Full text open access online (Since 2009)
© Kamla-Raj IJES 2026
PRINT: ISSN 0975-1122 ONLINE: ISSN 2456-6322
Int J Edu Sci, 55(1): 17-31 (2026)
DOI: 10.31901/24566322.2026/55.1.1450

Critical Literary Pedagogy: Teaching Literature for Social Transformation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Mabunda Magezi Thompson

Department of English Studies, University of South Africa, South Africa, 1 Preller St, Muckleneuk, Pretoria, 0002 Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Building
Tel: 012 429 6288, E-mail: emabunmt@unisa.ac.za

KEYWORDS Apartheid. Gender. Literary Art. Political Ideology. Religion. English Education

ABSTRACT Following the dawn of democracy in 1994 in South Africa, teacher training institutions were required to introduce critical, interpretive literary pedagogy to empower students with knowledge for social transformation. This study sought to investigate the effectiveness of the critical literary pedagogy used in the teaching of Zakes Mda's (2002) novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This study was qualitative and employed a literary analytical approach to collect data, which involved an analysis of a literary text, book reviews, assessment topics, and narrative interviews conducted with students. The study's findings revealed that the pedagogic practices used in the teaching of the novel empowered students with knowledge to challenge the socio-political issues that continued to affect the majority of South Africans. The study recommended a theory-driven approach to teaching literature to provide students with knowledge to use literature to challenge socio-political issues that shape(d) the South African society.

INTRODUCTION

Following the dawn of democracy in 1994, various higher learning institutions (HLIs) in South Africa embarked on several transformative processes to ensure that their academic programmes and teaching strategies contribute meaningfully to the processes of social change. In particular, teacher training institutions needed to revise their literary curricula and syllabi to respond to the changing political currency in the country (Mbambo 2024). There was also a need to provide teacher-trainees with a range of more critical, interpretive literary teaching approaches needed to empower learners with appropriate knowledge and skills for social transformation (Wuntu et al. 2024; Rahim et al. 2024).

Informed by these initiatives, this study investigated the pedagogical practices used to teach literary art to teacher-trainees in the English Education Discipline at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa. These pedagogic practices are based on the program's learning outcomes, which were to "develop critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation", and "…provide students with an awareness and perspective of the various approaches to literary analysis; and develop [in them] critical discourse" (English Major 310 Course Outline 2020:1). The learning outcomes are derived from the Ministry of Education's beliefs that the teaching literature should equip students with the necessary skills to "demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems and recognise that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation" (DoBE 2011: 9).

In the context of this study, it was necessary to examine the above learning outcomes because they were used to determine whether students had mastered the pedagogic practices, critical literacy skills, and sound knowledge required to produce learners who could demonstrate an understanding of the world as envisioned by the Department of Basic Education. Most importantly, these outcomes were an important component of an education faculty that takes pride in being part of an African university that is socially inclusive, contextually relevant, and the primary function of which is to generate knowledge for the society that it serves.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- Determine the extent to which the students in the English Education Discipline have mastered the pedagogic practices necessary to use literature as a resource for critical thinking and reasoning.
- Investigate the nature of knowledge and skills students have acquired on the pedagogic practices necessary for teaching literature in the classroom context.

- Explore the extent to which teacher trainees could demonstrate their knowledge of the pedagogic practices necessary to teaching literature.

Research Aim

In light of the above background, the aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the pedagogical practices used in the teaching of literature to teacher-trainees at UKZN. For its purpose, the study examined how Mda's (2002) *The Madonna of Excelsior*, a prescribed text in the English Education Discipline at UKZN, was taught to teacher-trainees who chose English as their major subject. This prescribed text contains expletives, sexist and racist language, all of which are considered profane and/or taboo topics in some African cultures. As such, the author intended to understand how critical pedagogy, within South Africa's reconstituted teacher education institutions, with reformulated teaching and learning objectives, literary curricula and other learning materials that are relevant to the lived experiences of the students, could be implemented to challenge the widely accepted practices that shape the multicultural South African community.

Research Questions

To achieve its purpose, the study was guided by the following critical questions:

- To what extent do teacher-trainees demonstrate their mastery of pedagogical practices for teaching literature?
- What kind of knowledge do teacher-trainees demonstrate in their understanding of the pedagogic practices for teaching literature?
- How do teacher-trainees demonstrate their knowledge of the pedagogic practices for teaching literature?

Literature Review

The historical development of the study of English literature portrays literature as a broad cultural embellishment, an appropriate attribute for the refined wives of successful and wealthy gentlemen in England. According to this viewpoint, literature had no chance of being accepted into the respectable realms of academia (Culler 1997; Mabunda 2008; Robinson and Kissack 2009; Mabunda 2021). However, literary theorists such as Eliot, Richards and Leavis challenged how literature was perceived, thereby "persuad[ing] university authorities that English literature could be respectable and entitled to a place in the formal tertiary curriculum" (Robinson and Kissack 2009:7). Their love for literature led to the creation of the Department of English Studies at Cambridge University (Robinson and Kissack 2009).

The establishment of English as a subject of study, and later, as a department, resulted in the development of various approaches for teaching and reading literature. These approaches included formalism, which served as both a criterion of literariness and a method for reading 'good literature'. It is worth noting that these developments in the teaching and learning of literature, as well as the method of literary reading at universities, influenced the establishment of English departments in subsequent British colonies, including South Africa.

In relation to this, Balfour (2000) notes that theoretical developments in the United Kingdom had a significant influence on literature teaching in South Africa. Scholars such as Culler (1997), Cavanagh et al. (2012), Gamede (2024), Mabunda (2021) and Mbambo (2024) also claim that in the British colonies, literature was intended to instil in the natives an appreciation for English culture. It is important to note that the importation of metropolitan norms and English culture influenced literary curricula in higher learning institutions (HLIs) in South Africa. According to Gamede (2024) and Mabunda (2021), this importation resulted in the promotion of cultural heritage, as the adoption of the 'Great Tradition' of assimilation disseminated through literary works became evident in some South African universities and colleges.

These developments, as Robinson and Kissack (2009) observe, suggested that British graduates with English degrees could be employed as teachers in the British Empire outside England itself. For example, the University Act of 1916 paved the way for the establishment of tertiary education in South Africa in furtherance of the colonial mission of the British Empire. This British colonial influence saw the establishment of departments of English in the English-medium universities.

Based on the above historical background, the researcher argued that the teaching of literature informed by a tradition of assimilation in South African universities did not empower students in ways that would present them as future teachers of literature, who are sufficiently prepared to exploit the potential of literature study as a force to liberate the creative and critical potential of their learners. The researcher insists that this approach did not present teacher-trainees as educated individuals with intellectual abilities to inculcate in their learners memory capacities and problem-solving skills needed for the process of social transformation.

The ineffectiveness of a teaching approach that is informed by a tradition of assimilation is confirmed by various researchers (Sweeny 2015; Gamede 2019; Mabunda 2021). These researchers bemoan teachers' and teacher-trainees' rather passive engagement with literary texts in schools and universities, respectively. A comparative study, for instance, was conducted in post-apartheid South Africa and looked at how literature was taught to student-educators at two universities. Mabunda (2021) makes an interesting observation about the training of educators who took English as their major subject. On the one hand, he noted that one of the two universities has tasked the English Education Discipline, Faculty of Education, with the responsibility to teach both the teaching methodologies and literary content of the literature modules. He also observed, on the other hand, a coordinated teaching approach between the Department of English Studies, Faculty of Arts, and the English Education Discipline, Faculty of Education, where the former delivers literary content and related theories, and the latter offers the teaching methodologies for literature modules.

According to Mabunda (2021) and Roiphe et al. (2022), the coordinated teaching approach to literary teaching was not without shortcomings, as teacher-trainees often regurgitated the presentations delivered by their lecturers in the lecture halls. The observations above indicate an underlying disconnect between students' understanding of literary content and their ability to teach it in the classroom. This disconnect resulted in teacher-trainees who graduated with inadequate and fragmented knowledge of literature (Gamede 2019; Mabunda 2021). Indeed, this should not come as a surprise given that the academic English Departments at universities do not see their role as serving a pedagogic practice that would provide prospective teachers with appropriate teaching strategies when they enter the profession as qualified English teachers.

From the above perspective, the researcher further argues that the teaching of literature in the English Education Discipline at post-apartheid South African universities would ensure that students understand that studying literature is more than just reading and writing, as it is about being able to read how people, as members of communities, live and use language to negotiate their views, and mostly, to highlight issues of human rights. Moreover, the researcher further contends that literature can be used as a powerful resource to empower prospective teachers with critical skills to use literature to challenge issues such as sexism, racism, tribalism, bullying and xenophobia that often invade classroom settings in post-apartheid South African schools.

For example, Ndlovu (2019) conducted a study on the teaching of literary art to highlight issues of human rights with particular reference to such literary texts as Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1967) *A Grain of Wheat,* to foreground both colonisation and decolonisation in the Kenyan society, Fugard, Khani and Ntshona's (1974) *Siswe Banzi is Dead*, to expose the dehumanising effects of apartheid, Coetzee's (1980) *Waiting for the Barbarians* to explore the torture and complicity in oppression, Marechera's (1978) *The House of Hunger* to highlight the psychological effects of colonisation, Dangarembga's (1988) *Nervous Conditions* to probe gender inequality, Mpe's (2001) *Welcome to Out Hillbrow* to highlight issues of xenophobia and HIV-AIDS in South Africa, and Diop's (2006) *The Book of Bones* to critical analyse the genocide in Rwanda as units for analysis and data collection.

Moreover, in his study entitled "*Literature and Social Change: Writing, Criticism, and Teaching in Neoliberal Canada*", Shupak (2015) investigates the actual and possible political effects of works of creative writing through close readings, thereby examining critically issues of political activism as raised in Stephen Law's (2013) novel, *Tailing of Warren Peace*. The study approaches these issues by discussing the methods of literary interpretation used by Canadian literary critics to make criticism politically effective in their attempts to highlight certain political ideologies that shape Canadian society. Shupak's (2015) findings are that

literary activism in the neoliberal age is characterised by intellectuals articulating a systemic critique of capitalism, providing conceptual tools that activists can use, and stimulating the public's radical imagination.

Furthermore, Ruzy et al. (2011) conducted a study to determine the awareness and sensitivities of students about current news relating to gender issues. Through a series of tasks offered to students during school lessons in relation to issues of gender in Malaysia, the study revealed that students are capable of identifying issues that can bring about change in their communities. The use of literature as a tool for political criticism and for critiquing the effects of capitalism and for highlighting the issue of social power in society, as highlighted in Shupak (2015) and Ruzy et al. (2011) are important ones, for they expose how power relations affect the lives of individuals in societies. Most importantly, the use of literature as a social expression has the ability to stimulate the public's radical imagination, which can lead to a quest for a just society (Shupak 2015; Wuntu et al. 2024; Rahim et al. 2024).

Mustakim et al. (2017) conducted a study titled "*Teachers' Approaches in Teaching Literature: Observations of ESL Classroom*" to investigate the teaching approaches used by teachers in teaching the Contemporary Children's Literature Program to upper primary school learners in Malaysia. The study employs classroom observations and interviews as research instruments to collect data. Their findings on the approaches used in teaching literature are that the incorporation of literary elements in the classroom in Malaysian schools is minimal, and that teachers of literature lacked creativity and relied on the teaching guidelines provided by the Malaysian School Curriculum Development Centre. In the context of this project, the above findings are important as they suggest that teachers of literature need a sense of creativity to make literature learning a stimulating experience, and to help learners relate their learned experiences to their immediate surroundings.

Another study in the teaching of literature was conducted by Beach (2005) to determine how students' discourses of race, class, and gender influence their responses to multicultural literature as well as how they adopt alternative discourses through coping with the tension portrayed in multicultural literature. To serve its purpose, Beach's (2005) study comprises 14 high school learners, eight female and six male students, three of whom were white, three Asian-American, one Hispanic, and another one of African descent, all of whom enrolled in a multicultural literature class taught by the researcher.

The findings of the study showed that learners' responses are influenced by three different factors, that is, the teacher's modelling of alternative ways of thinking about the texts by adopting alternative perspectives, responses to texts in which learners experienced fictional characters challenging status quo discourses and institutional forces, and context. In relation to this, the study pointed out that learners are able to examine forces in their own lives that limit their development as individuals. Lastly, the results of the study revealed that learners who shifted in their discourses over the period of the course are the most open to entertaining their perceptions of themselves in relation to others, and of the world within which they live. These are important findings as they amplify the role of literature in providing literature teachers and learners with critical skills needed to challenge dominant practices that shape their world and their perceptions of themselves in relation to others.

In her study, Nabudde (2007) offered an investigation into whether a teacher's knowledge of literary skills could significantly affect students' performance in the novels at 'A' level in selected secondary schools in Busia District, Uganda. The study used questionnaires, interviews and observations as instruments for data collection. The findings of the study revealed that most teachers of literature in the selected schools hardly possess any knowledge of literary skills. In addition to this, the results show that some of the teachers interviewed in this study do not have any knowledge of literary skills. The findings also showed that teachers who were observed while teaching literature used commentaries directly to make learners understand novels, which, according to Nabudde (2007), does not develop learners' skills to interpret novels effectively.

A similar study by Singh (2003) focused on how literature was taught at the secondary school level. Like Balfour (2000), Singh uses short stories to investigate the teaching of literary art by paying particular attention to the use of the Cultural Heritage approach of the apartheid education system.

While Singh focuses on ways of teaching literature at the secondary school level, Balfour (2000) employs a literary analytical approach by engaging learners in reading and analysing the selected texts. Appleman (2000) also conducted a study in which observation was made to determine the readability of literary texts prescribed for secondary school learners.

Behari (1997) investigated the use of literature education as a tool for transformation in South Africa. Behari uses various reading strategies with learners in a multicultural classroom setting to engage them with different critical issues such as race, class, attitudes and perceptions that relate to a learner's immediate environment. The study uses various teaching theories such as Schemata Theory and Additive Schema as models of reading analyses of pupils' personal-mental schemata. The study's findings reveal that Additive Schemata have a positive influence on a learner's personal schemata, leading in most cases to a transformation in attitude and perception of the world within learners.

Furthermore, Gamede's (2019) study explores the practices and strategies used in the teaching of novels at secondary schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study specifically probes the practices and strategies of Grade 10 isiZulu Home Language teachers who work in disadvantaged, rural areas. The study seeks to understand how educators teach and analyse isiZulu novels in the classroom context. In his findings, Gamede reveals that teaching novels is still a challenge and teachers have a limited understanding of what it entails.

Recent studies also show how researchers' interest in the teaching of literature has grown both at university and school levels. For example, Zamatul et al. (2025) investigated Malaysian secondary school students' opinions and attitudes towards incorporating local literary texts, differences in students' attitudes toward local versus Western literary texts, and the factors influencing those attitudes. The results of this study show that students' attitudes toward local literary texts are generally positive. However, while understanding students' attitudes towards certain types of literary texts is important in the literature class, Zamatul et al.'s (2025) study does not show how the pedagogic practices used in teaching both local and Western literature could have influenced students' attitudes towards, and preferences for, certain types of texts over others.

In addition, Zayed (2025) explored the perspectives of Libyan university students on teaching literature in English as a foreign language (EFL), thereby comparing students from public and private universities. The study collected data through an online survey distributed to 80 students from both public and private universities. The findings revealed that the pedagogic practices used and the teaching of literature and content design, as well as student engagement, helped to sustain EFL literature teaching and provided ways for improving education practices in Libyan universities. While Zayed (2025) investigated the perspectives of university students on the use of English as a foreign language in the literature class in Libya, he does not comment on the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the teaching strategies employed in the use of EFL to teach literature.

Furthermore, Windel et al. (2025) investigated Grade 10 students' attitudes, preferences, and perceived difficulties toward World Literature as a component of English language learning at a public high school in San Miguel, Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. The findings of the study suggest that positive dispositions alone do not reduce the challenges students encounter, and that pedagogical interventions are needed to address specific difficulties with text complexity, cultural unfamiliarity, and time constraints, rather than assuming motivation and interest are sufficient. Unlike the current study that focuses on university students being trained to become teachers, Windel et al. (2025) focus on a secondary school learners and are not concerned with the possible impact of the (in)effectiveness of the pedagogic practices used in the teaching of literature on students' academic performance.

Moreover, Sindkhedkar (2025) investigates how literature serves as a tool for bringing about fundamental societal reforms, thereby transcending the artistic notion of the "art for art's sake" framework to highlight how written texts may be an important pre-political tool. The research studies how people perceive literary narrative, how defamiliarisation produces linguistic disruptions, and how oppressed cultures use their native and ancestral languages to resist established power structures. Sindkhedkar (2025) insists that literature demonstrates that it is both a reflection of

society and a major force that enables and transforms social justice into a reality. While Sindkhedkar speaks to the relationship between literature and society, he does not locate his study within the teaching and learning environment to suggest how universities, for instance, could play a role in equipping students with the knowledge necessary to use literature as a tool for social transformation.

Zondi (2025) also investigates how literature teaching in South African high schools enhances English Second Language (ESL) students' language and critical thinking skills. The study looks at teachers' perceptions and whether an integrated approach is effective in ESL literature sessions. This study used a qualitative case study to select 12 ESL teachers from three high schools in a single South African education district. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather participants' perspectives and experiences. Thematic analysis was employed on the recorded, transcribed, and coded interviews. The results showed that teachers used a range of teaching strategies but operated in silos. The findings call for a comprehensive, learner-centred strategy for improving critical thinking and analysis skills. Once again, Zondi's study also concerns itself with secondary school teachers and focuses on how literature is taught to ESL students.

Another study was conducted by Mavhza (2025), who explored how Intermediate Phase (IP) teacher-trainees perceived learner-centred teaching practices in South African English language learning classrooms. According to the survey, many teacher-trainees recognise the advantages of learner-centred teaching techniques, including student involvement, autonomy, and motivation. Thus, the study's findings add to the current research on pedagogical approaches and guide the construction of more effective teacher training courses. Mavhza's (2025) study offers interesting perspectives on the need for a more effective teacher training course at teacher training institutions. However, the study does not interrogate the pedagogic practices used in the teaching of literature to teacher-trainees. Instead, its primary focus is on how teacher-trainees feel about or perceive a particular teaching strategy rather than on its effectiveness or lack thereof, which is central to the current study.

All the above studies raise pertinent issues regarding the teaching of literary art, both at the school and university levels. The studies highlight the need for literature teachers to recognise the role of literature in producing competent learners in terms of language competency and critical thinking skills. However, it is important to note that the above studies are generally limited to either the use of literature as a language resource, the perspectives of students towards literature at a school level, or teachers' perspectives towards the teaching of literature at a school and university levels (Zamatul et al. 2025; Zayed 2025; Windel et al. 2025; Zondi 2025; Mavhza 2025). From the above observation, the researcher notes that these studies do not comment on the effectiveness of the pedagogical practices used in the teaching of literature to teacher-trainees at a university. Where such a focus was made, the studies were confined to teacher-trainees' attitudes or perspectives towards teaching approaches used in the literature class (Mavzh 2025), and how literature could contribute to social transformation (Sindkhedkar 2025; Mabunda 2021). Therefore, there was a need to investigate the effectiveness of the pedagogical practices used in the teaching of literature to teacher-trainees at a university situated within a historically divided society, where certain literary texts were used to perpetuate particular attitudes towards some sections of the population.

Critical Theory

Informed by the need to establish a theory-driven approach to teaching literature that seeks to demonstrate to students the role of literature in the context of schooling, this study adopted 'critical theory', a theoretical position that advocates for the incorporation of themes such as multiculturalism and human relations into literary curricula. The theory proposes that institutions of higher learning in decolonised nations should respond to radical changes in the political landscape (Kunkel-Pottebaum 2013).

HLIs must ensure that a new order of things is established, including a transformative literary pedagogy that assists in the process of social transformation. Transformative literary pedagogy should instil in teacher-trainees the willingness to reject docile literary pedagogy in favour of progressive and transformative critical literacy (Freira 1982). Transformative literary pedagogy must seek to arrive at what Bernstein (1992: 35) calls "engaged pluralism", by which he means the willing-

ness to listen to others. Consistent with this view, critical theory would challenge teachers and learners to be "vigilant against the dual temptations of simply dismissing what others are saying by falling back on one of those standard defensive ploys where we condemn it as obscure, wooly, or trivial, or thinking we can always easily translate what is alien into our own entrenched vocabularies".

This calls for a theory-driven literary approach to teaching literature that views reading literary texts, as well as talking or writing about them, as both an affective and cognitive process that provides students with an emotional and personal experience while also allowing for reflection on societal issues. As a result, students would learn important things about themselves and the world within which they live. The researcher further insists that teaching literature is both an intellectual exercise and a challenging experience that allows students to understand life better. While studying literary works, students gain an understanding of themselves, and as a result, appreciate the macrocosm of the material world that exists outside of the literary texts (Vakili et al. 2024). Therefore, critical theory empowers students as critical citizens to substantiate their individual positions, thereby securing and verifying their judgements while also acknowledging their individual strengths and fallibilities as members of the community (Judge et al. 2009).

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research design, which allowed for the incorporation of various data collection and interpretation methods. This resulted in findings that were relatively consistent and accurate. The project was carried out within the interpretivist paradigm with the goal of understanding human subjectivity and experiences of the world (Neuman 2015). This study used a literary analytical approach as its research methodology. The use of this research methodological procedure enabled a critical approach to reading Mda's (2002) *The Madonna of Excelsior* as a prescribed text, in which students as readers are taught to use their cognitive strategies to analyse literary texts.

Research Site and Sampling

This study was carried out at a teacher training institution, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (hereafter referred to as UKZN), South Africa. The study's research participants were eight teacher-trainees enrolled for the bachelor's degree in education (BEd) programme, who were in their third year of studying English as their major subject. This research sample was chosen based on several criteria, including their field of specialisation, level of study, race and gender. The year of study and area of specialisation criteria were important because these were students who had been prescribed *The Madonna of Excelsior*, and they were expected to have fulfilled the module's purpose, as stated in the introductory section of this paper.

The above novel was chosen as a unit for analysis because it is set in a historical context that has the potential to evoke students' experiences of South African politics. The sample for this research project was gender and race representative and reflected the racial and cultural diversity of the population of South Africa. The need for the above representation was twofold. On the one hand, the selected novel represents strong racial attitudes among South African racial groupings and, on the other hand, it addresses issues of gender inequality, patriarchy and sexual exploitation, all of which continue to dominate post-apartheid South Africa.

Most importantly, because the chosen text deals with sensitive and contentious issues such as rape and racism, the author was aware of the dilemmas surrounding representative reliability. Neuman (2006: 31) points out that "[a]n interviewer's visible characteristics, including race and gender, often affect interviews and respondents' answers, especially for questions related to race and gender…" As a result, the participants were informed ahead of time about the issues to be discussed during the interviews, as well as the fact that they were free to withdraw from the study or abstain from answering questions that could make them feel uncomfortable.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

This study collected data through recorded face-to-face, open-ended narrative interviews, which allowed for a comparative analysis of the narrative interpretations of the text during the interviews, as well as further probing of the given narrative responses. The data was collected during the examination period. As a result, recruiting participants for the study proved challenging.

However, appointments with willing participants were eventually arranged. Prior to the interviews, participants were given an informed consent form to sign, and they were assured that the data collected would be used solely for academic purposes, and that their identities would be kept confidential.

Aside from interviews, the study used secondary research, which included *The Madonna of Excelsior* as the prescribed text, book reviews, assessment question papers, as well as seminar presentation papers, all of which are based on the text. The key points from the documentary evidence were then coded and categorised into two sets of themes, that is, sub-themes and coded themes. While the former refers to data interpretation from the perspective of the participants, the latter refers to data interpretation from the perspective of the researcher and/or other researchers (Cohen et al. 2018). Most importantly, the use of documentary evidence along with interviews and the prescribed text as data sources helped establish research triangulation (Cohen et al. 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To establish the context of the analysis of *The Madonna of Excelsior*, a prescribed text that forms a unit for analysis in this study, providing a brief summary of the plot was necessary.

The Madonna of Excelsior: A Brief Summary

The Madonna of Excelsior is a novel written in 2002 by Zakes Mda, a well-known South African literary artist. The narrative focuses on two important political moments in the history of South African, that is, the legal case of miscegenation in Excelsior in 1971 in the Orange Free State province, as well as the period of intense political tensions between Blacks and Whites that preceded apartheid. In the novel, Mda examines the politics of South Africa from the perspective of a mixed-race family to which Niki, one of the "Excelsior 19", belongs. The Excelsior 19 are a group of 19 individuals charged with violating South Africa's Immorality Act, which banned sexual relations between Black and White citizens under apartheid.

The events of the story take place in Excelsior, a small town in the Orange Free State province, where the Excelsior 19 are identified and prosecuted. Niki's family has always depended on the land for survival, as has the rest of the Excelsior 19. However, Niki, faced with the challenges to support her family, assumes a modelling career for a clergyman, Father Claerhout, who works on an "artistic study" of human anatomy, thereby recruiting prostitutes as his subjects of study under the guise of lifting them out of poverty and sex trafficking. He succumbs to the sexual temptation and commits miscegenation with one of his subjects of study.

This immorality act results in Niki, a black woman, giving birth to a son who is half white and half black, a coloured. Niki is arrested for her intimacy with a White man as she is deemed to have violated the Immorality Act, which is one of the apartheid laws. Once released from prison, she resumes her visits to Father Claerhout, and in the process, gets to understand that the men who frequently harass her when she visits the priest's house only do so because they know they can never touch her. Her enjoying their desperate attention to have her does not last long as one day, one White man detains and rapes her, a sexual encounter that results in her giving birth to her second son.

As they grow up, her two boys are exposed to structural violence and oppression. This oppressive encounter turns Viliki, one of the boys, into a political activist who fights for independence. Even when South Africa has gained its independence, structural violence and segregation remain, and the oppressive past is important to their identities.

The story ends with Viliki and his sister, Popi, becoming political office bearers in the new democratic South Africa. However, both Viliki and Popi feel both uncomfortable and simultaneously hopeful as they have no political background and knowledge for how to represent South Africa's new voice and spirit.

Data Analysis

The Proppian model was used in the study to analyse and categorise themes derived from data such as reviews, assignment topics, prescribed text, and narrative interviews. Once identified, the themes were divided into major themes and subthemes based on the sources from which they originated. Table 1 depicts the themes developed from documentary evidence and narrative interviews. Furthermore, the themes are represented based on the race and gender of the research participants to

Table 1: Thematic representation using the Proppian Model of literary analysis

Participants	*Race*	*Gender*	*Interviews (Sub-themes)*	*Documentary Evidence (Coded Major Themes)*
Pearl	White student	Female student	Racism	Literary Art: A Social Expression
Simon	White student	Male student	Polarity	Apartheid and Religion as
Vusi	Black student	Male student	Stereotypes	Political Ideologies
Zamani	Black student	Female student	Ideologies	Democracy: A Political
Vanessa	Indian student	Female student	Political History	Ideology
Benny	Indian student	Male student	Gender relations	Sexism Racial Conflict
Jerry	Coloured student	Male student	Textual expression	
Suzanna	Coloured student	Female student	Apartheid and democracy	

Source: Designed by the author

determine whether these factors influenced their narrative responses.

As various participants mentioned related sub-themes during the interviews, the sub-themes were combined to form the following coded major themes of literary art: a social expression, apartheid and religion as political ideologies, democracy: a political ideology, sexism, and racial conflict.

Literary Art: A Social Expression

During the narrative interviews on the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the issue of literary art as a form of social expression was raised. For example, when asked if the novel represented the sociopolitical realities of South African politics, Jerry pointed out, "*The Madonna of Excelsior symbolises the lived experiences of most South African people under apartheid. It provides a very good grounding in the apartheid rule. It shows that even though the White people of South Africa were the ones who were responsible for the Pass Laws, they were at the same time contradicting themselves; they were the ones who were sleeping with their maids, and that was against what they believed in. So, the novel tells us of the evil of the apartheid government. And, you see, these things are still there today in South Africa; we still see those things as the remaining evidence, which is why I say it is symbolic.*"

Jerry's interpretation demonstrates his ability to see the text as representing the historical realities that shaped South Africa, as he can relate the text to apartheid South Africa's Pass Laws. The Immorality Act of 1953, enacted to prohibit intimate relations between Blacks and Whites, is key to the novel. Furthermore, Jerry's understanding of the novel as symbolic of apartheid South Africa is confirmed by Mda himself, who stated during an interview as quoted in an article titled, *The Steamy Past of a Free State Town*, in the *Mail and Guardian* (2002), "*I have recently become a frequent visitor to Excelsior, since I am writing a novel in this Free State platteland town about 100 km northeast of Bloemfontein. The people are friendly and always welcome strangers like myself with open arms. It has not always been like that. In 1971, South African newspapers bewailed the fact that the residents of Excelsior had become withdrawn and hostile to strangers. A scandal had broken out, and both Black and White townsfolk rallied around one another to keep their shame away from the glare of the world.*"

Mda's responses further show how the author of the novel employed observation, interviews, and historical documentation as evidence to represent the history and politics of South Africa accurately. He continues, "*First to be arrested under the Immorality Act was Elizabeth Ramasedi, a 22-year-old beauty from the nearby Black township of Mahlatswetsa. She confessed she had had relations with Johannes Calitz, the town's only butcher and member of town council. She, however, added that she had not been the only Black woman who had done this. She mentioned a number of others.*"

The historical facts mentioned above were critical in determining whether the research participants were able to establish the novel's relevance (or lack thereof) to post-apartheid South African schooling. For this, it was necessary to ask the participants whether the teaching approaches used in the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* provided them with the requisite pedagogic practices to empower their learners with knowledge and skills

for sociopolitical change in South Africa. To this, Jerry responds, "*You see, it [the novel] teaches us how things were during those days; it does so by also educating our learners that, 'look, this was how things were' during apartheid. So, these kinds of things need not be repeated. It teaches children about history and why South Africa is the way it is now. For example, it tells us that those Pass Laws of racial discrimination…were wrong…now…things have changed; if you want to do something, you are free to do so. If I want to marry a Black person, for instance, nothing should stop me from marrying that person…the race should not be an issue I am free to marry who I want. The novel teaches learners to accept each other, not to be racists, and not to be prejudiced.*"

Vanessa concurs with Jerry's sentiments. When asked how the narrative techniques used by Mda in his novel allowed her to view the text as symbolic of South Africa's political history, she claims, "*The writer writes his novel not as an insider, but as an outsider, but not as far outside that he cannot identify, but through an inward look that enables him to identify with the subject of the story he is trying to tell. I am saying this because he does not always make himself part of the victims of apartheid, but as someone who observed it as it happened to those whom he is writing about. He always says 'we', 'we', 'we', in order to show that even though he may have observed or not gone through all that, some people have experienced it on our behalf.*

Vanessa's understanding of Mda's narrative technique to recapture the historical in the literary, thereby historicising the personal, and in the process, personalising the historical, reflects the degree to which the strategies employed in the teaching of literary art at UKZN, as well as the type of novel-based assignment topics, could have prepared her to engage critically with the text. The following is an example of the novel-based assignment topics given to students as prospective literature teachers.

The Madonna of Excelsior (My Emphasis): A representation of life in all its hues and shades, a picture of humanity more fully resolved than anything found in a history book. Write a well-structured essay of 2-3 pages in which you critically evaluate this statement by referring to incidents and characters in the novel.

The researcher argues that it was probably this type of assessment topic that gave Vanessa and Jerry the ability to identify the novel's narrative frames. Vanessa, for example, was able to identify Mda (2002) as an outsider who portrays a life that reflects and critiques the deleterious effects of racism and the excessive love for dominance and control over Black people by Afrikaner Nationalists as the basis on which apartheid as an ideology was conceived. Mbambo (2024) also points out that literary artists tend to use certain narrative frames that allow them to represent the historical in the literal in ways that present them as outsiders to their texts.

Apartheid and Religion as Political Ideologies

Mda (2002) uses religion to expose the contradictions of apartheid, an ideology based on religious beliefs. Mda's novel depicts Afrikaner nationalists as religious people with an inherent sense of contradiction. For example, Mda (2002: 87) portrays Reverend Bornman as a religiously and ideologically conflicted man. This is clear in that he believes "the devil had sent Black women to tempt him and move him from the path of righteousness. The devil had always used the Black female to tempt the Afrikaner… The devil made the Afrikaner covertly covet the Black woman while publicly detesting her" (Mda 2002: 87). However, it was the Reverend's fault that he had not been enough to resist the temptation. The devil made him do it. The devil had weakened his heart, making it open to temptations, and he made things worse for himself in the eyes of the Almighty by attempting to take his own life. He was therefore praying that God should forgive him. This sense of denialism on the part of the Reverend is symbolic of how the apartheid regime in South Africa used religion as the basis to exploit and exclude certain sections of the population (Mabunda 2021; Mbambo 2024).

Mda (2002: 29-30) expands on the issues of contradictions and racism by referring in the novel to former South African Prime Minister J.G. Strydom's speech from 1954 to 1958:

"*[T]he Lion of the North…who made certain that he did not make equal what God had not made equal. He who confirmed to his people that: as a Calvinist people we Afrikaners have, in accordance with our faith in the Word of God, developed a policy condemning all equality and mongrelisation between White and Black. God's word teaches us, after all, that He willed into being separate nations, colours and languages.*

The effects of religion as a political ideology in apartheid South Africa is also highlighted by Vusi, the research participant, who states, "*The Afrikaner nationalists in the novel created their superpower in the name of religion to justify their evil doings. I mean all the things that they did to Black people were believed to have been taken from the Bible. You know you would wonder how the Bible could ever promote such an evil act.*"

The contradictions presented above are also said to have characterised post-apartheid South Africa, which claims to embrace democratic ideological beliefs (to be discussed next) and celebrates multicultural diversity.

Democracy: A Political Ideology

The contradictions inherent in apartheid South Africa are portrayed in democratic, post-apartheid South Africa through the character of Viliki, a Councillor, who is tasked with ensuring equal distribution of resources such as houses, but he is later revealed to have engaged in greedy and corrupt activities. Mda (2002: 30) writes, "*Viliki had allocated himself a second house, which he was renting out to some homeless family. He felt that as the mayor, he deserved a second house in order to supplement his meagre income from the council…when there were still so many people on the list, desperately waiting for government-subsidised houses.*"

This characterisation of the contradictions inherent in the democratic dispensation is further confirmed by Benny who bemoans, "*If you look at what happens when the election comes [politicians] come and make promises and when they get into power, they will only deliver to their own provinces. You see, you go to other provinces in South Africa, there is no running water, electricity, houses, schools, and many other things. But go to the home townships of those political leaders, you'll be surprised. They are doing things for themselves and forget about the people who voted for them. And this thing is not good, that is why many people don't want to vote any more, it is because they have been fooled. So I can say there are contradictions.*"

The contradictions highlighted above continue to affect the lives of post-apartheid South African citizens. The participants in the study identified similarities between apartheid and post-apartheid South African politics. In doing so, they demonstrated how the novel represents, both literarily and literally, the realities of the South African community (Mabunda 2021; Mbambo 2024; Vakili et al. 2024).

Gender Relations

Gender inequality is a prominent theme in the novel, and it serves as the foundation for gender stereotypes and women's objectification. Teacher-trainees identified gender issues in the novel. When asked about her feelings as a female student about Mda's objectification of women and what makes her feel the way she does, Suzanna replied, "*[The] issue of women as sex subjects and looked down upon is more emphasised in this novel…remember during the sex scandal all women end up in jail and the men get away with it. So, you can see that although they are Black women, they are women. You know what I am talking about? The fact that they are women is what matters most in this novel. You know it always happens in this country that you find that if a man has got five girlfriends it is okay, it is not okay, but it is okay because he is a man. But if a woman has got five boyfriends, then she is a "bitch"… So, you clearly can see that in many cases men are getting away with things they are not supposed to do and a woman is charged…*"

The novel emphasises women's inferiority to men. Men, particularly White farmers, constantly exploit women sexually. Women, for example, are frequently portrayed in their naked bodies in the novel to arouse and quench the sexual desires of White farmers.

In relation to this, participants were asked whether the teaching of the novel and its portrayal of women has shaped their approach to the teaching of literary texts to learners in the literature classroom. To respond to this, Pearl observes, "*The novel teaches us about how women during those days were treated, women had no say to their husbands but now things have changed, women now also have their voices in society, they are no longer expected to be quiet and comply…[and] to be silent, they must participate in society. So, as teachers of literature, [we] can also teach children that, '…look, this is how women were treated, now things have change*d*, women must also learn to have a say'.*"

As seen above, the participant was able to demonstrate how the text shows the representation of

women during apartheid South Africa, and how the novel makes for an effective teaching tool to engage critically with issues relating to gender equality with learners in the classroom context. It would be interesting, however, to establish the extent to which the participant as a prospective teacher would apply the acquired skills when teaching literature that does not deal with issues emanating from the participants' immediate sociohistorical and political context.

Racial Conflict

Mda's novel focuses heavily on racism in apartheid South Africa. The text depicts the Afrikaners as representing the White race that considers itself superior to all other races in South Africa. The novel depicts racism in the context of a Black township located in the Free State during apartheid. In relation to this theme, Zamani, one of the participants, states, " *The novel indicates that South Africa was (is) a racist country, where everyone who was not White was treated as if he/she was a visitor…everyone was not free except for Whites because they thought this was their home only.*"

Simon concurs with the above as he states that, "*During apartheid…things were too difficult such that one could only imagine how Black people, especially women, felt when they were abused and raped simply because they were not White.…*"

Simon's and Zamani's comments on the treatment of Black people and women in particular, as well as the symbolic reference to the Black Free State township, are confirmed by Whipple (2004: 1), who writes, "*The small town in which the action takes place is a microcosm of the larger country of South Africa. The reader becomes acquainted with the town's people of both races in Excelsior, develops sympathy for some and abhorrence of others, and sees South African life as it affects fully developed and realistic characters of both races. It is the 'coloured' people, like Popi, who belong to no culture, who have the most difficult lives—they are too White for the Black society in which they try to live, and far too Black to be part of the White society, even if they wanted to be.*"

Similarly, Pearl makes an interesting comment, "*The novel has given us some skills of knowing where we are coming from and where we are going. In terms of a classroom situation, [the novel] provides an understanding as to how we as teachers must be able to understand the differences of the learners we are teaching in the class, as well as being able to identify sensitive issues which may not be friendly to students who are not of the race cultures as ours…and the novel teaches us of what was happening during apartheid and what is happening now… In fact, what was happening before was a disgrace, so things now have changed; what is happening now is normal. We have the rainbow nation. It sort of…prepares us to teach our children about the way in which they should accept and appreciate others…although it teaches us about the past, it simply shows us how things were during those days and how change is important in our society.*"

A Critical Evaluation of the Results

A critical exploration of the participants' responses highlights students' understanding of the pedagogic practices necessary to teach *The Madonna of Excelsior* at UKZN. Key to their responses is that the novel makes for an important source of knowledge about South Africa's past, present and future, and that teachers as agents for social transformation should apply appropriate pedagogic practices in their teaching of literature to learners to empower them with the necessary skills to contribute to social transformation. To most of the participants, the teaching of the novel, as a source of knowledge, serves to create an awareness of the past injustices and paves the way for a better South Africa as a society that celebrates multiracialism and multiculturalism.

To critically evaluate the above findings, it was important to look at the critical research question that guided this study. The first question states: *To what extent do teacher-trainees demonstrate their mastery of pedagogical practices for teaching literature?*

A critical analysis of the data presented revealed that the research participants showed their adequate understanding of the teaching approaches required when teaching literature to learners when they enter the teaching profession. This was evident in that the participants showed the ability to relate the themes that emerged from the narrative interviews to the social injustices experienced in South Africa during apartheid. However, it is not clear whether their ability to do so was due to the fact that the novel addresses local issues that

shaped the students' immediate surroundings, and whether the students would manage to apply the same analytical skills to any works of art regardless of their (ir)relevance to the South African context. In their respective studies, Metoder et al. (2023), John and Jeremy (2022) and Balagao and Dhan (2023) also emphasise the need for teachers to exploit the many existing teaching strategies when teaching literature to learners in order to meet the needs of the learners in their culturally diverse classrooms.

The second question states that: *What kind of knowledge do teacher-trainees demonstrate in their understanding of the pedagogic practices for teaching literature?*

The research participants were able to demonstrate how literature challenges teachers and learners to use it as a tool to understand dominant ideologies that shape societies. They appreciated how the pedagogic practices used in the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* are important in instilling in learners a sense of critical thinking and reasoning to challenge certain practices and political ideologies in societies. In relation to this, for example, the research participants identified gender inequality and the exploitation of women as important themes that needed attention in the context of a democratic South Africa. They revealed how the teaching of the novel exposes how patriarchy contributes to the objectification of women, and how it empowers them to question any generally accepted norms, practices and attitudes.

The third question states: *How do teacher-trainees demonstrate their knowledge of the pedagogic practices for teaching literature?*

The research participants pointed out that the teaching approaches employed in the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* prepared students as prospective teachers to embrace multiculturalism as a step towards creating a society that advocates for social inclusivity and appreciates cultural diversity. They also revealed that the pedagogic practices used in the teaching of the novel also equipped them with necessary skills to empower learners to deliberate on issues such as racism, sexism, and prejudice in the literature classroom. Important to note, though, is that the participants were able to engage critically with the chosen literary text, and how they were able to relate certain historical events to both apartheid and post-apartheid eras that continue to shape South Africa. However, there is a need to investigate whether their mastery and acquired knowledge to teach literature could be applied effectively to other literary texts such as Richard I, II and III by William Shakespeare that deal with issues far removed from the students' lived experiences (Mabunda 2021; Mbambo 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of the pedagogic practices used in the novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior,* prescribed for study to the third-year teacher-trainees in the English Education Discipline at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa. To realise its purpose, the study employed a literary analytical approach to collect data. The data analysed included documentary evidence such as the prescribed literary text, book reviews, assessment topics, and most importantly, students' narrative interviews on the prescribed novel. The analysis of data was juxtaposed with Critical Theory that informed this study. The paper, furthermore, provided a reflective evaluation of the analysed data in relation to the research critical questions which guided this study. This reflective evaluation highlighted that the students presented a convincing mastery of the pedagogic practices used in the teaching of literature. Their demonstration of this mastery was clear in that the students were able to relate the historical, political and socio-economic challenges presented in the novel to the current social realities that continue to shape South Africa as a country. In light of the above, the study called for a theory-driven approach that would assist students as prospective teachers in understanding the role of literature in society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper closes by providing a list of recommendations for contemplation and future examination of the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art to teacher trainees. The first recommendation recognises more research is needed to investigate the extent to which teacher trainees are able to put in practice the skills and knowledge acquired at university in their teaching of literary text in the classroom setting. The second recommendation is that while this study was limited only

to the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at UKZN, more research is needed to investigate *how* such pedagogic practices are implemented in other teacher training institutions. The third recommendation refers to the argument in this study that there is a strong need to introduce pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art, rooted in, and informed by, a theory which seeks to enhance students' understanding of the role of literature in society.

NOTES

This report is developed from the author's master's thesis entitled "*Literary Art and Social Critique: Teaching Literature for Social Transformation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, English Education Discipline*", which was submitted in fulfilment of the requirements towards the degree of Master of Education.

REFERENCES

Appleman D 2000. *Critical Encounters in High School English*: *Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents.* New York: Teacher College Press and National Teachers of English.

Balagao GP, Dhan TMI 2023. Best practices in teaching world literature: A phenomenological study. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 19(01): 1310-1315.

Balfour JR 2000. Between Reception and the Deep Blue Sea: The Formulation and Reception of an Experimental Syllabus for Language in KwaZulu-Natal Schools. *Paper presented at the Association of University English Teachers of South Africa (AUETSA) Conference at* Rhodes University, South Africa, July 5-8, 2000.

Bernstein RJ 1992. *The New Constellation: Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Beach R 2005. *Conducting Research on Teaching Literature: The Influence of Texts, Contexts, and Teacher on Responses to Multicultural Literature.* Miami: University of Minnesota Press.

Behari K 1997. *Literature Education for Transformation: A Critical Pedagogy for Literature Teaching.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Cavanagh D, Gillis A, Keown M, Loxley J, Stevenson R 2012. *The Edinburgh Introduction to Studying Literature.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Cohen L, Manion L, Morrison M 2018. *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

Culler J 1997. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: University of Oxford Inc.

Department of Basic Education 2011. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement*. Pretoria: Government Publishers.

English Major 310 2020. *Course Outline, English Education.* Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Freira P 1982. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books.

Gamede SS 2019. *Exploring Grade 10 isiZulu Home Language Teachers' Strategies When Teaching isiZulu Novels in The Pine Town District.* Master's Thesis. Unpublished. Richards Bay: University of Zululand.

Gamede SS 2024. *An Investigation of the Strategies Used in the Teaching of IsiZulu Home Language Poetry in the FET Phase in the Pine town District.* PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Richards Bay: University of Zululand.

John AB, Jeremy B 2022. Teachers' instructional approaches in teaching literary texts in an ESL classroom: Learners' impressions at core. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies,* 4(2): 243-264.

Judge B, Jones P, McCreery E 2009. *Critical Thinking Skills for Education Students. Learning Matters.* London: Sage Publications Ltd; Imprint Learning Matters Ltd.

Kunkel-Pottebaum HE 2013. *Mission Possible: Teachers Serving as Agents Social of Change*. PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Minnesota: University of St. Thomas.

Mabunda MT 2008. *Literary Art and Social Critique: Teaching Literature for Social Transformation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, English Education Discipline.* Master's Thesis, Unpublished. Pine Town: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Mabunda MT 2021. *Teachers' Role in Using Literature to Contribute to Social Transformation: A Case of Two Selected Universities in Post-Apartheid South Africa.* PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.

Mavhza G 2025. Teacher trainees' perceptions of learner-centred teaching approaches in South African English classroom. *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, 23(1): 74-87.

Mbambo K 2024. South African rural high school teachers' experiences of teaching English poetry Languages and Arts. *Journal of Education,* 6(2): 9-18.

Mda Z 2002. *The Madonna of Excelsior.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Metoder O, Karez AR, Lumnije K 2023. Reading literature: Teaching strategies and methods. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies,* 4(2): 310-336.

Mustakim SS, Mustapha R, Lebar OB 2014. Teacher's approaches in teaching literature: observations of ESL classroom. Malaysian Online *Journal of Educational Sciences,* 2: 35-44.

Nabudde M 2007. *Teachers' Literary Knowledge, Training and Students' Performance in the Novels in Selected Secondary Schools in Busia District.* Master's Thesis, Unpublished. Kampala: University of Makerere.

Ndlovu T 2019. Putting the human at centre: Human Rights and literary studies in South Africa. *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 3(2): 107-122.

Neuman WL 2015. *Social Research Methods*: *Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches.* Boston: Pearson.

Robinson D, Kissack M 2009. Lineages of influence and dispute in South African Literary Studies. *English Studies in Africa, 51*(1): 5-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00138390809485260

Roiphe A, de Azevedo ICM, Gocancalves-Segundo PR 2022. Teaching literary reading: Reflections and practices. *Linha D'A'gua,* 35(1): 1-4.

Ruzy SH, Raihanah MM, Hamdan SI, Yusof MN, Ho-Abdullah I, Amran N A 2011. Literature and social change: Engaging students with current issues in our midst. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 59: 85-89.

Shupak G 2015. *Literature for Social Change: Writing, Criticism and Teaching in Neo-Liberal Canada.* PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Guelph: University of Guelph.

Sindkhedkar SD 2025. Literature as a tool for social change. *International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Management (IJHSSM)*, 5(5): 620-624.

Singh R 2003. *Investigating and Developing an Approach to Critical Literacy by Using South African Short Stories*. Master's Thesis, Unpublished. Durban: University of Natal.

Sweeny R 2015. Teaching art, teaching artists, teaching art teachers. *Art Journal,* 66(3): 6-7.

Vakili R, Vakili S, Ajilian Abbasi M, Masoudi Sh 2024. Overcrowded classrooms: Challenges, consequences, and collaborative solutions for educators: A literature review. *Med Edu Bull,* 5(2): 961-972. DOI: 10.22034/MEB. 2024. 492269.1103

Whipple M 2004. The Madonna of Excelsior: Author's Bibliography Bookmark About The Author. From <http:// mostlyfiction.com/world/mda.htmbookmarksbokmarks > (Retrieved on 6 October 2022).

Windel A, Ragusta J, Ngoho RL, Supilanas JQ 2025. Turning pages, facing challenges: Students' attitudes, preferences, and difficulties in learning English Through world literature. *Journal of Education and Learning Reviews*, 2(6): 147-158.

Wuntu CN, Tatipang DP, Ali MI 2024. Literature pedagogy for English development: Investigating preferences, motivation, and best practices toward the implementation. *Teaching English Language*, 18(2): 1-34.

Zamatul NE, Zamatul A, Nurul FMU 2025. English Language literature component: Students' perspective and attitude towards Malaysian literary texts. *The Malaysian English Language Teaching Association,* 22(1): 46-61.

Zayed A 2025. Libyan university students' attitudes towards literature in EFL classrooms: A comparison between private and public universities. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics,* 3(2): 8-17.

Zondi SP 2025. The integrated approach to teaching literature in English Second Language classrooms: A constructivist lens. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research,* 24(6): 1-20.

Paper received for publication in March, 2025
Paper accepted for publication in October, 2026