TEACHING STRATEGIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF CRITICAL REFLECTION

by

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Foreword

This research essay is dedicated to Dr. S J Gravett who introduced me to the challenging and exciting world of the practice of critical reflection.

I also dedicate it to the individuals who have assisted me in 'hunting' my assumptions and who play significant roles in my life.

To my soul-mate Sathievan for all the support and encouragement you have given me and for the dialogues you have engaged me in.

To my father Ramanlal and my mother Ambalika Devi who taught me valuable lessons for life and living I am grateful, as well as, for all the help you have given me so that I could complete this piece of writing.

To my brother Vivasvan and my sister-in law Ursula, who played a part in the writing of my research essay.

To my sister Thejasvee and my brother-in law Kershwin, who also played a part in the writing of my research essay.

To my son, Avthar Soni-Naidoo, for the inspiration that your little life has given me.
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Robert Frost
(1874 - 1963)

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth:

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
ABSTRACT

This research essay argues in favour of a university pedagogy that encourages the habits of mind which produce the practice of consistent or regular critical reflection amongst students. The reason for the above is to impart such skills to students in order that they may contribute significantly to constructing a critically thinking civil society in which the values espoused in a democratic ethos are encouraged and cherished.

It is pointed out in this research essay with reference to international literature and national policy documents, that one of the main goals of higher education is to foster critical reflection and educate a committed and critically reflective citizenry. Because of the fact that students in higher education are, through their education, being groomed to be the future leaders who will develop policy and lead the nation, it is imperative that they establish and practice critical habits of mind.

The concept 'critical reflection' is defined. The key point is that it is a process of 'hunting' taken-for-granted assumptions that individuals have about the world in which they live.

Teaching strategies are explored using international literature. Those strategies that can be used or adapted in the unique South African higher education context of escalating student numbers and diversified student populations are enumerated and discussed. A dialogic approach is seen to be key and underpins all of the selected strategies which are as follows:

1) Skilled critical questioning
2) Making use of critical incidents
3) Getting students to keep a journal
4) Role-playing
5) Getting students to co-develop the curriculum

This selected list of strategies is, of course, by no means intended to be exhaustive.
The true division of humanity is between those who live in light and those who live in darkness. Our aim must be to diminish the number of the latter and increase the number of the former. That is why we demand education and knowledge.

Victor Hugo
1. INTRODUCTION

In this research essay, teaching strategies for the promotion of critical reflection at universities will be explored. Importantly, and among other things, critical reflection is a process of 'hunting' taken-for-granted assumptions that individuals have (Brookfield, 1995:2). Teaching strategies for the promotion of critical reflection in higher education institutions will be discussed, with the focus on universities. Cognisance is taken of the fact that higher education institutions are those institutions that serve as the launching pads for the future leaders and managers of the societies in which they live. It is envisaged that through the promotion of critical reflection, universities may be able to produce critically reflective civil citizens who are important in the society as they are the future policy makers and decision takers.

In the first section of the study, the concept 'critical reflection' will be explored and a clear and concise definition will be provided. Thereafter, the goals of higher education will be detailed. The cultivation of a critical citizenship is in fact seen to be a goal of higher education and it is argued that the fostering of critical reflection is also a goal because it is through the practice of critical reflection that individuals are able to become empowered civil citizens. I therefore concur with Daloz et al. (1996:11-12) who put forth the claim that "mainstream higher education has always placed the cultivation of citizenship among its central purposes [and that] at best... universities provide a place where students may move from ways of understanding that rest upon tacit, conventional assumptions to more critical systemic thought that can take many perspectives into account; make discernments among them and envision new possibilities."
I argue in this research essay that the South African society is undergoing major transformations and is working hard towards democracy and a new national identity. Following a discussion of the South African higher education context the envisaged role of the university teachers and the students with regards to practising critical reflection will be discussed. Furthermore, the importance of the educators and students engaging in a dialogic interaction will be highlighted. This is because underpinning teaching strategies aimed at promoting critical reflection is the approach of engaging in dialogue.

Lastly, an exploration of selected teaching strategies for promoting critical reflection that would be most suitable for the South African context of escalating student numbers and increasingly diverse student populations will follow. The strategies chosen are: skilled critical questioning, making use of critical incidents, getting students to keep a journal, role-playing and getting the students to co-develop the curriculum.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

This research essay argues for a university pedagogy that will guide students towards practising critical reflection. It is necessary for universities to assist students to develop critical habits of mind as it is those students who, will later hold key positions at various levels in various sectors of the society. For these individuals who will lead the nation and who will develop policies and guidelines, it is vitally important
that they are able to engage in critical reflection. Universities especially, are those institutions that are responsible for the creation of specialised cannons of knowledge. Being able to reflect critically on how, why and in what ways knowledge is produced and perceived, is an asset that can assist in the creation of a committed, civil citizenry.

However, teaching for critical reflection is not an easy task, even more so in a society that previously insulated cultural groups from each other. The reason is that teaching for critical reflection requires both educator and students to be willing *inter alia* to assess critically the premises, presuppositions and presumptions upon which their habits of expectation are predicated (Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 1995). Moreover, the difficulty with the promotion of critical reflection at South African universities is compounded by the fact that the education system has been such in South Africa, so as to have seldom encouraged critical reflection among students. Thus the challenge at present is to employ teaching strategies that will assist students to reflect critically and also to employ strategies that will help sustain critical habits of mind.

As suggested previously, the reason that critical reflective thinking is vitally important is because higher education institutions (universities specifically) produce future managers, policy makers and decision makers. They thus need to assist students to develop such skills that would enable them to contribute in appropriate and significant ways when engaging in policy-making and decision making. Managers are leaders of the people. Leadership requires certain skills. One of the vitally important skills I propose for such key persons in any society is for
them to be able to look back critically on what they have done so that they may learn from their experience and improve the quality of their lives. It is for this reason that universities need to start to look for creative and innovative ways to get students to develop critical habits of mind.

There exists an international body of literature that argues for and addresses teaching strategies aimed at enhancing critical reflection. Against the preceding background the question to be addressed in this research essay may be formulated as follows:

What strategies for the enhancement of critical reflection are described in the research literature and how could university teachers in South Africa employ or adapt them in order to assist students from diverse backgrounds to become critically reflective?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a literature-based investigation. In order to address the research problem, literature pertaining to critical reflection and higher education was consulted.

The reason for undertaking a literature-based study, was that there is a considerable body of information which exists internationally regarding critical reflection and relevant teaching strategies that could be
employed to foster the practice of critical reflection. We in South Africa can make use of this by adapting the available information to our context. Not only this, but the South African higher education institutions (universities specifically) are currently undergoing major transformations and many new policy documents are emerging that address various issues relating to the education crisis. Thus, South African national education policy documentation has also been analysed, within this framework.

4. TEACHING FOR THE PROMOTION OF CRITICAL REFLECTION

4.1 Definition of critical reflection

The reason for exploring the meaning of the concept critical reflection in this research essay is twofold:

- There is a need to look at the distinction made in the literature regarding the concepts 'critical reflection' and 'critical thinking' generally; and

- the concept 'critical reflection' needs to be defined and clarified in this research essay.
The concepts critical thinking and critical reflection are emerging as popular topics for discussion in educational literature, and educators are showing much interest regarding these concepts (see Barnett, 1994). However, many meanings have evolved and have been associated with these concepts and as a result the various meanings have made the definition of these concepts ambiguous. The way in which critical reflection is used in this essay is in line largely with the ideas of Stephen Brookfield and Jack Mezirow.

Mezirow (1990:xvi) makes the important point that "despite this burgeoning scholarly interest, the concept of critical thinking continues to suffer from great ambiguity of meaning." I agree with Mezirow that clarity about the meaning of the concept is "made possible by the analysis of the concept of reflection, and its three functions: to guide action, to give coherence to the unfamiliar, and to reassess the justification for what is already known" (ibid). It is the last function, Mezirow says, that is central to critical reflection although all three functions may be involved in critical thinking.

As Mezirow (1998:185-186) states in his recent work, "reflection, a 'turning back' on experience can mean many things, . . . including awareness of perception, thought, feeling, disposition, intention, action, or of one's habits of doing these things. Critical reflection may be either implicit, as when we mindlessly choose between good and evil because of our assimilated values, or explicit, as when we bring the process of choice into awareness to examine and assess the reasons for making a choice."

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Critical thinking, according to Mezirow (1990:xvi) is informed by reflection and is synonymous with reflective learning. One aspect of critical reflection according to Mezirow (1995:45) "is the process by which we engage in premise reflection." Premise reflection requires that we ask ourselves why we make judgements and why it is important that we are aware of the consequences of those judgements. Engaging in premise reflection is an attempt to engage in an 'intellectual puzzle' of sorts, the kind to which Brookfield refers.

Stephen Brookfield (1995:2) points out that thinking critically requires that we recognise the assumptions underlying our beliefs and behaviours. I assert that critical reflection can be seen as a process of applying our minds to assess or judge, analyse and evaluate our beliefs and behaviours. We engage in critical reflection in order to become more fully aware of those aspects in our lives that assist us in 'developing' to our fullest potential. It also allows us to become aware of those aspects that lead us to 'stagnate' and merely accept and align ourselves with the status quo.

Based on the above, I argue that through practicing critical reflection, individuals are empowered in learning and in life. They are enabled to enhance not only their own lives, but also the lives they directly impact on and even those lives which together with their own, make up the society in which they find themselves.

Individuals are empowered through the practice of critical reflection. Therefore it is imperative that they understand fully what critical reflection is in order that they can investigate it thoroughly and be
familiar with how it should be practised. Brookfield (1995:2) states that if we are "to understand critical reflection properly, we need first to know something about the reflective process in general." The most distinctive feature of the reflective process, says Brookfield, "is its focus on hunting assumptions which are taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and our place in it that seems so obvious to us as not to need stating explicitly" (ibid).

Each of us have assumptions that give "meaning and purpose to who we are and what we do [and] becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act is one of the most challenging intellectual puzzles we face in our lives" (Brookfield, 1995:2). These viewpoints of Brookfield form a central feature of the understanding of critical reflection expressed in this research essay.

Furthermore, Brookfield (1995:2-3) identifies three categories of assumptions: paradigmatic, prescriptive and causal. The most difficult of these to uncover is our paradigmatic assumptions which are the "basic structuring axioms we use to order the world into fundamental categories." Prescriptive assumptions are those assumptions "about what we think ought to be happening in a particular situation," and causal assumptions, "help us to understand how the different parts of the world work and the conditions under which processes can be changed" (Brookfield, 1995:3).

Mezirow's (1998:186) point enhances that of Brookfield by the clarification that "when the object of critical reflection is an assumption or presupposition, a different order of abstraction is introduced, with
major potential for effecting change in one's established frame of reference. Assumptions upon which our habits of mind and related points of view are predicated, may be "epistemological, logical, ethical, psychological, ideological, social, cultural, economic, political, ecological, scientific, spiritual, or pertain to other aspects of experience" (ibid).

Brookfield (1995:8) further explains, however, that in order for reflection to become critical it has to be seen as having two distinctive purposes: "The first is to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching [and learning] lives easier but actually work against our own long-term interests." I concur with Brookfield's (1995:26-27) submission that "critical reflection is inherently ideological, morally grounded and anchored in values of justice, fairness and compassion and finds its political representation in the democratic process. Critical reflection urges us to create conditions under which each person is respected, valued and heard."

It is noteworthy that through the practice of critical reflection we actually engage in emancipatory learning. Cranton (1994:68) points out that emancipatory learning can be divided into two parts, that is, "critical reflection on meaning schemes and critical reflection on meaning perspectives." Meaning perspectives and meaning schemes are the structures of meaning according to Mezirow (1991).

Through critically reflecting on our meaning schemes and perspectives it is possible that, as learners we are able to undergo personal
transformations. Such transformations could lead to alterations not only in the ways in which we view the world but also in the ways in which we act with the world and in the world. It is important to note that through practising critical reflection one could experience major personal transformations in one's life.

As a result of those transformations which emanate from practicing critical reflection, individuals are able to become constructors of a civil society, a society in which democratic values are held in the highest esteem. These are the features or characteristics of fairness, justice and equity.

Based on the above discussion, I propose, after having extracted key points from the various works of Brookfield and Mezirow that critical thinking should be viewed as a much broader concept than critical reflection. Critical thinking is informed by reflection and can lead to critical learning. Critical reflection is the most significant component of critical thinking.

Critical reflection is most significantly a process by which we hunt our taken-for-granted assumptions. It is a continuous process that we engage ourselves in so as to ensure that we are aware of our beliefs, values, behaviours, ideologies and we are aware of the dynamics contained within the society in which we live, specifically relating to how those various dynamics affect our daily living.

Engaging in critical reflection is a higher order mental skill that is essential for all individuals. It is a tool and an art to be mastered
which can assist us with the challenges that we are faced with in the global village as we approach the twenty-first century.

Notwithstanding the above clarification of meaning of the terms, it must be noted that for the purpose of this research essay, the concepts of critical thinking and critical reflection are sometimes used synonymously as in the literature. If one looks at the writings over the years, of Stephen Brookfield in particular, one finds that he, too, uses the terms interchangeably.

Now that the concept critical reflection has been defined the focus shifts to the goals of higher education as they are found in the literature.

4.2 The goals of higher education

Ronald Barnett (1994:6) in his work, The Idea of Higher Education emphasises that it is crucial to note that the term 'higher education' "indicates that additional processes are taking place in bringing about in the individual student a special level of personal development." The personal development of individuals is made possible by the type of educational processes that they are exposed to during their education at university. I concur with Barnett (1994:173) that "graduates, after all, pass into society and take up significant posts of managerial or professional responsibility," a point which I have stressed earlier on in this research essay as well.
The goal of universities is to provide those graduates (the leaders, the policy makers and the decision takers) with an education that will equip them to deal effectively with the challenges that they will encounter not only in their work lives but in their personal lives as well. Barnett (1994:108) continues that it is important "to provide the graduates of higher education with the capacity not merely to go on learning, but also to go on being critical of all they encounter in thought and action." This viewpoint is indeed central to the focus and concerns of this research essay.

Critical thought is decidedly an important feature of higher education. Chalmers and Fuller (1996:4) refer to various goals of universities they have studied and have found that such universities list critical thinking as one of several characteristics identified, that graduates should possess as outcomes of their university experience. Similarly, Ramsden (1992) notes that university teachers in Australia and Canada agreed that the educational goals they set were to teach students to analyse issues critically and to develop the intellectual and thinking skills of learners.

Rogers (1992:33) who refers to critical reflection as a goal of higher education, makes a strong link between education and society, which is a point stressed by Barnett (1994:4) as well, who states that "higher education is undergoing a fundamental shift in its relationship to society." The purpose of education in society says Rogers (1992:33) is that "if it is effective, it is a revolutionary force for both individual . . . and society. . . It enables the learner to reflect critically on the reality around and to co-operate with others to change that reality."
Even though the goal of higher education has been shown to be the fostering of critical reflection, the teaching of critical reflection can never be done in isolation. Thus, while teaching content to students the teaching of critical reflection can be integrated with the teaching of content. Students can be taught the skills of critical reflection, problem solving and logical reasoning (the higher order skills). As McKeachie (1987 in Chalmers and Fuller, 1996:13) states "teachers can help students develop learning and thinking abilities at the same time as they teach subject matter . . ."

In assisting students to engage critically with subject matter and in developing their abilities to think creatively and reflect critically, universities have not only set themselves the goal of teaching students higher order cognitive skills but have also set themselves the goal of providing emancipatory education to students. In fact the consequences of the two are interconnected to the point that having set one of them as a goal implies that the other is also a goal. Barnett (1994:23) makes this point clear and shows how this is so, by stating, in discussing the emancipatory concept of education, that a "fundamental condition of the process of higher education is a lessening of the taken-for-grantedness of the individuals' hold on the world." The idea of a university education "promises a freeing of the mind, but also looks beyond to bringing about a new level of self-empowerment in the individual student" (Barnett, 1994:x). This links directly to the initial concept stated in this section, regarding the personal development of individuals who experience a university education. This emancipatory promise of a university education, says Barnett (1994:23), becomes a reality only at the point at which the "corpus of knowledge itself comes
under critical evaluation" (1994:78) and "inquiry should be conducted in a critical spirit, having as an outcome new ways of perceiving the familiar."

This concludes the goals of higher education. Now that it has been established that the literature does incorporate the promotion of critical reflection as a goal of higher education, the discussion shifts to the South African context.

4.3 The South African context

The need for a section such as this, in this research essay is twofold:

- The focus is on noting the South African context in terms of the preceding discussion and on how South Africa, too, is struggling with issues as discussed above; and

- the focus is on recognising the importance of promoting critical reflection amongst students in South African universities specifically in order that the people in South Africa can together re-build the nation which has been crippled by the apartheid policies.

In much of the national and international literature, reference is made to the relationship between the education system and the society in which we find ourselves (see Freire, 1971; Shor, 1992; Apple, 1993). According to Phurutse (1997:5) "an inquiry into transformation is an inquiry into the social structure of the society" and Gramsci (1979)
argues that, "transformation of an institution of society should not be divorced from the restructuring and reshaping of the wider society and state as a whole and the role of the education system in society as a whole needs to be closely examined in transformation" (see Phurutse, 1997:6). In South Africa this is certainly true especially at the current time.

An important role of universities in South Africa, it is argued in this research essay, is to promote the practice of critical reflection amongst students who pass through their doors. This is in order that such students, who are future leaders and policy makers, are able to assist in constructing a civil society in which tolerance, public debate and the accommodation of differences are valued. The accommodation of differences is especially pertinent for South Africans, who have all experienced living in an apartheid society. The system employed, advocated that difference and separateness were to be emphasised, thus leading to a culture and habit of intolerance.

In all aspects of the South African society including education, major transformations are currently taking place as the South African people work towards a true democracy, having emerged from the apartheid era. One extremely important sector in which shifts and transformations are occurring is in higher education. The reference to transformation here, in South African higher education, involves several different types and levels of transformation.

The two most important reasons for transformation at this point in the history of South Africa are:
• Transformation is an attempt to address the issues the apartheid legacy has left behind; and

• transformation is an attempt to address the issue of cultivating a society that can add value to global endeavours to ensure the preservation of humanity.

In South Africa at the present time, higher education is seen as one of the important sectors that is going to be the driving force behind ensuring that the creative and intellectual energies of individuals are utilised to their fullest potential. The aim is to develop, through a process of education, a people who together create a new national identity. These views are expressed strongly in the Government's policy papers regarding Reconstruction and Development in South Africa as well as in policy documents regarding the future of Education, Labour and Trade and Industry in South Africa.

Even with the new 'structures' in place, however, the success of the overall goals of higher education being achieved is dependent on all the individuals involved in the education process. Especially because universities in South Africa previously mirrored apartheid policies, fostering critical reflection is indeed an extremely challenging goal for universities in South Africa to set themselves due to their unique history of keeping groups of people separate and fostering suspicion among individuals.
In South Africa, especially because the law of the past oppressed so many it is more urgent now than ever, in attempting to build a democratic nation that individuals are taught critical reflective skills.

As suggested earlier, this is in order to enable them to become constructors of a civil South African society, a society in which each human being is valued, respected and heard. I agree therefore with Gabelnick (1997:30) that "the challenge of educating a committed citizenry is to change the societal and university paradigm from a strategy of competitiveness to one of collaboration, from a perspective of scarcity to one of sufficiency and inclusion, and from a stance that looks for expedient solutions to one that engages and commits to a series of values and a way of life."

How can these paradigms be changed? An attempt at changing the paradigms it is argued in this research essay requires that the practice of critical reflection be promoted. I base this on an assertion of Cranton (1994:3-4) that "adult learning could be seen as a process of critical reflection during a time when individuals are questioning their political and economic systems." During this period of transformation that South Africans are going through and especially since they have survived the apartheid era, learners in education are doing exactly this, that is questioning their political and economic systems and also the social and educational systems.

It is of significance because for the majority of South Africans, this critical questioning and critical reflective process is seen as part of the ongoing struggle to regain "their humanity" (Freire, 1971:26). In order
for the struggle to have meaning, "the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity, become in turn oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (ibid).

South Africa's future is in the balance. If the South African nation is to become a successful nation, then at least as a start, the leaders of such a democratic nation need to commence practising critical reflection. This is in order to ensure that South Africa is seen as a global asset and a global player, that is a force to be reckoned with, among nations of the world.

Policy makers in South Africa currently are aware of such pertinent issues. I have found for example, Shor's thinking (1992) encapsulated in the Draft Education White Paper 3 (Government Gazette, April 1997). It is stated that the challenge which the South African higher education institutions are faced with can be identified as follows: "that [they] can succeed in stimulating, directing and using the creative and intellectual energies of the entire population" (Draft Education White Paper 3 Government Gazette, April 1997:9). One of the important purposes of higher education, as laid down in policy documents for the new South Africa, is identified as responsibility "for the socialisation of enlightened, responsive and constructively critical citizens" (ibid). It is further stated in the same document that "citizenship of this nature presupposes a commitment to the common good, but it also implies a reflective capacity and a willingness to review and renew prevailing ideas, policies and practises" (ibid). Higher education systems in South Africa are undergoing transformations through their attempt to address such issues.
Presently, universities in South Africa are still largely segregated as I have alluded to, and unequally able, in terms of a variety of resources to meet the needs of education of the South African people. Therefore, I wish to emphasise, as stated in the Draft Education White Paper 3 (Government Gazette, April 1997:10) that the present South African higher education system "is limited in its ability to meet the moral, social and economic demands of the new South Africa. It has not succeeded in laying the foundations of a critical civil society with a culture of tolerance and debate." This passage goes to the heart of the critical concerns of this research essay.

To fulfil their purpose and accept the challenge of international competition universities in South Africa need to revisit all aspects of their functioning. They need to work towards transforming themselves into institutions that can help make concerted efforts to try to provide answers and solutions to the educational and social challenges that the country faces. Thus, the call for transformation of the higher education institutions and of universities specifically comes as a result of broader transformations taking place within the South African political, social and economic systems. The Draft Education White Paper 3 states that higher education institutions "must also socialise a new generation with the requisite cultural values and communication competencies to become citizens of an international community" (ibid).

The section that follows, deals with the roles of the educator and the roles of the students in fostering the practice of critical reflection.
4.4 The envisaged role of the educator and the role of the students with regard to critical reflection

As suggested earlier, teaching for critical reflection is not an easy task, even more so in a society that previously insulated cultural groups from each other. To engage in critical reflection is extremely challenging and involves much risk-taking. Jane Vella (1994a:181) states that by enabling learners to feel safe and supported they are more willing to engage in risk-taking and become more trusting of the processes in which they are involved. She states furthermore, that "only by feeling safe [or by being supported by the educator] will students be creative and critical [or engage in critical reflection]" (ibid).

The role that the educator plays in promoting critical reflection is of paramount importance due to the fact that engaging in critical reflection is a difficult process, especially, as indicated earlier, for learners who were never exposed to critical and democratic education. The majority of students in South Africa have been exposed only to 'banking education.' This is a concept put forth by Paulo Freire (1971) in which students are seen as 'empty vessels' and education is 'done to them' and is something that they have no real stake in. Traditionally, South African higher education institutions have not helped students develop critical reflective capacities or cultivated the idea that critical reflective practice is something to be valued. Now that educators want to encourage the practice of critical reflection amongst students, they need to ensure that the learning environment stays conducive to risk-taking, which is part of the practice of critical reflection.
University teachers who want to promote critical reflection need to create an environment for students that will be conducive for practicing critical reflection. In this regard some of the twelve teaching principles of Jane Vella are important to note as these principles aim specifically at creating a conducive learning environment. These selected teaching principles are: safety, a sound relationship between teacher and learner, respect for learners, immediacy, engagement of the learners in what they are learning and accountability. The works of Knox (1995); Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) and Brookfield (1990) are also valuable in providing the educator with direction in terms of creating a conducive environment. This means "learners must experience comfort, self-confidence and freedom to participate and express their views" (Cranton, 1994:140). Other adult education practitioners and authors like Malcolm Knowles (1984); Roger Hiemstra and Burnton Sisco (1990); Alan Knox (1995); Jane Vella (1994a) and others all agree that the learning environment is key in determining learners' involvement in learning.

A 'safe' environment is essential so that learners' trust and commitment to the learning process may be enhanced. In giving support the educator to an extent deals with the issue of the development of trust between the students and the educator and between the students and the educational process. There is 'buy-in' on the part of the students. By this I mean that the students are committed to the process and are not afraid to take risks in order to learn and grow.

Making learners feel respected and heard, listening attentively, giving all students an equal opportunity to participate, openness, acknowledging
student contributions, treasuring diversity are important for the university teachers to bear in mind. Awareness by the university teachers of their own attitudes, beliefs, values and not imposing these on students or judging students negatively when their beliefs and values are different are extremely important. All of these factors assist the educator to make the educational environment a learning-conducive and a risk-taking-conducive environment.

Wlodkowsky and Ginsberg (1995:2) emphasise that "the respect [students] receive from the people around them, and their ability to trust their own thinking and experience powerfully influence their concentration, their imagination, their effort, and their willingness." Other writers too such as Hiemstra and Sisco (1990) and Wlodkowsky and Ginsberg (1995) stress the importance of creating a conducive, 'comforting' climate for students. This is in order that they feel 'free' to exercise their authentic voices and are non-threatened in the sense that their self-esteem as learners is not 'shattered' in the educational setting in which they find themselves.

Therefore, in order to foster critical reflection educators should be consistent and regular practitioners of critical reflection. If university teachers want to promote the practice of critical reflection in their classrooms, they need to be familiar with the regular practice of such reflection themselves. According to Brookfield (1987 in Gravett, 1994:20-21) "the teacher who wants to help develop the learners' ability to reflect critically must himself be a model of critical analysis and openness."
In higher education, especially, students need to be challenged and to be guided by their educators regarding alternatives to the current ways of thinking, behaving and living. Gravett (1994:21) points out that in the teaching situation, emphasis needs to be placed on identifying assumptions, allowing them to be open to attack, considering alternatives to them, accepting diversity and divergence and "the taking of risks will be regarded as valuable and final answers will be treated with reflective scepticism."

The acceptance by an educator of a particular educational goal, in this case the promotion of critical reflection amongst university students, can provide a meaning perspective on education that can assist such an educator to create a framework for developing an 'individual theory of practice'. Any theory of practice, says Cranton (1994:56) "must be informed through an understanding of what others write and say but it must also be freely chosen on the basis of experience." One orientation of practice mentioned by Cranton (1994:142) the goal of which "is to foster empowerment of individual learners" is of particular importance in this research essay. Mezirow (1991 as cited by Cranton, 1994:138) sees the role of the adult educator as that of helping learners to look critically at their beliefs and behaviours, as these appear in the present and in the historical context of the learners' lives while also taking consequences into account.

This is especially important in the South African context where higher education institutions had to replicate the discriminatory practices of the wider society. Students from diverse backgrounds, entering previously mono-cultural higher education institutions of South Africa
have to begin to have 'faith' that the proposed transformations, the new policies and practices are geared with the interests of all South Africans in higher education no matter how diverse the student population.

Furthermore, higher education institutions in South Africa over the last few years have suffered tremendous setbacks as a result of the student unrest over various issues of discontent. Students at universities need to start critically assessing the premises and presuppositions upon which their habits of expectation are predicated.

As much as educators at higher education institutions may attempt to promote critical reflection students will only be willing to practice it if they are not suspicious of the process or resistant to it. Critical reflective thinking cannot be forced upon individuals but individuals need to be made aware of its value. In order to promote critical reflection it is also challenging for the educator to choose particular teaching strategies that will foster such practice amongst students.

The section that follows is intended to consider specifically those teaching strategies that would best promote critical reflective practice amongst students at South African universities.
4.5 Exploration of teaching strategies for promoting critical reflection

In considering the teaching strategies for fostering critical reflection, reference will be made to international literature. Taking into account the unique South African context, of ever escalating student numbers in university classrooms and student populations that are becoming increasingly diverse, certain strategies will be highlighted as those that would be most suitably applicable. It should be noted that a particular proposed strategy could be used in the university classroom independently or together with several other strategies, simultaneously.

The NCHE Report (1996:2) acknowledges that "teaching strategies and modes of delivery have not been adapted to meet the needs of larger student intakes and the diversity of lifelong learners." The NCHE Report (1996:3) also notes that if we are to drastically change higher education institutions to provide a high quality of education then "new learning programmes will be needed to mobilise the cultural, social and economic potential of the country and all its people."

Thus the aim in this section is to look at those teaching strategies, which in the South African context, are most suitable to promoting critical reflection. Dialogue as a teaching approach is seen to underpin each of the strategies and therefore a discussion regarding dialogue and its importance in an emancipatory, democratic classroom, will precede the discussion of the several chosen strategies. Burbules (1993:8) makes an important point that "dialogue is an activity directed toward discovery and new understanding, which stands to improve the knowledge, insight, or sensitivity of its participants." This is precisely
the reason why a dialogic approach is of paramount importance in any teaching strategy aimed at encouraging students to practice critical reflection on a consistent basis.

I endorse the view of Freire (1971:73) that "true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking . . ." and dialogue "must be understood as something taking part in the very nature of human beings. It is part of our historical process in becoming human beings . . . to the extent that humans have become more and more critically communicative beings. Dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect [critically] on their reality as they make and remake it . . ." (Freire in Shor, 1992:86).

An educator who believes in the dialogic approach to learning and teaching should importantly note, as Gravett and Henning (1998:2, in press) state "the voice of the teacher is not proclaimed from the power of the lectern but is offered as invitation to participation." This is significant, for if students are going to engage in the practice of critical reflection which involves risk-taking they need to trust that the educator is a part of the process and is willing to learn from them as well. The educator should be willing to learn from students in order to gain new perspectives about teaching and the educational process in general.

In 'critical' dialoguing with individuals we are able to 'hunt' and uncover the assumptions that we may have and as we dialogue we become more able to engage upon the frames of reference of those who are dialoguing with us. Through engaging in dialogue or communicating mutually with
others, individuals are also availed of the opportunity to see democracy in action. By this I mean that individuals get an opportunity to show respect for others, to exercise their authentic voices, to be heard and to hear and listen to the voices of others. Dialogue is a way in which the educator can use the words of the students to assist them in reflecting critically. The nature of such dialogic action demands that the diversity and knowledge of students are respected. Large classes with diverse learners provide an opportunity for much challenge and excitement and learning to take place.

Daloz et al. (1996:15) speak of the fostering of constructive dialogue in a mentoring environment for citizenship in the twenty first century and point out that it is "difficult for constructive dialogue to take place if we can't move beyond simplistic thinking and unexamined assumptions" and that 'effective' dialogue enables individuals to realise the complexity of an issue and to bring the underlying assumptions to the surface (ibid).

Skills of dialogue underpin habits of mind that are needed in a diverse, complex and challenging world and "to activate and cultivate them, we need to develop contexts in which genuine dialogue about real issues will be pursued . . ." (Daloz et al. 1996:15). The university classroom can be the platform for this.

What the dialogic teaching approach entails and the importance of such an approach in classrooms where the practice of critical reflection is valued has been briefly examined above. Attention will now be paid to
the teaching strategies that may be used to promote critical reflection in university classrooms in South Africa.

4.5.1 Skilled critical questioning

According to Brookfield, as explained by Cranton (1994:169) the use of skilled critical questioning is an effective means through which ingrained assumptions can be externalised and it is a specific form of questioning concerned with fostering [critical] reflection. Furthermore, Brookfield states that for critical questioning to be effective one should note three aspects, that is, be specific, work from the particular to the general and be conversational. Questioning and challenging as techniques should become the norm of a learning setting in which critical reflection is seen as a goal (Cranton, 1994:87). Goodman (1995:181) and Davies (1981:163) concur that critical questioning encourages and stimulates cognitive processes and ensures students stay alert and 'mentally active' in a class where such a strategy is employed.

At the higher education level of teaching the general concern is the development of the higher order mental skills, says Greg Pastoll (1992:3). One such higher order mental skill is the fostering of critical reflection. Skilled critical questioning as a teaching technique can also achieve this. Goodman (1995:180) has a similar view to that of Pastoll (1992) above in that he, too, is of the opinion that questioning provokes "thought and expression." Challenging learners through asking critical questions could be a very effective means of promoting critical reflection. Skilful critical questioning could be done with the specific
aim of questioning assumptions in order to make those assumptions explicit, to question the sources and consequences of assumptions and to question the validity of assumptions (Cranton, 1994:169). McKeachie (1994) also emphasises the use of critical questions and regards it as a means of getting students to challenge critically, amongst other things, assumptions that they have.

Critical questioning by the educator will enable students to look more deeply at issues and to uncover 'taken-for-granted' assumptions that students might have. Wlodkowsky and Ginsberg (1995:38) also refer to the use of critical questioning as a strategy to allow learners "to construct and delve into real world issues" and to utilise, amongst other things, their values to deepen understanding. Diestler (1994:77) reinforces this idea in pointing out that "... when we critically examine what it is we take for granted, we have the advantage of gaining a strong and solid conviction for those ideas and principles we believe to be true. Knowing why we believe what we believe helps us to be more credible and effective ..."

Critical questioning, says Cranton (1994:172) helps the students to engage in premise reflection where "the learner is questioning the question ... Why is this question worth considering... Why does it matter what others say?" If the educator is able to use critical questioning in a skilful and sensitive manner it is possible that he/she will have effectively challenged students to explore a 'situation' in a new, alternative way.
McGill and Beaty (1995:140); Diestler (1994:77); Cranton (1994:169) all believe similarly, that the use of effective questioning is a most important strategy as critical questioning enables learners to explore issues in a way that allows the learners to gain a more indepth appreciation of those issues. However, the use of critical questioning is not as 'simple' as it may seem. Brookfield (1990:178) makes us aware that critically questioning "...key assumptions is like laying down charges of psychological dynamite. When these assumptions explode and we realise that what we thought of as fixed ways of thinking and living are only options among a range of alternatives, the structure of our assumptive world crumbles." Brookfield (1990:178-179) continues that "when educators assist people in questioning the assumptions underlying their structures of understanding or in realising alternatives to the habitual way of thinking and living, they must act with care and sensitivity ... It is no good encouraging people to recognise and analyse their assumptions if their self-esteem is destroyed in the process."

Taking the above point into account, the university teachers in the South African context have to pay special attention to ensuring that they have a relatively good understanding of the diverse students in their class. This is in order that they may use skilled critical questioning as a strategy but ensure that students do not feel their self-esteem 'shattered'.

Critical questioning is a particularly important strategy which can be employed in the South African context. It can be used effectively in the oral and written forms where the educator asks critical questions
based on readings given to students or asks such questions in handouts to students which are specifically aimed at getting students to engage in critical reflective exercises.

Skilful critical questioning especially undertaken orally is more suited to larger, more diverse classes than written critical questions as students and educator can immediately 'communicate' and 'check' to ensure that the essential meaning of the question and the answer is understood by all. In other words, when students give feedback in class, the feedback is then used as a basis for discussion and leads to the asking of other critical questions by the educator. Students in large classes could be grouped into pairs or triads and be asked to discuss and share their answers to critical questions put to them.

It should be borne in mind that English is a second language for the majority of South Africans. With higher education institutions in South Africa following a trend of 'delivering' education largely in English, the task of promoting critical reflection and the use of strategies to enhance critical reflection specifically becomes even more challenging than before.

This is not to make a case that language diversity is an obstacle that cannot be overcome. In fact, in trying to "name the world" in a language other than one's own (Freire, 1971) it is an opportunity as well, to engage in critical reflection. In attempting to establish 'base' meanings for terms, individuals have to reflect critically on their 'taken-for-granted' assumptions. Engaging in an 'intellectual puzzle' of
this sort becomes more challenging, exciting and rewarding for all those who take up the challenge.

4.5.2 Making use of critical incidents

Critical incidents are brief descriptions by learners of significant events in their lives that they record on paper (Brookfield, 1990:179). Tripp (1993:8) adds that 'seeing' something as a critical incident is a value judgement individuals make, the basis of which is the significance that individuals attach to the meaning of the incident.

Brookfield (1990:179-180) points out that "as a means of probing learners' assumptive worlds, the critical incident technique is rooted in the phenomenological research tradition and presumes that learners' general assumptions are embedded in, and can be inferred from, their specific descriptions of particular events."

Similarly, for Tripp (1993:41-42) critical incidents are created by the way individuals look at a situation. Writing critical incidents provides a means of enabling students to become more aware of the nature of the values they hold as important, as well as enabling learners to become more aware of the things they take for granted. This relates to the idea Brookfield puts forth of becoming more aware of the assumptions that we have and hunting those assumptions. Thus, the use of critical incidents is an important strategy for promoting critical reflection amongst learners. For Cafarella (1994) and Davies (1981) the use of critical incidents has the objective of enhancing thinking skills. This
clearly promotes critical reflection. The purpose of making students relate critical incidents "is to enter another's frame of reference so that that person's structures of understanding and interpretive filters can be experienced and understood by the educator, or a peer, as closely as possible to the way they are experienced and understood by the learner" (Brookfield 1990:180).

This is why the use of critical incidents is chosen as a particular strategy that can be employed in the context of the South African universities. In relating a critical incident the learners are availed of the opportunity to think back on the experience that they have had. The students are given the chance to think about how they would have done things differently, perhaps with a different perspective on the incident while it was happening.

The use of critical incidents is a 'subtle' way of getting learners to reflect critically and as such is non-threatening compared to learners being directly asked to comment on the assumptions "they operate under in various aspects of their lives" (Brookfield, 1990:180). A direct approach could intimidate students and make them resistant.

There is no point in using the strategy 'half-way.' By this is meant that when the strategy is employed and students write down their critical incidents, it is just the first part of a process. Analysing the incident is where the practice of critical reflection is engaged more importantly. The students are given a chance to read the incident to their peers and perhaps verbally provide more information regarding the circumstances in which the critical incident occurred. The class could
then discuss the critical incident or the students could be given the opportunity to have 'quiet time' after the writing of the incident in order that they can re-examine the incident thereby trying to practice critical reflection.

It should be borne in mind, that in order that one may successfully be able to "enter another's frame of reference" (Brookfield, 1990:180) that, one is aware of one's own assumptions. Here, attention is drawn to the fact that the university educator and the peers of the students relating their critical incidents need to be aware of the assumptions that they have. In the light of this it should be remembered that no critical incident can be viewed as more important than another.

Each critical incident related by an individual is unique and is specifically a critical incident for that person because of the total sum of experiences that make up that particular individual. Teaching critical reflective skills to students is done with the aim of getting them to make better decisions and take accountability for their actions. It is done to get them to look intensely at the assumptions that they have in order that they are able to be empowered and change the conditions that affect their daily lives in negative ways. These students at universities are the future leaders and decision-makers. Getting them to analyse critical incidents can indeed equip them with valuable life-skills such as the practice of critical reflection.

University teachers could employ the writing of critical incidents as a teaching strategy in tutorial groups or in post-graduate study programmes. The reason for adapting their use with smaller groups of
students is so that their impact is not lost and in order that the assumptions made by the students writing them can be discussed thoroughly.

The use of critical incidents to encourage critical reflection in large, undergraduate classrooms would defeat the purpose as the great numbers of students make the use of such a strategy impractical due to constraints such as time.

4.5.3 Getting students to keep a journal

Getting students to keep a journal or logbook or diary could become a teaching strategy that fosters critical reflection amongst students. Journal entries can serve two purposes. Firstly, when writing down an 'experience' the students have an opportunity to practice critical reflection. Secondly, when the students go back to their initial journal entries after the lapse of some time they can critically reflect on the entries they made as a way of 'monitoring' their development. Having to write always requires one to think about what one is going to write.

If a university teacher chooses to foster the practice of critical reflection through getting students to keep a journal, then the purpose of journal writing and keeping of such records should be discussed on an ongoing basis with students. This would be done in order to reinforce the value of cultivating such a habit so as to assist learners to practise critical reflection on a regular basis. Cranton (1994:179) however, points out that "in order to encourage [critical] reflection rather than
the production of a log of daily events or a series of descriptions . . . " helpful guidelines should be provided for students, by educators. Cranton (ibid) makes the following suggestions:

- The university teacher suggests that learners divide each journal page in half using one side for observations and the other for recording affective reactions to events.

- The university teacher should make it clear to the learners that journals will not be judged in any way and spelling and grammar will also not be of consequence.

- The university teacher will, from time to time suggest a theme or perspective to be explored in the journal.

- The university teacher encourages learners to establish a routine and ensure time is set aside to make journal entries consistently.

- The university teacher should allow time in class for students to raise any issue they might have regarding the keeping of the journal.

Getting students to put down their thoughts on paper could immediately encourage critical reflection if students are made aware of the processes to follow when putting pen to paper. And even later on when students go back to entries they made, they will be able to understand better perhaps how they made certain decisions and why they made those decisions.
Hiemstra and Sisco (1990:211) point out that the use of a diary or journal to enhance learning is an old phenomenon and that journal or diary writing usually involves the recording of an individual's reflections on a topic. They make use of this strategy because, they say journal writing facilitates "the growth of self-awareness and self-reliance" (Hiemstra and Sisco, 1990:212). This idea is also captured by McGill and Beaty (1995:248) who stress that journals and diaries are valuable pieces of evidence showing development of an individual and they act as a 'spur' to consistent critical reflection.

Hiemstra and Sisco also refer to Christensen (1981) whose views are similar to theirs in that Christensen (1981) holds the view that by keeping a journal, students are availed of the opportunity to reflect on their life experiences. It is a means whereby they can think about the future in a critical reflective way. Most importantly through keeping a journal students come to trust in their own authentic voices that they come to see as having value. This point is taken up by Pastoll (1992:63) too who claims that the advantage of getting students to keep a journal is that it encourages learners to believe in their own thoughts and to believe that their thoughts have value. In addition to this is the view that diaries can be used to build learner confidence in their own abilities and thoughts. Such a strategy can be said to "encourage independent thinking" (Ashcroft and Foreman-Peck, 1994:59).

For McKeachie (1994:121) and Holly (1989:31) writing aids thinking and is a way of thinking while in a process of recording one's thoughts. Keeping a journal allows students to see their thoughts in a 'concrete' way. This process can also assist in promoting critical reflection when
learners look at their thoughts and start 'analysing' their thoughts and when they become more aware of their taken-for-granted assumptions. Holly (1989:74) encapsulates this idea in her view that "written reflections provide stationary yet flexible pictures that can be manipulated so that different dimensions and perspectives on experience may be exposed."

In this research essay the claim is that the promotion of critical reflection is in fact a goal of higher education in South Africa. Getting students to keep a journal is a teaching strategy that can assist educators to achieve the goal of promoting critical reflection. Pastoll (1992:63) says that "perhaps the most effective way of getting students to reflect [critically] on their learning experiences is to encourage them to keep a diary especially for this purpose."

In the South African higher education context of large, and diverse classes the university teacher may only be able to encourage such a practice but may never in any constructive way be able to 'monitor' such an exercise undertaken by students. However, this does not mean that the importance of using such a strategy should be ignored.

4.5.4 Role-playing

Role-playing according to Davies (1981:45) involves learners acting out an incident while for McKeachie (1994:167) role-playing is a way of setting up unstructured situations in which students' "behaviours are improvised to fit in with their conceptions of roles to which they have
been assigned." McKeachie (1994:167) and Alan Knox (1980:84) both refer to the use of role-playing as a means of getting students to hunt their taken-for-granted assumptions, conceptions, issues and the values that students have.

McKeachie emphasises that the educator needs to be clear regarding the goal of role-playing (which in this research essay is to promote critical reflection). He continues that if used to accomplish definite goals and if the goals are explained to students and also if "students perceive their progress towards these goals, it can be an extremely rewarding technique [or teaching strategy]" (ibid).

By using role-playing as a strategy the educator can assist students in developing a critical habit of mind. A way of engaging students, which promotes the cultivation of critical reflective practice, is through the use of role-plays which is suggested by Cranton (1994:174). These role-plays can be conducted informally or roles can be assigned to students and they can be afforded time to plan and structure the role-play.

Cranton (1994:175) notes that "participants should have the opportunity to discuss their experience in the role fully, especially what it was like to view the situation from that perspective." Such role-playing can assist in promoting the practice of critical reflection. It is a way of getting students to 'hunt' their assumptions. The manner in which one conducts oneself in the role-play and the choices that are made regarding an issue and the handling of an issue are all dependent on the individual's 'taken-for-granted' assumptions.
This idea is carried forward by Caffarella (1994:190) who suggests the use of role-playing as a means of changing "attitudes, values and feelings." For these aspects 'within' an individual to be changed engaging in critical reflection is essential. The learner's assumptions can be brought out in a role-play where upon critically reflecting the student will be able to 'see' what his/her 'taken-for-granted' assumptions are.

Therefore, I concur with Stock (1974:94) that one of the major steps in the role-playing exercise, which is of specific relevance, is what he calls the "discussion and analysis step." If the goal is the promotion of critical reflection and the strategy is role-playing then both before and after the exercise discussion should take place. After the exercise learners should be availed of the opportunity to dialogue about the analysis of the experience.

Such role-playing exercises could be used in smaller post-graduate classes or alternatively, a video showing a role-play exercise, where a specific 'issue' is explored, could be screened in a larger class and discussion could ensue, with participants engaging in critically reflective exercises thereafter. The class could be divided into small groups and each group could provide feedback to the larger class.

In either scenario the facilitation by the educator is very important. The reason is twofold: the purpose for doing the role-play and the 'analysis' of individuals in the role-play thereafter should be handled in a structured, organised format if role-playing is to be used as a strategy to promote critical reflection.
In large diverse classes role-playing exercises could prove difficult to get off the ground but with educator support and perhaps direct participation of the educator as well, students could see role-playing exercises as a fun-filled way to engage in serious critical thinking. In using such a strategy the educator should ensure that ample time is allocated for allowing students to reflect on the role-play. By doing this students are able to engage fully in critical reflection.

4.5.5 Getting students to co-develop the curriculum

Co-developing the curriculum entails, by definition, a joint partnership in the development of the curriculum by means of a process of interaction between the content expert who is the university teacher and the learner who is the university student. The process is a slow, developmental and progressive interaction. The inputs and viewpoints of the students with regard to what they consider to be significant in the curriculum must be open to revision and must be weighed and assessed at all times.

Much help has to be given by the university teacher who is the content expert in guiding the students for the determination of the ultimate curriculum which will be used. This co-development process involves a joint interaction between the university teachers and the students and of necessity requires critical reflection at all stages. Open-mindedness and not dogmatic approaches will help in the interaction and the critical reflection which are essential to what must finally be chosen by the university educators as the most beneficial and realistically educative
Co-development must be an ongoing process. There will be a steep learning curve initially for both the university teacher and the students.

When students are given an opportunity to co-develop the curriculum with the university educator they are encouraged to practice critical reflection. In allowing students to co-develop the curriculum the university teachers can assist in socialising them "into critical thought . . . into autonomous habits of mind" (Shor, 1992:13). Getting students to co-develop the curriculum will take much work on the part of the university educators in the South African context. This is because students going through the education system are not socialised into a critical and dynamic mode of learning and thinking and, in any case, students on account of their circumstance cannot be content experts by any means.

Therefore, getting the students to co-develop the curriculum will be exciting and challenging but it will also need patience and encouragement on the part of the university educators. It will encourage student participation during the educational programmes for if they are given a chance to co-develop the curriculum it means that their concerns and issues will be included. When this is done it is a way of empowering and emancipating them. It helps them to see that education is not something 'done' to them or forced upon them (as in 'banking' education mentioned earlier) but that education is a meaningful process that will assist them through life. By getting students to co-develop the curriculum empowers them and makes them aware that education is not
something that happens to them. Rather, it is a process in which they can have an authentic stake.

Such an "empowering education invites students to become skilled workers and [critically] thinking citizens who are also change agents and social critics" (Shor 1992:16). This is because as they assist the university educators in suggesting and selecting material that will be used in the class they are exploring the 'why' of choosing certain materials over others. Critical reflection is a way of engaging in premise reflection and when students are responsible for co-developing the curriculum it encourages them to look in new ways at education and at the education process. It requires that they look more closely at their role in creating knowledge and at their relationship to knowledge and power.

Shor (1992:4) states that "when the [students] chose material for class discussion, they were co-developing the curriculum with me, a key idea for critical and democratic teaching." The exercise avails the students of the opportunity to critically reflect on key ideas and thus develop a "critical habit of mind" (ibid).

In getting students to co-develop the curriculum the task of the university teacher is to paraphrase the material chosen by the students. The university teacher should present it to them in a manner that will allow them to critically reflect on their suggested or proposed topics or material for inclusion in the curriculum.
In large, diverse classes, such as those in the South African higher education institutions the co-development of the curriculum by students can be employed to promote critical reflection but creative ways will have to be found by the educator to do this. The following are my suggestions for how this can be done in large, diverse classes:

- The class can give proposed written topics or issues for inclusion in the curriculum and the educator can (where necessary) summarise and hand out for comment.

- The class can be divided into groups and each group could provide feedback to the larger class regarding topics to be included in the curriculum.

- The class can be asked to make suggestions verbally by way even of brainstorming and these can be written down and prioritised taking time and other constraints into consideration.

- The class can be divided into groups and each group can be given a particular theme to work on for material that might be included concerning a particular theme.

The university educator would serve as guide and provide assistance ensuring that students do not deviate from the aim of the course but that within the aims of the course students could look critically at developing the curriculum with the teacher. The university educator should ensure that he/she is able to manage the process because it
could very well be an overwhelming experience when students realise that they are able to voice their opinions and give their inputs.

5. CONCLUSION

In this research essay the promotion of critical reflection through the use of particular teaching strategies employed at university, has been explored. The purpose of this research essay has been to argue for a university pedagogy that would guide students towards practising critical reflection. This is in order to enable them to become constructors of, and contributors to, a civil society in which "tolerance, public debate and the accommodation of differences" are valued (NCHE Report, 1996:2). The exploration of selected teaching strategies for the purpose of the promotion of critical reflection was structured to firstly examine closely the definition of critical reflection and secondly to explore goals of higher education.

It was shown that the promotion of critical reflection is in fact one goal of higher education, particularly university education. A case has been made, using national policy documents on higher education in South Africa and both international and South African literature, to illustrate that the goal of higher education is to promote the practice of critical reflection.

The reason that the promotion of critical reflection is so vitally important is that critically reflective individuals are emancipated,
empowered individuals who can contribute significantly towards establishing a democratic society. Such a society values differences and sees diversity as an asset to be appreciated to the fullest. Furthermore, a democratic society values human life and respects human beings.

Thirdly, the particular South African context was explored. The promotion of critical reflection is especially challenging in the South African context due to the legacy of apartheid that promoted practices of keeping millions of individuals oppressed and depriving them of an education, let alone an education of high quality. South Africa is a crime-riddled country as a result of problems in the political, economic, social and educational spheres. However, citizens of the new South Africa are making a concerted effort to work with one another toward creating a new national identity and to acquiring and developing skills and knowledge that will assist them to lead an improved quality of life.

Universities have an important role to play in stewarding the transformation of the South African society into a true democracy. Individuals are only now beginning to realise that diversity is an asset but more importantly they are realising that it is through education that a committed citizenry can ultimately be established.

Fourthly, the focus then shifted to the role of university teachers and the role of students with regard to the practising of critical reflection. It was shown that fostering critical reflection is indeed challenging as it requires all stakeholders in education especially educators and students,
to assess critically the premises or presuppositions upon which their habits of expectation are predicated [Mezirow, 1991; Brookfield, 1995].

Finally, five teaching strategies were discussed that would be best suited for use in the South African university context. The selected list of strategies provided could be employed at universities in South Africa in various undergraduate and post-graduate programmes to foster the critically reflective habit of mind, thereby creating a civil society which values democratic principles of fairness, justice and equality for all citizens. Dialogue was mentioned as a teaching approach that should be employed across all of the strategies mentioned. It is seen to be extremely important as an approach and an important element in the educational process especially when it is used to promote the practice of critical reflection. The list of strategies provided is not an exhaustive one. The strategies chosen are ones that are regarded as most suitable in the South African context as they are able to be used, or adapted for use, in South African universities that are challenged by ever increasing student numbers and a diversity of student populations.

The problem posed at the beginning of this research essay was: What strategies for the enhancement of critical reflection are described in the research literature; and how could university teachers in South Africa employ or adapt them in order to assist students from diverse backgrounds to become critically reflective?

It will be found that the central concern and focus of this research essay has been to achieve the following: - arguing for a university pedagogy that encourages the promotion of critical reflection; the
illustration of critical reflection as a central goal of university education; the selection of strategies in higher education which allow for the promotion of critical reflection; the consideration of the South African higher education context, especially university education; and finally the adaptation of teaching strategies selected from the literature, both international and South African, encouraging the habits of mind and promotion of critical reflection.
This research essay's promotion is the concept of critical reflection as a habit of thinking and of mind for truly democratic individuals of the new South Africa; indeed, individuals called 'educated' amongst mankind.

Strategies which critical reflection promote span five, which attention devote to cultivation of societal structures sound so that democratic principles may abound, such as fairness, justice, equality and a critical reflective citizenry.

The literature review emphasises devotion to diversity now promoted at university, which is coping with student number explosion. Both, a large student population and the diversity of the rainbow nation are core concerns of a teaching university.

Encouraging and promoting critical reflection create a truly democratic nation soundly based on a good education foundation.
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