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'I got content with who I was': Rural teachers' encounters with new ways of practising literacy

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In a context where Foundation Phase literacy teachers' personal literacy often involves operational and technicist practices rather than creative, this paper argues that it is by exposing teachers to experiences of working with different genres of text for an extended time, in different fields, that teachers are able to imagine the possibilities these genres afford. Using a Bourdieusian framework of habitus, field, capital and doxa and applying imagination to the theorisation of these concepts, I examine the effect on a group of rural teachers from Limpopo province of being removed from their classrooms, and being given the opportunity to complete a 4-year Bachelor of Education degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. This case study used reflective journals and focus groups to trace shifts in the ways these teacher-students enacted literacy and thought about teaching literacy. Findings from this study suggest that teachers of literacy can change deeply entrenched ways of thinking about and valuing literacy by reflecting on the discontinuities between old and new ways of practice and, through anticipatory reflection, to imagine possibilities of teaching and enacting literacy differently. This requires critical imagination, awareness and agency. This paper discusses, in particular, Elela's experience with poetry and Kganya's experience with a drama script, assessing the effect this had on their personal literacy practices and how they imagine teaching literacy in the future.

Introduction

Imagination is seldom considered in relation to in-service teacher development initiatives for literacy teachers. Many workshops and interventions for in-service teachers have been introduced in response to South African learners' poor performance on systemic, standardised tests. Teachers are important in making a difference in helping young South Africans become literate in ways that will empower them sufficiently for fields (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) they will encounter in their futures. However, the focus tends to be on 'fixing' problematic teachers (Green *et al*. 2011). This paper aims for a more nuanced understanding of how and why some teachers seem to be struggling to teach literacy effectively. It examines the importance of an awakening of the imagination in literacy teachers and the role this plays in helping them to become aware of new possibilities (Greene 1995) in reading and writing genres of text they do not usually work with. This paper focuses on two experienced, rural Foundation Phase teachers' reactions to being taught poetry and drama in the first year of a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree. As teachers growing up in and working in rural Limpopo, South Africa, Elela and Kganya both had limited access to a variety of genres of written texts. The study described in this paper followed both participants across 4 years (2009–2012), during the time they spent at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) where they completed a B.Ed degree. Specifically, I ask what changes manifested themselves in Elela's and Kganya's literate habitus (Albright & Luke 2008) during this period. I illustrate how being exposed to the reading and analysis of different genres of text ignited their imaginations. In doing so, I draw on Vygotsky's (2004) claim that it is the environment which contributes to imaginative capacity as 'imagination always builds using materials provided by reality' (p. 30). In doing so, I emphasise the importance of imagination on the development of teachers' own literacy practices, arguing that being in different fields for an extended time helped provide materials and opportunities for using these that Elela and Kganya may not been aware of previously. Imagination provides the key to dismantling established, deeply entrenched ways of teaching literacy and enacting literacy; imagination provides the 'push' necessary to shift habitus.

Theoretical framework

A sociocultural perspective of literacy is presented in this paper, recognising that literacy is not only more than a set of discrete skills but is also a set of social practices influenced by the context in which it is used (Street 1984). There is more than one way of being literate (Gee 1996; Prinsloo &

Breier 1996). With this in mind, I do not discount the literacy practices the participants experienced in fields in Limpopo; I do argue, however, that exposure to different literacy practices opens up possibilities not imagined before and provides additional cultural capital. Literacy includes the values, attitudes and social relationships underpinning particular literacy events, defined by Heath (1983:50) as 'any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretive processes'. The notion of literacy events is important as I discuss observable reading and writing events in Elela's and Kganya's considerations of literacy. I also consider how being taught relatively unfamiliar genres of text, and reflecting on these in ways that welcomed imaginative interactions and interpretations seems to have contributed to a shift in their literate habitus.

Teaching literacy should consist of more than imparting discrete skills. It should focus on the development of critical and analytic skills as well as an understanding of the purposes of different texts and how they function, particularly, in relation to social contexts. It requires that learners are helped to bring their own meanings to texts and to link written texts to speaking and listening. This is what Freebody and Luke (1990, 2003) refer to as the 'Four Resources Model'. This model illustrates how the four roles of the reader, that is, code-breaker, text-participant, text-user and text-analyst, need to operate simultaneously and collectively in the literacy practices of 'literate persons'. This model does not explicitly include imagination but, using Bland's (2012, 2016) model of the four kinds of imagination and applying two of these to the 'Four Resources Model', I argue, that these four roles do contribute important imaginative elements to interactions with texts. Bland (2016) explores four imaginations: fantasy, empathic, critical and imaginative. I now discuss the 'Four Resources Model' in more detail and show connections between empathic and critical imaginations and Freebody and Luke's model. Furthermore, I discuss Greene's claims about imagination, linking these to the model.

The code-breaker role, encoding and decoding, is most focused on in many township and rural contexts in South Africa (Gennrich & Janks 2013; Prinsloo 2002; Reeves *et al*. 2008). The text-participant role opens up possibilities for bringing one's own meanings to texts and encourages reflection and connection of texts to real-life concerns. This connection requires imaginative interpretation and identification with others (Greene 1997). By including 'empathic imagination' (Bland 2016:8) in relation to this role, it can be expanded to include allowing students to explore 'the tensions between their personal beliefs and real-life behaviours' (2016:8). The text-user role helps learners understand and recognise the purposes of different genres inside and outside of classrooms. The participants described in this paper had not worked extensively with poetry and drama texts in ways that helped them to understand the characteristics and functions of these genres. Freebody and Luke maintain that students need to focus on the cultural and social functions and the 'social actions' (2003:57) that texts perform in and outside of school. The text-analyst role requires imaginative attentiveness to alternative perspectives and a critical consciousness. Greene (1997) argues that this is the beginning of real learning and that it requires agency to ask significant questions. Bland (2012, 2016) views critical imagination as reflective, disruptive and conscious of the social and political. He likens this to Freire's (1998) 'conscientisation', reasoning that students need opportunities that force them to think in different ways. A rupture in the fields an individual inhabits, or a removal from those fields, is necessary for this awareness, otherwise an individual is like a 'fish in water' and does not 'feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:127).

It is with this in mind that the social construction of Elela and Kganya as 'literate persons' is focused on in this paper. Specifically, it examines how they experienced changing fields (Bourdieu 1977, 1990, 2007) and encountered new ways of being literate and practising literacy. In order to fully understand this, Bourdieu's notions of habitus, symbolic capital, field and doxa are key. I now introduce these concepts, discussing how they have been used in this paper.

A Bourdieusian framework of habitus, capital, field and doxa

Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus, capital and field (1977, 1986, 1990) frame the discussion. Firstly, I invoke Bourdieu's construct of habitus, which he defines as being structured by layers of dispositions which result in 'an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions' (1990:55). I consider these products to be observable literacy events, such as writing poetry, reflective journal entries and the practices surrounding these events, which involve 'values, attitudes, beliefs, feelings and social relationships' (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson & Degener 2004:32). These products are structured by 'capacities and dispositions shaped by conditions of existence' (Bourdieu 2000:150). An individual's collection of capacities and dispositions creates a bias towards behaving in certain ways which become 'internalized as a second nature' (Bourdieu 1990:56). These also affect how an individual 'perceives and appreciates' (Bourdieu 1990:54) all experiences. A disposition to literacy forms a layer of the structure of habitus and this disposition results in a 'tendency' or 'inclination' (Bourdieu 1977:214) to value and construct literacy texts in particular ways. These layers can also build resistance to new ways of thinking and valuing.

A literate disposition and imaginative capacity are structured by the fields or social worlds individuals inhabit and participate in. The practices of each field are produced and reproduced by participants in the field. Each field has unwritten 'rules of the game' which Bourdieu refers to as 'doxa' (1977, 1990). These 'unquestioned opinions and perceptions' (Deer 2008:120) are learnt over time and through experience underpin what participants in the field consider to count as literacy. How individuals act, respond, feel and

imagine is deeply formed by the regulated practices of the fields they participate in, which produce a 'logic of practice'. These practices, literacy practices more specifically, become so deeply entrenched that they are embodied and internalised as dispositions over time.

Part of what drives individuals to pursue these practices, is the view of what counts as symbolic capital in the fields in which they operate. Bourdieu contends that agents constantly strive for what is valued in a field and what they consider will provide social status and power in that field. Because different fields influence people differently, individuals sometimes find that the ways that they enact or value literacy may be accepted or rejected as capital in other fields. How individuals are placed within a field determines how much symbolic capital they have. It is the perception that individuals have of what counts as capital 'which cause[s] them to know it and to recognise it, to give it value' (Bourdieu 1998:47). Individuals strategise to ensure maximum capital gain and so their practices tend to conform to those of others in the field (Bourdieu 1977, 1990).

Bourdieu does not write specifically about the role of imagination in the structuring of habitus. He does, however, discuss taste and an aesthetic disposition (1984), arguing that what is regarded as 'legitimate taste' or 'high aesthetics' (1984:24) is related to class. Reading and enjoying a variety of literary genres, it could be argued, are the luxury of the leisured classes and may not be viewed as capital by some who come from backgrounds where buying books is an indulgence few can afford. It is with this awareness that I argue for opportunities to be provided for teacher to read, write and make meaning critically and imaginatively using a variety of genres of texts. I believe that this paper contributes to thinking about how literate habitus shifts, by examining the role imagination plays in this process.

Imagination and a shift in habitus

Although habitus is durable and lasts over time, Bourdieu does not rule out the possibility of change, stating that it is 'not a destiny' (2004:44) nor is it 'eternal' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:133). Disrupting literate habitus is difficult but not impossible (Gennrich 2015; Gennrich & Janks 2013). This paper focuses on the importance of imagination in facilitating a shift in deeply entrenched ways of valuing and enacting literacy. An imaginative capacity contributes to the structure of the dispositions layering an individual's habitus. Greene (1995), arguing that one's identity is in constant creation, identifies four elements necessary for the release of the imagination which are important to consider here. They are: critical awareness, agency, awareness of discontinuities between old and new ways of thinking and practising, and reflective anticipation. She emphasises the role that the arts, including literature texts, play in providing alternate ways of perceiving the world.

Viewing the world critically and using the critical imagination (Bland 2012, 2016) is important for releasing the imagination and individuals need to be awakened to perspectives that are different from their own (Greene 1995). Greene calls this becoming 'wide awake to the world' (1995:4). Engaging with different genres of texts opens up possibilities for making creative connections and helps one to shift from accepted, unquestioned opinions to insights about the 'infinity or inexhaustibleness of things' (1995:15).

Greene (1995) calls for teachers to provide spaces where learners can find agency and are empowered to 'pose significant questions' (p. 23) and can realise that there are many ways to interpret and construct meaning. Moving away from conformity and 'unexamined common sense' (p. 23) or doxa (Bourdieu 1990, 2000) enables agency. This agency also comes from an awareness of the discontinuities between what is accepted as unquestioned to new perspectives and practices. It is this 'awareness of leaving something behind while reaching towards something new' (Greene 1995:20) that Greene says should be linked to imagination. She cites Dewey (1934:272) who describes imagination as 'a "gateway" through which meanings derived from past experiences find their way into the present; it is the conscious adjustment of the new and the old' (1995:20).

In relating Greene's ideas to Bourdieu's concepts I recognise that imagination is essential in [re]structuring the habitus in that it builds new layers of dispositions on the structures already in place. However, one can argue that this is why habitus is difficult to shift, because the foundational layers and structures are still there and are more deeply entrenched than the new.

The role of reflection

Next, what I consider important for this paper is Greene's contention that imagination provides the 'capacity to invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society' (1995:5). She contends that teachers should be provided with opportunities to reflect on their practice in complex contexts and to see their work in relation to a broader whole. Conway (2001) calls this 'anticipatory reflection' or 'future-oriented reflection' (p. 90) and identifies this as 'generative imagination' as opposed to 'analytic remembering':

> What I mean by analytical remembering is the focus in teacher education on analysing both the distant past (the apprenticeship of observation) and the more immediate past (lesson, unit, or daily reflective evaluation). This necessary focus on analytical remembering, however, is enacted to such an extent that what gets neglected is an important dimension of prospective teachers' experience and cognition as they learn to teach: i.e. imagination. (p. 102)

Based on his research with prospective teachers, he argues for the importance of hope and imagination, asserting that teacher education needs to focus on 'conversations and activities designed to promote imaginative/prospective reflection' (2001:102).

Ward and McCotter's (2004:251) four levels of reflection were used to analyse the data discussed here, in an attempt to understand the role increasing reflective levels play in imaginative and critical understanding of teaching literacy differently. Routine reflections are limited to focusing on problems and blaming circumstances or others for things going wrong in lessons. There is no questioning of practice and no taking responsibility for change. Reflections operating in the technical category reveal a desire to learn and centre on solving problems. This level of reflection focuses on narrow teaching tasks and does not lead to new insights.

Reflections that reveal an ongoing process of thinking and taking into consideration the views of others are characteristic of the dialogic level. Questioning leading to new insights opens up the possibility of change. Although for Ward and McCotter (2004:253), transformative reflection 'questions fundamental assumptions and purpose more deeply', they point out that it is rare for pre-service teachers to reach this level. The participants in this study were experienced teachers so one might expect that they reflected at the transformative level. However, transformative reflection takes place over a long period of time and is characterised by 'whole-hearted inquiry' (Ward & McCotter 2004:253). Conway's and Ward and McCotter's claims for the importance of different kinds of reflection were useful in examining the quality of reflection of Elela and Kganya.

The participants and a rupture in field

A rupture in field is important to enable a shift in habitus. It creates instability which results in adaptations, adjustments or 'regulated improvisations' (Bourdieu 1990:57). A sudden change in the social environment results in individuals strategising in order to maximise their capital in the new or changing field (Bourdieu 2007). New environments, circumstances and conditions lead to forced improvisations which bring about the possibility of a change in the structure of habitus (Wacquant 2006).

Similarly, Greene (1995:24) recognises the importance of change in igniting the imagination and enabling new perspectives. She cites Camus (1955) writing about situations when 'the stage set collapses' and how this brings about necessary interrogations and questioning to enable 'the capacity to imagine what is not yet' (1995:24).

Kganya and Elela were part of a group of 200 experienced and practising Foundation Phase teachers from Limpopo province, South Africa's northernmost province, who received bursaries from the Limpopo Department of Education to study B.Ed degree at Wits, Johannesburg from 2009 to 2012. I was employed at the university to teach a module namely, 'English in Education', to these teacher-students[1] in their first year. It is the interaction that Elela and Kganya had with new genres of literary text on this course, namely poetry and a drama script, which I present here.

Elela is a 40-year-old Shangaan speaker who grew up in a township in a former homeland which had been incorporated into Limpopo province after the demise of apartheid. Her mother loved reading and passed on the same love to Elela:

> 'My mother used to love to read … she used to buy me books' (FG, 2010).

Books were highly valued, so that even in a home where there was not much money, it was considered worthwhile spending money on books. Elela recognises that this early exposure to books has resulted in the ease with which she reads:

> 'Even from my earliest grades I was a good reader and it was not difficult for me' (FG, 2010).

She associates reading with positive emotions using words like 'good'; and 'not difficult' when writing about reading. This has had a lasting effect on her literate habitus and in adulthood, she continues to buy novels. She is a strong Christian and this influences her personal reading practices, as she buys and reads Christian books and is 'moved by them'. She values them for the effect they have on how she:

> 'lives and understands things' (EJ, 2009).

Kganya is a 39-year-old Sepedi woman. Her mother was illiterate, in fact the only book she recalls seeing in her childhood home was a Bible. She admits that she never entered a library until she went to university. She indicates that she does not read for relaxation or fun:

> 'I do not have memories that are vivid and interesting about reading. Maybe that is the reason I see reading as a "duty." I read when I "have to" and mainly for academic reasons' (LJ, 2011).

Her strong Christian faith motivates her to read Christian and self-help books and she subscribes to a daily Bible verse on her cell phone. She also reads magazines, mainly celebrity gossip articles.

These two participants both graduated from Wits in 2012 on time and enacted literacy in different ways early on. Both of these teacher-students reveal how reading, analysing and writing about different genres of texts helped them to 'do' literacy differently.

Context and its impact on literate habitus

Two contextual factors from the fields these teacher-students grew up in and worked in are discussed in this section as contributing to the development of their literate habitus, namely their education during apartheid and a limited access to printed texts. Elela and Kganya were both schooled during the apartheid era and are products of Bantu education. The conditions in schools in rural areas were inadequate and had sub-standard buildings, high pupil-teacher ratios and

1.I refer to the participants as teacher-students because they were already qualified, had taught for a number of years and now found themselves in the position of being students again. They were neither pre-service nor in-service teachers.

underqualified, demoralised and disillusioned teachers (Bloch 2009). Learning was fact-based, non-interpretive and aimed to indoctrinate learners (Gardiner 2008). Individual perspectives were not encouraged, and drilling, rote-learning and reliance on discrete, isolated literacy skills were focused on (Hoadley 2012; Muller 1989).

Elela and Kganya both trained as teachers in teacher training colleges in the former homelands. These colleges were racially and ethnically divided and were 'little more than glorified high schools' (Gardiner 2008:21). Fundamental Pedagogics was the educational philosophy underpinning the instruction in these colleges and they 'discouraged questioning or critical analysis' (Gardiner 2008:21). In both schools and teacher training colleges, imagination was stifled as the aim was to produce a docile, unquestioning black community while promoting the dominance of white rule (Von Holdt 2012).

Since the demise of apartheid, contextual influences in many schools in Limpopo have resulted in limited material resources and this has affected pedagogy. Learners in many rural areas of Limpopo are taught without textbooks because the delivery of these textbooks to schools in the province is problematic. Because of the lack of books, literacy roles are limited (Freebody & Luke 2003) and there is little engagement with different genres of text and extended writing (Reeves *et al*. 2008). Reading is taught using choral reading aloud from the chalk board or from photocopied worksheets (Taylor & Moyane 2004) or the teacher reads and the learners copy the teacher (Fleisch 2012; Reeves *et al.* 2008). Teachers tend to focus on names of letters, decoding isolated words and sounds, and they pay little attention to meaning-making or imaginative, creative writing (MacDonald 1990; Pretorius 2002; Reeves *et al.* 2008).

I argue that these educational contexts have contributed to deep, dispositional literacy layers in Elela's and Kganya's habitus. Teachers cannot be expected to teach literacy imaginatively if their personal literate habitus is such that they have not had first-hand experience of a variety of genres of text. In this paper I demonstrate how Elela and Kganya, being offered opportunities to read poetry and drama, both texts that they did not read or write regularly, began to recognise and imagine possibilities in using these texts, that they had not been aware of before.

A note on methodology

There have been many short-term teacher training interventions in South Africa and these have had limited impact on the teaching of literacy in particular (Gardiner 2008; Taylor 2007). There have been few opportunities to study the longitudinal development of the identities of practising teachers in South Africa. Specifically, we know little about the impact of long-term interventions on the teaching of literacy. Elela and Kganya were part of a larger study and I researched their literacy for 4 years. I invited the teacher-students to participate in research I was conducting at the time into teachers' literate habitus (Gennrich 2015) and they both volunteered. The data I draw on were: reflective journals kept in their first year in the English in Education (EJ) course,[2] focus groups (FG) held early in 2010, reflective journals kept across the 4 years of the degree while on teaching experience (TE),[3] journals from a library science (LJ) course and exit interviews (EI) in 2012.

I analysed the data by identifying patterns and themes as revealed in Elela's and Kganya's writing and speaking about their encounters with drama and poetry; creating literacy tables using the Freebody and Luke's 'four roles of the reader' (1990, 2003) and analysing reflections using Ward & McCotter's (2004) levels of reflection. I examined instances of new ways of 'doing, feeling, thinking and being' (Maton 2008:52) imaginatively and creatively in relation to literacy.

Elela's encounter with poetry

A 3-week module of the course I taught dealt with selected poems drawn from the anthology, *Seasons Come to Pass*. The poems taught were well-established, well-known poems from the 'canon' including some written by South African and African poets. This selection had limitations of access which I have discussed elsewhere (Gennrich & Wilson 2009). In class, I explained the historical period as well as the contextual issues that were relevant for understanding the poem. I aimed to help the teacher-students use the text-participant role (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003) and to use empathic imaginations (Bland 2012, 2016) by finding personal meaning in the poems, assisting them to find connections to their own lives and contexts. In the lecture room a variety of personal responses was welcomed and I helped teacher-students understand that multiple perspectives were possible if supported with evidence from the text. Together we interrogated the poems, critically examining the perspectives presented and questioning these. In this way I helped them to use a text-analyst role (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003) and engaged their critical imaginations (Bland 2012, 2016) by interrogating their own beliefs and attitudes and becoming politically and socially aware. I encouraged the development of Freebody and Luke's text-user role (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003) by assisted them to examine how the poets' use of language and poetic devices contribute to the meaning, tone and point of view.

This series of lectures resulted in Elela's excitement at the possibilities opened up by an approach that did not rely entirely on the text-decoder role of a reader (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003). An entry in her English Reflective journal of 20/08/09 began with a poem that she had written herself and reveals active engagement and an application of the creative imagination (Bland 2012, 2016) with the genre:

> Poems, poems, Poems!
> So challenging yet so interesting.

2.The abbreviations in brackets indicate how the data are referred to in discussion in this paper.

3.All Education students at Wits University currently complete TE for six weeks in a year, during which they work in schools under the supervision of a teacher in the school and a tutor who is employed by the university.

Like funny strange creatures
With silly scary features
They slither towards you; and
Cover you up.

This poem is revealing in many ways. It is short and written with control. There are a number of figures of speech used effectively demonstrating that Elela has understood their use beyond merely identifying them as she described being taught poetry at school, 'In our mother tongue approach of poems we only looked for figures of speech in the poems and identify them' (EJ 2009). The whole poem is an extended metaphor in which she compares poems to 'funny strange creatures' indicating how the genre is unusual for her. The choice of the words 'funny' and 'strange' emphasise this, however, these words are neither sinister nor frightening. Lines 4 and 5 contain alliteration on the 's' sound which suggests a snake-like quality especially because of the word 'slither', perhaps hinting at some trepidation which the enjambed lines effectively add. There is a possible double meaning in, 'Cover you up' as covering can be protective or overwhelming. This phrase encapsulates the duality of her emotions in relation to poetry.

In the body of her journal entry, Elela reflects on the discontinuities she has become aware of, between how she had been taught poetry at school and the way she is being taught poetry at Wits. This awareness results in a shift in her feelings about poetry and her comprehension of the possibilities the genre affords. She contrasts the two ways of learning poetry:

> 'When we learnt poems at the school level it was to memorise them and then recite them in order to obtain some oral marks. The only poems we attempted analysing were mother tongue poems with a totally different approach to the one we learnt here at Wits University.' (EJ, 20 Aug. 2009).

Her description of the typical literacy practice relating to poetry was that it focused on memorisation and performance. Enjoyment appears to have been constrained by having 'oral marks' assigned to these activities. Evaluation rather than enjoyment seems to be the focus of the literacy event. She uses a series of negative phrases such as 'not given much attention', 'usually avoided', 'did not fully understand why', 'poor quality' and 'never really studied them in depth' which highlight the dominant attitudes to poetry as she had experienced it at school. Elela uses the word 'only' twice implying that, with hindsight, the way she had studied poems previously was limited, in her view.

At Wits she describes experiencing poetry as 'a challenging yet interesting adventure'. This metaphor emphasises her excitement at the unlimited possibilities she begins to see in poetry. Although the experience is new, she embraces it. She expresses regret at the brevity of the 3 week module, 'I just feel the session was too short because just when I felt I was beginning to get what poems were all about, the session came to an end'. Elela realises how she is becoming attentive to opportunities to think broadly and creatively, offered by poetry:

> 'I was beginning to love poetry because I realised one can gain great insights and wisdom from them. I also realised that because of their open endedness they encouraged critical thinking and creativity.' (EJ, 20 Aug. 2009).

Not only does she express her bourgeoning love for reading and analysing poetry, but she also indicates her desire to develop as a text-user (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003), and to write more of her own poetry:

> I was beginning to appreciate the art of the poets … and even wondered if I myself can be able to express myself through poetry, unfortunately before I was sure of it, it was over.

Despite the tentativeness she feels, it is evident that she *did* try writing poetry. She expresses a longing for more time to write poetry and suggests not only a sense of the boundlessness offered by the genre, but also that extended time is needed for her to participate in poetry with confidence.

Elela ends off this journal entry by revealing her growing self-assurance and agency in her responsiveness to new possibilities offered by writing poetry:

> 'The introductory paragraph is my playful attempt to see if maybe I can develop the skill of expressing myself through poetry which I believe I can learn if I put myself to it. I think I have fallen in love with poetry, and to think how stupid and funny I viewed those who wrote and recite them in our traditional events before learning about them here at Wits makes me see how ignorance can make one miss out on great things.' (EJ, 20 Aug. 2009).

The phrase 'I believe I can learn if I put my mind to it' emphasises her determination to try out new ways of writing. She makes connections between the poetry she has done in class with poetry as it is used in her cultural context. This new field and her reading and writing of poetry in it, help her to reflect back on her attitudes towards poets in her community and to anticipate appreciating these differently in the future. She is becoming open to different points of view and realises 'how ignorance can make one miss out on great things'. Elela is increasingly aware of the discontinuities between the old poetic field and the new and this enables critical reflection on her own attitudes to poets and poetry in Limpopo. Her writing reflects a growing awareness and critical understanding which appear to contribute imaginatively to a shift in her disposition to poetry.

At the end of her 4 years at Wits, Elela reflects deeply on how far she has come on her long journey to becoming a different kind of teacher to the one she had been prior to this intervention:

> 'When my students become successful because of something that I taught I really feel some sense of achievement and satisfaction. Where I would have lately blamed on other people, e.g. that children were not serious, parents are irresponsible and do not help or blamed the Department for changing curriculums without training us, I realise now that I feel like I am directly responsible too for their learning and want my children to be successful.' (TE, 20 Sept. 2012).

Here Elela demonstrates agency as she shifts from blaming others, a technical level of reflection (Ward & McCotter 2004) to taking responsibility for her teaching. She recognises how she is gradually changing in how she taught reading and writing as discrete, isolated skills to an ability to make connections and to help her learners to do so as well:

> 'Before I came to Wits I realised that my children learnt very little. I just let them read, dictated some words to them, and let them transcribe sentences. I knew I had to integrate other subjects, but I did not know how to do it. I did try to do the best I could, but could not teach the way I do now.' (TE, 27 Sept. 2012).

Kganya's encounter with a drama text: 'Love, Crime and Johannesburg'

Another module of the 'English in Education' course introduced teacher-students to the drama genre and the script selected for study was Purkey's (2000) *Love, Crime and Johannesburg*. Kganya's literate habitus is strongly influenced by her Christian faith and this could be why she is initially put off by the:

> 'swearing words and vulgar words' (EJ, 25 July 2009).

This objection reflects her habitus which is infused by principled values. She also finds the behaviour of the characters alienating because it is discordant with the moral dispositions which layer her habitus. However, she demonstrates willingness to move beyond this dislike and to recognise perspectives so different to her own views, in order to engage meaningfully with the script as a text-analyst (Freebody & Luke 1990). This also demonstrates her use of critical imagination (Bland 2012, 2016) as she is forced to think in new ways about the relationship between her perspective and the behaviour and values of others. Kganya consciously questions the meanings in the text and clearly articulates the views portrayed by the playwright:

> 'I have a feeling that the authors want to portray Queenie as uncapable [sic] of managing the police. The issue of affirmative action is questioned here. Queenie got the job not on merit, but because she is a woman…' (EJ, 25 July 2009).

The song that says:

> 'When will the woman police govern?' suggests the gender issue and males are not satisfied to be the subordinate of females.' (EJ, 25 July 2009).

This extract reveals how she has insight into the way the play conveys views on important societal issues in South Africa, in this case affirmative action and she recognises also how it challenges gender stereotypes. She is asking important questions and constructing meanings that help her to consider views which are different to her own, which is an important aspect of the critical imagination.

Like Elela, she is conscious of discontinuities in her personal reading between what she read before coming to Wits and her current literacy practices. As she is exposed to different ways of reading and writing, her literacy practices gradually begin changing, indicating shifts in her literate habitus. The experience appears to generate steps towards new ways of thinking, perceiving and acting in relation to literacy:

> 'In my opinion I am reading and writing differently now compared to when I was in Limpopo … I mostly read the Bible and magazines … gossip columns, recipes, games … I got content with who I was … When I read more, I have realised that I gain more knowledge. As I gain more knowledge I also engage with different academic articles, theories or viewpoints. I can now critically analyse other people's viewpoints and come up with my standpoint. I never had this skill (critical thinking) but Wits had developed this skill (though not yet fully developed, is a step in the right direction).' (EI, 2012).

This quote, from the interview held at the end of her fourth year at Wits, indicates that her view of what it means to be literate has begun to change. Kganya places particular value on thinking critically and recognises that this is a new and developing aspect of her literacy repertoire. As she reflects on the changes, she is aware of the impact these have on who she is, her identity as a literate person. The repetition of phrases, such as 'I am', 'I read', 'I gain' and 'I can now', shows agency that seems to have arisen from being in new fields, in a different environment and, perhaps, from practising literacy in different ways. There is also a sense of the 'inexhaustibleness' and 'infinity' (Greene 1995:15) inherent in how she is reading differently in her recognition that she is still developing as a critical thinker. In claiming that she recognises how 'I got content with who I was' she is breaking with what is 'habitually taken for granted' (Greene 1995:4) and moving beyond the familiar to imagining and perceiving fresh perspectives while asserting a position, arrived at thoughtfully.

Kganya displayed a growing attentiveness to the differences between how she taught reading in her Foundation Phase classroom in Limpopo and how she learnt to teach reading at Wits. During her first year in Johannesburg, as she spent time in classrooms on TE, she recognised that:

> 'Reading activities is a serious business in Gauteng.' (TE Sept. 2009).

She also recognises that she used to teach reading focusing on discrete decoding skills, the code-breaker role (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003):

> 'I used to teach reading separately, focusing on phonics and fluency but ignoring the main aspect of reading – meaning.' (EI, 2012).

She also displays anticipatory reflection revealing 'generative imagination' (Conway 2001:102) as she anticipates teaching reading and writing differently on her return to Limpopo:

> 'I have been taught [at Wits] that reading and writing can be done using different genres. This is a positive move from where I was before I came to Wits. I mainly relied on readers or textbooks provided by the government. I have been taught here to develop different scripts like readers' theatre; poems, advertisements,

> journals. I will use these genres to teach reading and writing and instil in children that reading and writing are purposeful. We write for a specific audience, and we read for a specific reason.' (EI, 2012).

Kganya appears to recognise the importance of genre which reveals her development in the text-user role (Freebody & Luke 1990, 2003). She identifies key ways to make the use of genre explicit to the learners, namely identifying the audience and purpose. She imagines possibilities for engaging creatively in developing her own texts using different genres and through this helping learners read and write in meaningful, purposeful ways. There is an indication of self-reliance, agency and creativity as she envisages moving beyond texts provided by the Department of Education and creating her own examples of different genres for her learners to use.

Despite the constraining conditions of classrooms in Limpopo, which, as an experienced teacher, she is well aware of, she anticipates overcoming these:

> 'I intend to put all the efforts in developing the children's literacy skills. There will be challenges, of course, of lack of print-rich environment because of poor family backgrounds … but this will not hamper the passion I have developed in making the classroom a print-rich environment to supplement what the children lack' (EI, 2012).

Instead of being overwhelmed in anticipation of going back to teach with constraints of resources and poverty, she imagines having agency, based on her new-found desire, to overcome these constraints.

Conclusion

I have drawn on the work of Bourdieu, in particular his concepts of habitus, field, capital and doxa and applied them to an examination of the development of literate habitus of two teacher-students. As others have done (Compton-Lilly 2014; Kerfoot 2008; Lee & Kramer 2013; Lehmann 2013; Loh 2013), I have raised questions as to whether it is possible to shift a deeply entrenched habitus. This has been applied in particular to asking whether it is possible to change the literate habitus of experienced teachers and if so, what it takes to do so.

In attempting to answer this question, I have extended Bourdieu's concepts by applying imagination and theories of imagination to the theorisation of habitus and making links between habitus and imagining and [re]imagining the teaching of literacy. Using Greene's work on the importance of releasing the imagination in classrooms and Bland's four types of imagination, I have interrogated the kinds of literacy experience teachers themselves need to have in their teacher education and professional development to be equipped to create imaginative and imagining classrooms which allow for openness to different points of view, the kindling of learners' abilities to construct meaningful worlds for themselves and to critically engage with the curriculum.

This paper has argued for the link between experiences offered by different environments and the development of imaginative capacity that contributes to shifts in habitus. I indicate that it is necessary for teachers to move 'away from the experience of the familiar world' (Bourdieu 2000:147), so that they can have access to different literate experiences which can generate possibilities for new ways of teaching literacy and being literate. The implications for teacher education of this are that, although it is not possible for all teachers to leave their families and classrooms for 4 years to study in new environments, it *is* possible to disrupt fields such as the teaching of literacy. However, it is important that these opportunities take place over extended time as this paper has shown a development over 4 years that has resulted in some incremental shifts. I have argued that literacy teachers need experiential, hands-on opportunities to read, write and analyse genres of texts different to those they usually work with and in ways that are unlike the familiar, established and entrenched pedagogies they use and know for an awareness of the possibilities these hold to be imagined.

I have also claimed the importance of reflection in creating awareness of possibilities. Reflection helps teachers to look back and recognise the differences between their well-established practices and perceptions, and newly developing enactments and insights. Conway's (2001) argument for the importance of anticipatory reflection and Ward and McCotter's (2004) levels of reflection have been drawn on to illustrate the usefulness of the provision of regular opportunities for teachers to reflect retrospectively as well as prospectively as they are encouraged to make connections between past practices and their imagined futures. This is particularly important where habitus is well-established, as with the experienced teachers, who were participants in this study.

Both participants focused on in this paper had an opportunity to experience literacy in new ways and, on reflection, seem to consider the impact of this on their work as teachers of grades 1–3 literacy learners. I have discussed in the doctoral thesis from which this data has been drawn the importance of other influences that might have contributed to shifts in literate habitus (Gennrich 2015).

Some might argue that the genres of texts used in the 'English in Education' course were 'colonial' and irrelevant to the cultures of these teacher-students. However, both participants appear to have found ways of building on these texts imaginatively and to begin applying them to their contexts and their learners in ways that demonstrate agency. It is this imaginative application which holds the possibility of empowerment for both of them and their learners.

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