attitude' (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006:148-149).

Kress and van Leeuwen argue that visual and verbal elements should be considered as contributing to an integrated text. They refer to the spatial composition of a text as an overarching code 'whose rules and meanings provide the multimodal text with the logic of its integration' (2006:177) and discuss composition in terms of three interrelated systems: information value; salience and framing.

Information value refers to the placement of elements in a composition that 'endows them with the specific informational values attached to the various 'zones' of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin' (2006:177). Kress and Van Leeuwen suggest that 'viewers of spatial compositions are intuitively able to judge the 'weight' of the various elements of a composition and the greater the weight of an element, the greater its salience' (2006: 202). Salience, or prominence, is the result of a complex interaction of such elements as size, sharpness of focus, colour contrast, placement in the foreground or background and culture specific factors 'such as the appearance of a human figure or a potent cultural symbol' (2006:202). Framing refers to the ways in which elements in a spatial composition are marked off from or connected to each other by frame lines, changes of colour, visual shapes or empty space. These interrelated systems have been used previously in an analysis of the covers of the texts from which the passages to be analysed in this paper have been drawn (Reed,

2005). While the verbal is dominant in teacher education materials, images also contribute to the meanings made available to readers.

2.3.1 Using conceptualizations of knowledge for teacher education programmes to analyse 'content'

For over thirty years the international curriculum reform movement has raised questions about the kinds of knowledge to be produced by schooling and thus the knowledges required by teachers (Adler, 2002). Shulman's categorization of a knowledge base for teaching and in particular, his work on pedagogic content knowledge (1987) has been widely used to inform the design of teacher education curricula. However, by the end of the 1990s some teacher educators were expressing concern about the 'static' nature of this conceptualization (Banks, Leach and Moon, 1999) and about the perpetuation of a divide between 'formal' and 'practical' knowledge through the very attempt to provide a bridge between the two (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle propose a framework for understanding teacher learning that is based on conceptualising knowledge-practice relationships in terms of 'knowledge-for-practice', 'knowledge-in-practice' or 'knowledge-of-practice'. Knowledge, teachers, teaching and educational change are imagined in different ways in each of the three conceptualisations, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge-Practice relationships in three conceptions of teacher learning

Knowledge-Practice Relationship	Subject / 'book-based' knowledge <u>for</u> practice	Practice-based knowledge <u>in</u> practice	Meta knowledge <u>of</u> subject and practice in relation to each other and to context
Images of Knowledge	Defined and distinctive 'formal' knowledge of 'subjects', educational theory and pedagogy – produced mainly by university-based academics	Knowledge base is what very competent teachers have come to know through their practice; knowledge acquired through reflections on experience – groups/dyads of more and less experienced teachers generate knowledge through working together in and on practice	Through enquiry teachers problematize 'formal'and 'practical' knowledges – knowers and knowledge located in socio-political contexts

Images of Teachers, Teaching and Professional Practice	Teaching involves applying 'received knowledge' in a practical situation – knowledge for use	Teachers generate knowledge through reflection on 'wise practice' – the classroom is a 'knowledge landscape'	Teachers expected to be transformative Teaching as praxis
Images of Teacher Learning and Teachers' Roles in Educational Change	Teachers come to know what is already known and use this knowledge to effect change	Teachers learn through reflecting on their own and other teachers' practices in order to improve these practices	Teachers learn through participation in on-going action research communities
Current Initiatives in Teacher Education, Professional Development and/or Teacher Assessment	Programmes in which teachers learn and demonstrate knowledge for certification purposes	Pre-service teachers learn through 'assisted performance' with mentors; in-service teachers through professional development opportunities supported by external facilitators	School or district-based teacher enquiry communities, teacher conference presentations and publications

(Reed, 2006, based on Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999)

Cochran-Smith and Lytle argue that such a framework
> . … exposes a number of provocative issues about the whole topic of teacher
> learning and the role of communities. These issues are at once subtle, in that
> very different meanings are often embedded beneath the surface of similar
> language and structures, and also striking, in that the differences are
> enormously significant for how teachers understand and position themselves in
> various initiatives for school improvement as well as how universities and other
> educational institutions position teachers and teacher learning in relation to
> change (1999:295).

While this framework is useful for analysing teacher-educators' conceptions of
how teachers should acquire knowledge and also the subject positions that these
conceptualisations make available to teachers, it does not fully engage with what
Wilson and Berne (1999) term the 'what' of teacher education. This complex
subject is addressed by Banks, Leach and Moon (1999). They draw on a wide
range of theorists and on their own research in classrooms to develop a model in
which subject or disciplinary knowledge, pedagogic knowledge and school
knowledge are dynamically interrelated, with teachers' personal subject constructs
at the heart of their professional knowledge making. Pertinent to an analysis of
materials for pre-service and in-service teacher education is their view that the
model is applicable to both student teachers working out a rationale for their
classroom practice and 'expert' teachers working in times of curriculum and

social change (Banks, Leach and Moon, 1999:95). The diagram in Figure 1 below
presents subject, school and pedagogic knowledge as dynamically interrelated:

> '… a teacher's subject knowledge is transformed by his or her own pedagogy
> in practice and by the resources which form part of his or her school
> knowledge.' (Banks, Leach and Moon, 1999:95)

In the diagram, the examples of what could be included within each element were
developed by a group of English teachers with whom the authors worked. Banks,
Leach and Moon argue that not only is the development of a teacher's
professional knowledge a dynamic process, but that this knowledge is brought into
existence by the learning context in which the teacher is situated. This argument
suggests that each of the elements in the model could be positioned inside an outer
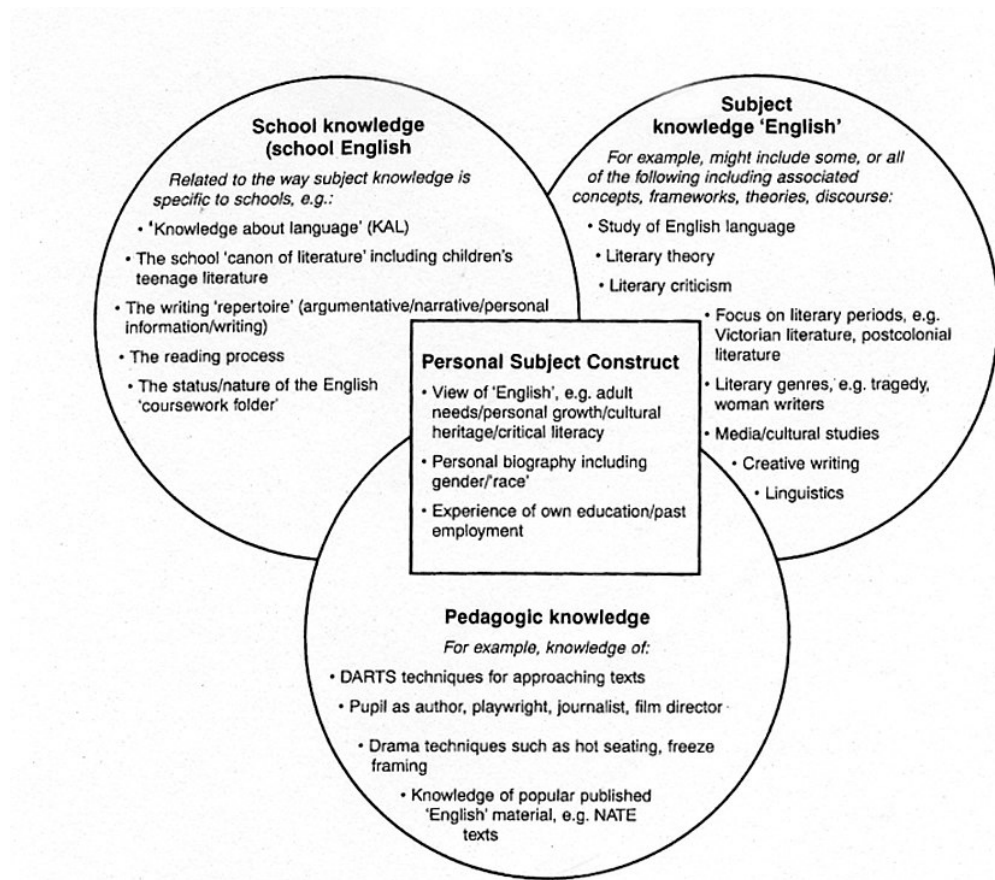'contexts circle'.

**Figure 1: A model for conceptualizing teachers' professional knowledge, with
examples from a group of English teachers**
(Source: Banks, Leach and Moon, 1999:96)

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2.4 Using sociocultural and activity theories of learning and development to analyse mediation strategies

Both sociocultural and activity theories of learning and development are historically linked to the work of Vygotsky and 'both attempt to provide an account of learning and development as mediated processes' (Daniels,2001:1). In sociocultural theory the emphasis is on semiotic mediation through spoken language, but also through a range of other 'tools' which learners can use in the zone of proximal development (ZPD):

> … in addition to deliberate instruction and assistance from others who are physically present, learners may benefit from symbolic artifacts such as written texts, charts, mathematical formulae and so on. The implication of this, according to Wells, is to enlarge considerably the concept of learning in the ZPD. Such artefacts, he argues, provide a powerful means of self-instruction as the reader appropriates the thoughts of others and makes them his or her own… (Hammond, 2001: 112-113)

In distance learning materials the written word takes the place of a physically present teacher. Materials writers are advised to write in the style of 'guided didactic conversation' (George, 1994). An analysis of semiotic mediation in a written text includes the analysis of language and images described in sections 2.1 and 2.2 but also considers how such features as codeswitching between languages, word glossaries, explanatory text boxes, headings, subheadings, icons and diagrams are used to mediate content .

In activity theory, the activity itself is of central importance. Well-designed, in-text activities are considered to be one of the key elements of high quality distance learning materials (Lockwood, 1994; Moon, Leach & Stevens, 2005; Welch & Reed, 2005). Analysis of the mediation of learning through the activities included in materials focuses on the opportunities for learning that are made available (or unavailable) through the design of these activities. Central to this part of a critical pedagogic analysis is analysis of how activities are scaffolded and sequenced within materials.

3. Critical pedagogic analysis 'in action'

In a critical pedagogic analysis, each of the four elements outlined above offers a lens through which to examine a 'learning guide' or 'course book'. Analysis of a complete guide or book is particularly important for understanding the selection and sequencing of content and the range of mediation strategies used by the designers. For an individual page or sub-section of a book, one or more of the lenses may be more productive than the others. One reason for choosing the in-text-activities to be analysed below is that in these examples all four elements contribute to the positions made available to readers. The examples are taken from *Learners and Learning* and from *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo 2. Learners and Learning* was designed and co-produced by the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE), internationally recognised for the quality of its research and development work in distance education[i]. It is one module in a series titled 'Study of Education' and was designed for use in both pre- and in-service teacher education programmes. *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo2* is a text from a University of Fort Hare in-service B

Prim Ed degree programme that received a national award for excellence in materials design[ii].

Designers of distance learning materials face the challenge of constructing 'learning pathways' between students' existing networks of knowledge and skill and those in the to-be-acquired knowledge domain (Moll, 2003:21). In-text activities have a key role to play in this mediation process. The activities chosen for enacting a critical pedagogic analysis are from a section in *Learners and Learning* in which 'reading' is the primary content focus and a section in *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo 2* in which 'reading' is an important part of the content focus.

3.1 Analysis of examples of in-text activities from *Learners and Learning*

Example 1: The first activity in Section Four, 'Text as a context for learning'
One of the mediation strategies used throughout *Learners and Learning* is the use of 'half-truth statements' to introduce and conclude each section. The first activity in the section instructs readers to decide what they believe to be true, false or inaccurate about each statement. In the concluding activity they are instructed to revisit the half-truths and to consider whether their response to any of them has changed as a result of their learning from the section.

In the general introduction to the half-truth activities the designers foreground their aspirations by placing themselves in theme position in the first clause ('We hope') and position the teacher-learners as active students who will construct knowledge through an on-going process ('refine', 'change your initial understanding', 'find further knowledge'):
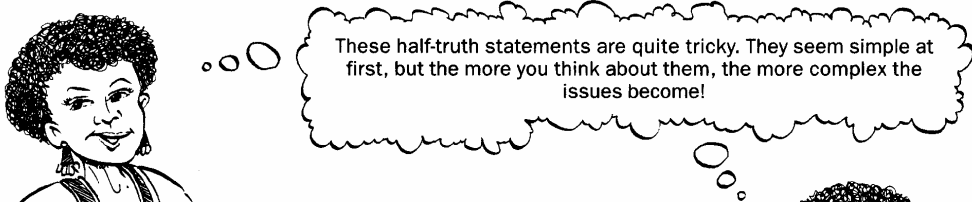
> We hope that in the process of studying each section you will refine and change your initial understanding of the half-truth statements and find further knowledge and evidence to support particular positions (Gultig, 2001:11).

In Section Four of *Learners and Learning* the half-truth statements are about reading. They are reproduced, in slightly reduced format, in Example 1. This activity follows a half-page introduction to reading as 'one of the most important language acts in school learning' (Gultig, 2001:113). The statements in the activity provide a frame for much of the content in the section.

Example 1: *Learners and Learning,* **' More half-truths to think through'**

More half-truths to think through

Read through the following assumptions about reading and learning. As before, make notes about your agreements and disagreements with these half-truths.

These half-truth statements are quite tricky. They seem simple at first, but the more you think about them, the more complex the issues become!

Statement about learning	What is true about the statement?	What is inaccurate or false about the statement?
Reading is difficult and boring.		
All readers will understand the meaning of a text in exactly the same way.		
There is only one way to read.		
Textbooks should be read differently to storybooks.		
Children learn to love or hate reading because of their parents' attitudes to books.		
Reading is only useful for school learning.		
Learning through reading is just the same as learning through talking and listening.		

(Gultig, 2001:113)

Analysis of Example 1

The title and the questions position teacher-learners to accept the viewpoint of the designers that there <u>is</u> something that is true and something that is false or inaccurate about each one (and also that an assumption <u>is</u> a half truth). The task instructions require teacher-learners to 'make notes' about their 'agreements and disagreements' with each of the 'half-truths' but the questions ask 'What is true about each statement?' and 'What is inaccurate or false about the statement?' While the form of the instructions suggests a freedom to express one's own views on the statements, the polarity (Martin and Rose, 2003) of the questions suggests that there is definitely both truth and untruth to be uncovered in each one.

Throughout *Learners and Learning* the designers use a range of male and female 'teacher heads' to comment on content or activities or to raise questions. In Example 1 the two heads frame the statement, with the thought bubbles forming vectors which draw the reader/viewer's eye to this statement. While the viewpoint on this activity is that of the designers, it is presented as the thoughts of fellow teacher-learners. The two heads look directly at the viewer, constructing an 'imaginary relation' (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006:117) between the teachers represented in the images and the teacher-learners who read the study material. This direct gaze addresses the viewers with a visual 'you' and thus demands a response. Readers are positioned to identify with this point of view, to take the activity seriously and to spend time on it.

Example 2: Activity 35 in Section Four,'Text as a context for learning'
The majority of the seventeen activities in the section on Reading (activities are numbered consecutively from the beginning of the course book) are forms of tutorial-in-print (Lockwood, 1994). They focus either on developing new or deeper understandings of theories and research findings about reading or on extending the teacher-learners' own academic literacy. In terms of Cochran-Smith and Lytle's conceptual framework, it is book-based 'knowledge-for-practice' that frames the content and its mediation. The teacher-learners are constituted primarily as students who are learning about reading and about how to improve their ability to engage with academic texts (both extracts in the Learning Guide and longer texts in the course Reader). Examples 2 and 3 illustrate the knowledge-for-practice orientation and the mediation strategies employed by the designers.

Example 2: *Learners and Learning*, Activity 35: Reading and responding to Bettelheim and Zelan's 'The magic of reading'

Activity 35

1 Turn to page 137 of the Reader, and read the extract by Bettelheim and Zelan called 'The magic of reading'. *Before* you read the extract, carefully think about your own experience of learning to read.
  a What motivated you to learn to read?
  b Did you experience reading as a magical thing?
  c Who supported you? Where did you struggle?
  d What was the attitude of your parents to reading?
2 Read the extract by Bettelheim and Zelan and make notes about the factors that motivate children to read.
3 Now use Bettelheim and Zelan's language or discourse to redescribe your experience in these more formal terms.

Spend about an hour on this activity. Read the extract on your own first, then meet with fellow learners and discuss Bettelheim and Zelan's ideas.

(Gultig, 2001:125)

Analysis of Example 2
Though the icon foregrounds writing, throughout *Learners and Learning* it is used to indicate reading and writing activities. Throughout Activity 35 the mood of the clauses is imperative / directive in both the 'study directives' under the icon and in the tasks within the activity: teacher-learners are commanded to 'spend' (about an hour), 'read', 'meet' (with fellow learners), 'discuss', 'turn', 'read', 'carefully think about', 'read', 'make notes', 'use', 'redescribe'.

The information focus provided by the italicized *Before* directs teacher-learners to respond to Task 1 a,b,c,d in order to activate their schemata about reading before they tackle edited extracts from a chapter in Bettelheim and Zelan's *On Learning to Read*. In Task 2 the designers offer them a focus for their reading by directing them to make notes on a specific topic while they read. The importance of talking about texts is also signaled in the instruction beneath the icon to 'meet with fellow learners and discuss Bettelheim and Zelan's ideas'. Through the design of the first two tasks and the instructions beneath the icon, the designers model both an approach to reading for academic purposes and an approach to working with texts

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that could be productive for teacher-learners' classroom work (if they are not already doing something similar). However, the designers do not make any explicit links between the learning experiences they design for the teachers as students and what these teachers could then transfer to their classroom practice.

According to findings from South African studies of students' difficulties with academic reading and writing tasks, some readers are likely to find task 3 very challenging. Bertram's recent investigation of the reading competence of 153 teachers enrolled in a distance education B Ed Honours programme in South Africa revealed that 'more than a third of the teachers are reading an ordinary academic text at frustration level' (2006:1). She argues that 'course writers need to support and scaffold students' learning so that they can access the original reading with understanding' (2006:1). A comparison between the original chapter from Bettelheim and Zelan (1982) and its presentation in the *Learners and Learning Reader* reveals that the designers have imagined the teacher-learners as needing support for their reading of the extracts from this chapter and that they have scaffolded the reading in several ways. Firstly, they have written a three paragraph introduction which sums up the authors' main arguments (p.137) and a further summary (p141) at the conclusion of a section of the argument. Secondly, they have inserted five sub-headings in bold-type into the original text: 'Why it isn't useful to justify reading in terms of its usefulness' (p.137); 'Reading is about opening up a world of imagination and joy' (p138); 'How will the child experience reading? (p139); 'Why we must develop our emotions' (p.141); 'Two ways of teaching reading' (p142). All of these serve to direct the reader. Thirdly, they have italicized what they consider to be some key words / ideas as in this example:

> Our thesis is that learning, particularly learning to read, must give the child the feeling that through it *new worlds will be opened up to his mind and imagination*. (Moll et al, 2001:139)

Fourthly, they have edited out a few short sections and written new link words. Finally, they have added two margin notes, the first of which scaffolds a section of the text and positions teacher-learners to both accept the authority of experts and reject the use of primers or basal readers for teaching learners to read:

> This example demonstrates how a child can read a difficult text in Hebrew and translate this into English very well. But when the child is asked to read the simplified English summary, he can't do so. Bettelheim and Zelan argue that this shows that difficult originals which still contain 'magic' to interest the learner, are better teaching texts than simplified summaries that have lost this magic. This is why primers (simple school reading books) aren't good books to use in teaching reading. (Moll et al, 2001:143)

After teacher-learners have worked through Activity 35 and the extracts in the Reader, they are expected to turn the page to the sub-heading **What did we think?** This is a heading that is used at intervals throughout the Learning Guide to signal that the designers will give feedback on an activity. In Example 3 this page is reproduced in slightly reduced size, with paragraph numbers added.

Example 3: *Learners and Learning*, Feedback on aspects of Activity 35

TEXT AS A CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

What did we think?

We have all had unique experiences in learning to read. You may remember a favourite book, or have a fond memory of a special relationship with a parent or teacher that centred on books, or recall a less pleasant experience of anxiety or boredom in your first classroom. | 1 |

While we have all had *unique* experiences, we have also all had some *common* experiences of reading. As we suggested earlier, we only learn to read if reading seems purposeful and meaningful. Reading must give children the feeling that *new worlds are opening* before them. Only then can it be seen as the key to unlimited knowledge. | 2 |

Bettelheim and Zelan argue that a positive attitude to reading grows out of a child's experience of *how adults enjoy books*. Children who have never shared the enjoyment of books with anyone will not believe that reading is important. In the end, it is the 'wish to penetrate [...] the important secrets adults possess' that helps children to persist in the struggle of learning to read. Without this desire, as Mike's experience so clearly shows, the act of reading seems meaningless from the start. | 3 |

This has important implications for teaching reading in South Africa. Many learners come from homes which have no books, and where parents have been denied (by our history) the joy of literacy. So they enter schools with no model of reading as a joyful and meaningful activity. At school, they often encounter teachers who also don't read and don't see any point in reading. Many studies have pointed to the fact that teachers don't read enough and don't encourage reading in schools. So, both at home and at school, reading isn't 'modelled'. | 4 |

> In order to teach reading, teachers need to start by actively extending their own reading activities. They should read *more*, read *different kinds of things*, and then communicate this personal world of active reading to learners. This will encourage children to see reading as something that is pleasurable and useful beyond the classroom walls.

Bettelheim and Zelan argue that the kind of encouragement teachers and parents often use with learners, namely that reading will help you get ahead in life, is a very weak persuasive tool. They say that 'usefulness' isn't something that motivates young learners. Instead, they suggest, we read (and children, in particular, read) because we are promised trips to magical lands. It is the fantasy that reading brings – the imaginative stories that books carry – that motivates us to read. This is what teachers need to communicate to learners, both in words and in actions. | 5 |

Bettelheim has often been criticized for being too 'psychological' and 'magical' in his description of reading. For example, although he talks about the importance of reading parents, he does not elaborate the extent to which reading and writing are social activities beyond the rather private space of the family. The political and economic dynamics of the society we live in can have a powerful influence on our attitude to reading, on our opportunities for reading, and on the uses that we can make of reading in our everyday life. | 6 |

What do you think?

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Analysis of Example 3

The designers' feedback on Activity 35 provides further scaffolding for comprehending the extract by re-presenting key arguments made by the two authors. It also positions teacher-learners to accept the designers' views on texts and the teaching of reading. In contrast to their use of 'we' to refer to themselves in the heading ('What did we think?'), in the opening sentence of paragraph 1 the designers use 'we' as a pronoun of solidarity. This usage makes a statement about a single community of readers ('We all') that includes both designers and teacher-learners and that positions the latter to identify with at least one of the 'scenarios' constructed in the next sentence.

In paragraph 2, while the designers continue to use inclusive and exclusive 'we' (Pennycook, 1994) in potentially confusing ways ('As we suggested earlier we only learn to read …') they leave teacher-learners in little doubt about their attitude to reading. The information focus realized through the italicized words and phrases, the repeated use of 'only' to indicate a position that cannot be argued with and the choice of 'must'- a modal form that expresses both a high degree of certainty and of obligation - all construct a position that the designers expect the teacher-learners to accept.

In paragraphs 3 and 4 and in the speech bubble, the designers attempt to position the teacher-learners as role models who will act responsibly and assist learners to overcome the negative effects of the apartheid legacies of poverty and 'illiteracy'. The first sentence in paragraph 3 includes the italicized information focus 'how adults enjoy books' and from this sentence to the final one in the paragraph there is a 'lexical chain' that links 'a child's experience of how adults enjoy books' to 'children who have never shared the enjoyment of books' to 'the important secrets adults possess' to 'children to persist in the struggle of learning to read' to 'desire' (or lack of) to read. The chaining continues in paragraph 4: 'parents have been denied the joy of literacy'; children enter school 'with no model of reading as a joyful and meaningful activity'; many teachers do not provide such a model at school. Teachers are positioned as contributing to an on-going problem.

On this feedback page the paragraphs of dense print, unrelieved by headings, are bisected by the talking head and the speech bubble, a placement that is likely to direct readers' attention to the words in the bubble which summarize much of the information on the whole page. In contrast to the two teacher images in the 'half-truths' activity, this talking head does not look directly at the viewer. His gaze is towards the bubble. He offers information to the readers/viewers and seeks their agreement. Here teachers are referred to in the third person (not you, the teacher-learners in this programme, but 'they' out there) perhaps to suggest to readers that the designers imagine them as teachers who are not like the majority constructed in negative terms in the previous paragraph ('teachers who also don't read and don't see any point in reading').

Paragraph 5 begins with the designers' attribution of a particular argument to Bettelheim and Zelan. In the first sentence, their choice of the verbal process 'argue' suggests that the ideas of these authors can be contested. In the second and third sentences it is clear that the designers are reporting further ideas from

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the writing of the two authors ('they say'; 'they suggest'). In the last two sentences in the paragraph there is no direct attribution so that it is unclear whether the statements expressed with certainty are from Bettelheim and Zelan, from the designers or from both. Whatever their origin, both statements reinforce the content of the speech bubble: teachers are called to be role models for learners in their classrooms. In this instance they are called to demonstrate pleasure in reading imaginative texts. They are positioned to accept as uncontestable a statement that is likely to be contested by readers who find greater pleasure in fact than fiction.

The final paragraph in this commentary on Activity 35 is an unscaffolded and very brief reference to a socio-cultural perspective on reading. It challenges teacher-learners to make their own response without really supporting their engagement with the perspective presented in one highly nominalised sentence ('The political and economic dynamics …'). The paragraph positions them as adults who are more familiar with political and economic factors affecting whether children and adults become readers, than with arguments about the 'magic' of reading and the value of reading for pleasure.

In both the 'half-truths activity' and the 'academic reading activity' teacher-learners are imagined as both teachers and students, but particularly as students, whose existing knowledge needs to be challenged and extended through a process of reflection on what they already know and introduction to some alternative perspectives on reading and its role in learning (chosen by the designers). The first activity introduces a challenge to teacher-learners' understandings of reading and readers. Analysis of Activity 35 suggests that the designers have imagined teacher-learners as readers who are likely to need considerable support for their reading of texts that offer new perspectives. The extracts from Bettelheim and Zelan are scaffolded in ways that are likely to assist readers to understand the text, albeit from the perspective of the designers.

The designers have constituted the teacher-learners as teachers who will be responsible role models for learners in their classrooms but they have not offered them strategies for teaching reading. In the activities and in the subsequent commentary pedagogic knowledge is backgrounded; subject and school knowledge are foregrounded. While the dominant orientation is towards knowledge-for-practice, the inclusion of reflections on personal experiences of learning to read and on the 'half-truth' statements, suggests that the designers also recognize the importance of knowledge-in-practice and of teacher-learners' personal subject constructs in bringing professional knowledge into being.

3.2 Analysis of examples of in-text activities from *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo 2*

Umthamo is a Xhosa word which means 'a bite-sized chunk' and reflects the decision of the designers to present the content of each course in a series of 36 or 48 page booklets rather than in one comprehensive course book. The activities presented in Examples 4 and 5 are part of an *umthamo* in which the focus is on a whole language approach to language and literacy learning. They follow two research activities which require teacher-learners to collect *iinstomi*. (In Xhosa, an intsomi is a traditional tale or story behind a saying or an idiom.) The designers

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offer two versions of Activity 7 – Option A in which learners read the beginning of a story and Option B in which they listen to their teacher telling the beginning of a story.

Example 4: *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo 2*, **Activity 7: Introducing a literature-based whole language approach in the classroom**

Option A: Reading the story beginning

Activity 7 - Introducing a literature-based whole language approach

Read carefully through the story you collected in your research.

Then you need to make decisions about how much of the story you will give your learners. The idea is to give them a *small* part of the story, so that they have to **think** about what might follow. You want to give them just enough so that they have questions burning in their minds. Each story will be different. You may be able to use the first two paragraphs, or you may need to use the first three. But *you* will have to decide.

You will also have to decide whether you write this story-beginning on the chalkboard, or whether you make copies so that your learners can share one copy between two learners. If you have a very big class, this could be quite expensive, especially if your school does not have copying facilities.

When you are with your learners, tell them that you are going to give them something to do that you yourself have done. You are going to give them the **beginning** of a story. You want them to read the story-beginning very carefully.

Then hand out copies of the story-beginning (or make sure that you have it written up clearly on the board, or on some newsprint), for your learners to **read**. When we tried this activity with a group of multi-grade learners, the teacher read aloud the story beginning. As she modelled good reading, the learners followed on their own copies of the text.

Don't give them too much time. Watch your learners. Watch their non-verbal communication! When you feel that they have had time to think of good questions, and enough time to write, stop them. Five to ten minutes should be enough.

When you think most of your learners have finished reading, stop them. Tell them to work in pairs, and **write** down *very quickly* all the questions that they can think of from what they have read. Make sure that they are quite clear that you don't want questions that *test* what they have read. You want them to really **think** of all the questions that they can about information which is **not** in the passage.

Now get each pair to join up with another pair and tell your learners to share their questions. When they have **read** through each other's questions, tell them to begin to **think** of and to **talk** about possible answers to some of these questions.

You will probably have to allow about ten minutes for this activity. You will have to read your learners' body language to judge when they are ready. If one or two groups don't seem to be talking very much, go to those groups and make sure that they are clear about what it is that you want them to do.

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After about ten minutes, stop your learners. At this point you are going to 'conduct' a class discussion - rather like a choir master or a choir mistress! Ask each group to read out one of their questions. (Write each question on the board or make a note of it in your Journal.) Then ask whether they have thought of possible answers to this question. Encourage the other groups to think of other possible answers to this question. Get your learners to support their suggestions. They may have to refer to the passage that they have read to check for clues to the answers. This is an important part of this activity.

Continue in this way. Try to get a question from **each** group. Don't just ask the children who you can rely on to give you answers. Ask some of your more shy learners. Encourage everyone to participate. Make notes in your Journal of the possible answers that your learners give.

Now get your learners to work in the same pairs that they started this activity. Tell them that you want each pair to discuss, and write the rest of the story in their own way. Tell them that you don't just want a few sentences. You want proper stories. Let them do this in a scribbler, or on rough paper. But if they work on rough paper, they will need to write their names on the pages, and they will need to keep them safe. If they really work at this part of the task, it should take them at least half an hour.

If your school has a strict timetable, you will need to do this part of the activity in another period, or you could ask your learners to do this for homework.

At the end of the day, open your Journal, and write the date and time. Think back to this activity.

How did it go?

What surprised you?

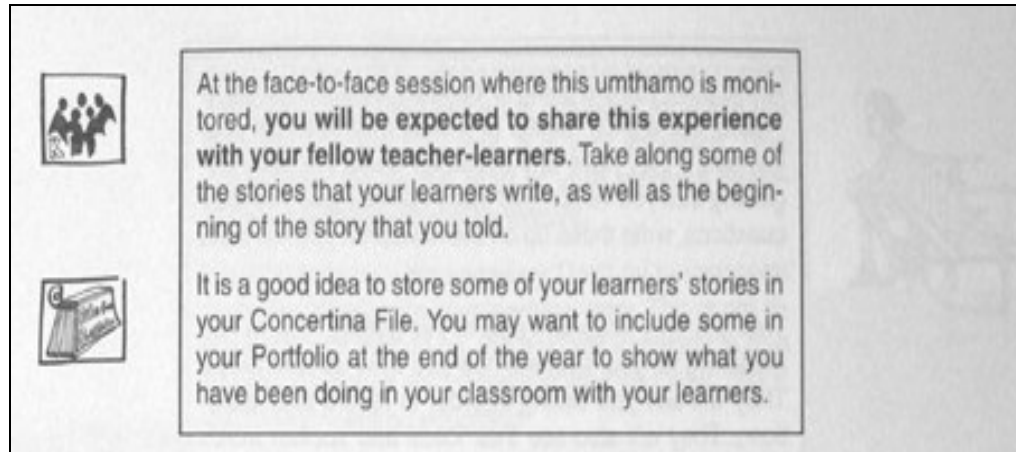What did you learn from this experience?

What did your learners learn?

How did you feel when you were with your learners? Why?

How do you feel now? Why?

As a follow-up to this activity, get your learners to swap the stories which they have written. Encourage them to make positive suggestions about one another's stories. Tell them to write under the story that they read, *What they enjoyed most, and what they would like to know more about.*

Make sure that you make time to tell them the rest of the story. Or you could give them the rest of the story for them to read themselves. Some other time, you could conduct a class discussion about the different versions.

At the face-to-face session where this umthamo is moni-
tored, **you will be expected to share this experience
with your fellow teacher-learners**. Take along some of
the stories that your learners write, as well as the begin-
ning of the story that you told.

It is a good idea to store some of your learners' stories in
your Concertina File. You may want to include some in
your Portfolio at the end of the year to show what you
have been doing in your classroom with your learners.

Analysis of Example 4

Analysis of the entire *umthamo* suggests that this activity is representative of the
majority of the activities in it. Throughout the booklet the designers' main
purpose is to build teacher-learners' pedagogic knowledge and skills. For the
most part the mood of the clauses is imperative and where teacher-learners are
given choices to make, these are either very minor (e.g. to read two <u>or</u> three
paragraphs of the introduction to a story), or the designers' preferred choice of
action is clearly expressed (e.g. If you have a very big class, making individual
copies for learners is expensive).

The designers position themselves as members of a team of classroom
practitioners who have tried out the activity and whose advice should therefore be
taken into consideration: 'When we tried this activity with a group of multi-grade
learners, the teacher read aloud the story beginning. As she modeled good reading,
the learners followed on their own copies of the text'. The small photograph in
the right-hand margin offers 'proof' of this trial. The foregrounded learners gaze
intently at their copies; the central figure of the teacher directs the reading activity.
The teacher-learners are positioned to follow this example. The mood of the
clauses in the very small textboxes in the left and right margins is for the most part
imperative. The command, in the box on the left-hand margin, to watch learners'
nonverbal communication is a reference to a topic which was the focus of
Umthamo 1. It can be assumed that the exclamation mark functions to remind
teacher-learners that they have encountered non-verbal communication before.

In the first paragraph of the second page of instructions, the teacher-learners are
compared to choir leaders. The designers' choice of this simile and of its
gendered forms is likely to be approved by teachers for whom music competitions
are an important part of school and community life and one in which these
gendered terms are used. The instructions continue in minute detail (e.g. 'But if
they work on rough paper, they will need to write their names on the pages and
they will need to keep them safe.') and position the teacher-learners as teachers
who will benefit from guidance on each aspect of their classroom work.

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The icon for journal writing in the left-hand margin in the middle of the second page signals a shift from a focus on pedagogic knowledge for teaching to reflecting on this knowledge, using one's personal subject construct to do so. The designers' questions demand answers. They position teacher-learners to think and to write in response to specific questions. The designers conclude the activity with further directives to teacher-learners for a peer assessment activity and for completion of the story reading.

As this is a Key Activity, the icon for contact session discussion and the bold type, remind teacher-learners of their accountability to fellow students. The directive to bring evidence of their work to the contact session is followed by a final paragraph in which the mood is declarative rather than imperative: though positioned to follow the guidance ('It is a good idea to ….'), teacher-learners have some options here.

Example 5: The final activity in *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo 2*, Activity 9: A Reading

In contrast to *Learners and Learning* in which most activities are oriented to subject and school knowledge within a knowledge-for-practice conceptual framework, only the final activity in *Language, Literacy and Communication Umthamo 2* moves away from an orientation to pedagogic knowledge within a knowledge-in-practice framework. The activity and the first part of the text on which it is based are reproduced in Example 5.

Example 5 The introduction to a reading and the first paragraphs of the extract

> Now we would like you to read a section from a book by Kenneth Goodman called, *What's Whole in Whole Language?* Don't worry if you don't understand *everything* that he says in this text. Skip over the parts you are unsure of. After some time, come back and read the passage again. As you re-visit it, you will find that it will make more and more sense with each re-reading. (We have put one or two explanations in the margins where Kenneth Goodman has used American terms.)

> **Activity 9 - A Reading**
>
> *Whole language: the easy way to language development*
>
> *This riddle has long troubled parents, teachers, and scholars: learning language sometimes seems ridiculously easy and sometimes impossibly hard. And the easy times are outside school, the hard times in school.*
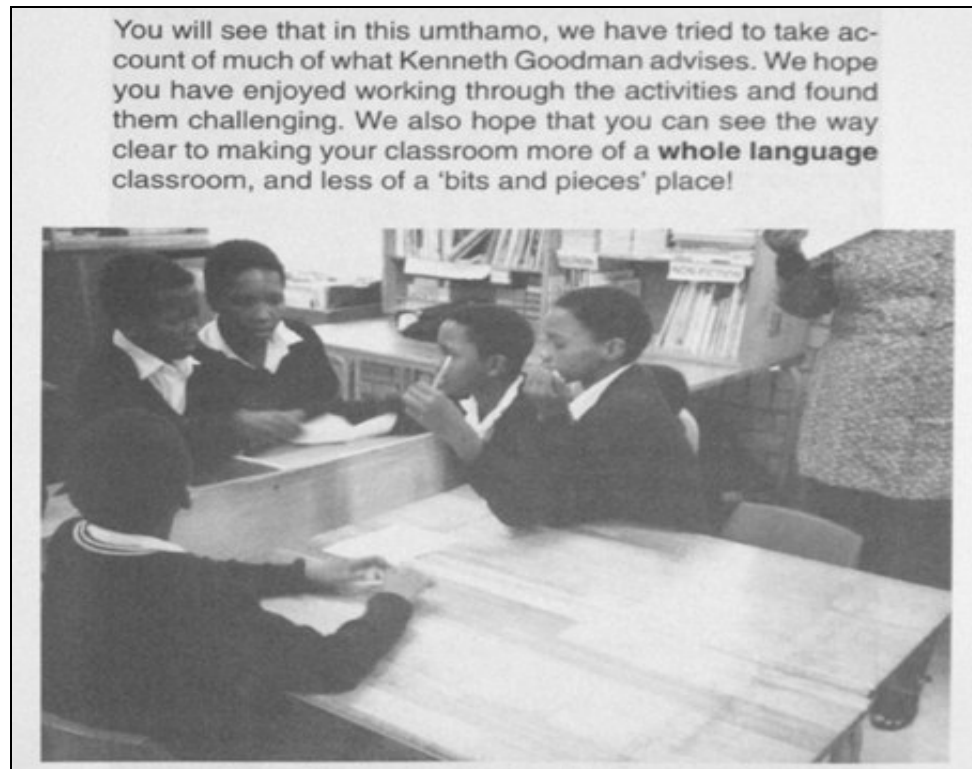>
> *Virtually all human babies learn to speak their home language remarkably well in a very short time, without any formal teaching. But when they go to school, many appear to have difficulty, particularly with written language, even though they are instructed by diligent teachers using expensive and carefully developed materials.*
>
> *We are beginning to work out this seeming paradox. Careful observation is helping us to understand better what makes language easy or hard to learn. Many school traditions seem to have actually hindered language de-*

Analysis of Example 5

The text is printed on a grey background - a design feature of the *imithamo* which is used to differentiate between the texts of writers / speakers included in the materials and the words of the designers. While the pages from Goodman's book have been reformatted, the content has not been edited. Apart from the glossing of three American terms, there is no scaffolding to assist teacher-learners in reading the extract. The designers position the teacher-learners as inexperienced readers who are unlikely to fully understand the text at a first reading ('Don't worry …' 'Skip over…'). However, the brief commentary which follows the extract from Goodman suggests that the designers believe they have provided scaffolding for this reading task throughout the *umthamo*, by constructing opportunities for teacher-learners to experience a whole language approach, first as learners and then as teachers. This commentary and the photograph below it are reproduced in Example 6.

Example 6: *Language, Literacy and Communication, Umthamo 2*: **The
conclusion to the** *umthamo*

> You will see that in this umthamo, we have tried to take ac-
> count of much of what Kenneth Goodman advises. We hope
> you have enjoyed working through the activities and found
> them challenging. We also hope that you can see the way
> clear to making your classroom more of a **whole language**
> classroom, and less of a 'bits and pieces' place!

Analysis of Example 6

In this concluding paragraph the designers construct a particular position for
reading the entire *umthamo*: it is to be read through a whole language lens. The
designers align themselves with an international expert (Goodman) and
foreground their aspirations for the teacher-learners ('We hope', 'We also hope').
The teacher-learners are positioned to respond positively to the idea of making
their classroom a whole language classroom. Such a classroom is contrasted with
'a 'bits and pieces' place' – a negative relexicalisation which renames a traditional
classroom in which aspects of language work (writing, reading, etc.) are
timetabled separately. The caption underneath the photograph, 'Thinking,
speaking, listening, reading and writing', repeats the five integrated aspects of a
whole language classroom which were introduced in the *umthamo.* The
photograph is another version of those on the front covers of *Umthamo 1* and
Umthamo 2. The learners are photographed from a 'teacher distance' (Van der
Mescht, 2004) The teacher is present, but in the background. The learners'
attention is focused on one another and on the learning task. Their eyes draw the
attention of the viewer to the paper that seems to be the focus of their activity. An
additional feature of this photograph of a learning-centred classroom is the neatly
organized box library on the table in the background: this is a classroom in which
the teacher takes reading seriously and is a positive role model for others. The
photograph is an important part of the mediation of 'whole language learning in
action'.

At the contact session which introduces *Umthamo 2*, teacher-learners experience as a group a 'storying' activity that is very similar to Activity 7 (Example 4). The designers have imagined them as benefiting from first experiencing as students much of what they, as teachers, will subsequently require learners to do in their classrooms. They are also imagined as benefiting from detailed and repeated guidance for each aspect of the activities, whether this be reflective writing in a journal or introducing a whole language approach in the classroom. Pedagogic knowledge is foregrounded with subject / school knowledge introduced only in the final activity. The mediation strategy employed by the designers guides the teacher-learners' practice and then introduces theory that affirms this practice.

5. Conclusion
A critical pedagogic analysis of examples of in-text activities and of commentary on these activities in two South African teacher education texts reveals both similarities and differences in the identities made available to teacher-learners.
Some similarities

- Designers position teacher-learners as novices who will benefit from detailed scaffolding of activities – in *Learners and Learning* as students who need assistance in reading academic text and in reflecting on this reading; in *Umthamo 2* as teachers who need detailed guidance in the preparation and teaching of lessons and in reflecting on these lessons.
- Designers use highly directive language in the construction of activities, positioning teacher-learners as students and as teachers who will benefit from following explicit instructions   .
- Designers use both inclusive and exclusive 'we' – in some instances positioning teacher-learners and designers as members of the same 'community' ('we' as a pronoun of solidarity); in others to establish a distinction between expert designers and inexpert teacher-learners.
- Designers position teacher-learners as having important responsibilities to the learners in their classrooms and also as professionals who need to rethink their theories and practices.

In some contexts, particularly in 'first world' countries, the designers' choices of language and image and their elaborate scaffolding of activities might be considered patronizing and as constructing teacher-learners as 'deficient'. However, Bourdieu argues that any discourse ' can only exist in the form in which it exists, so long as it is not simply grammatically correct but also, and above all, socially acceptable, i.e. heard, believed and therefore effective within a given state of relations of production and circulation (1991:76). In South Africa, teachers enrolled in both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes, who are eager to reject the apartheid past in education and to embrace what education policy and curriculum documents construct as new, may respond positively to this constitution of them both as 'beginners' who will be assisted to become competent and as people with important responsibilities. In addition, the highly directive language in task instructions and the extensive scaffolding of academic reading could be regarded as part of a necessary process of mediating between the teacher-learners' primary languages and English, an additional

language for the majority of the teacher-learners who use the texts from which the examples have been taken.

Some differences
- In *Learners and Learning*, there is a 'knowledge-for-practice' orientation to theory which informs practice and in *Umthamo 2* both a 'knowledge-for-practice' and a 'knowledge-in-practice' orientation to classroom teaching, with theory backgrounded.
- In *Learners and Learning* subject and school knowledge are foregrounded; in *Umthamo 2* pedagogic knowledge is foregrounded.
- In *Learners and Learning* male and female 'African generic' line drawings and the language of the text suggest that a national teacher readership has been imagined; in *Umthamo 2* use of terms from isiXhosa and local photographs suggest that a regional readership has been imagined.

It is a common experience of teacher educators that some students, in both pre-service and in-service programmes, claim greater interest in what they term 'theory', others in what they term 'practice' and still others in praxis. Teacher-learners' 'investment' in either of the texts from which examples have been taken may be influenced by the 'match or mismatch' between their main interest or felt 'need', in terms of their 'histories and current personal and professional situations' (Comber, 2005: 52), and what is offered in the text. Their 'investment' may also be influenced by their identification with the 'local' or the 'national'. One finding from research on the impact of the University of Fort Hare B Prim Ed programme on teachers' perceptions of their practice, is that teacher-learners in the Eastern Cape province responded positively to the focus on local 'context and culture' (Devereux and Amos, 2005: 277).

As stated in the introduction, this paper presents work in progress – both in relation to the development of the analytic framework and in relation to its use. It has attempted to demonstrate that a critical pedagogic analysis of distance learning texts for teacher education enables a text analyst to identify particular subject positions offered to readers as students and as teachers– positions which they may accept, contest or reject and positions which may affect their investment in a teacher education programme.

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[i] For example, Alan Tait from the UK Open University wrote the following on the occasion of SAIDE's tenth anniversary in 2002: 'SAIDE's fearless work has lit a torch for educational opportunity for all, in conjunction with the most effective of contemporary approaches to distance education. The work has not only been notable within South or even Southern Africa, but has a reputation world-wide for the impact it has made.'

[ii] In 2005 the University of Fort Hare's B Prim Ed programme won the National Association of Distance Education Organisations of South Africa (NADEOSA) award for excellence in materials design.