

**TOWARDS A CRITICAL APPROACH TO ART EDUCATION:
AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**



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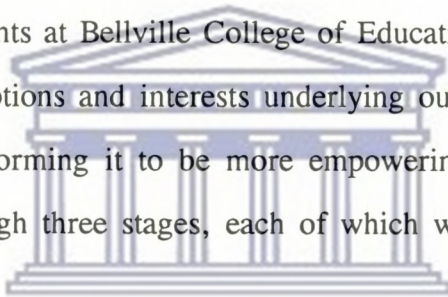


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ABSTRACT

The action research project documented in this thesis was informed by Jürgen Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests. In this theory Habermas postulates three anthropologically deep-seated interests that inform our search for knowledge. These interests are the technical, the practical and the emancipatory.

In the action-research project, which was done in collaboration with a group of first year art students at Bellville College of Education, I attempted to uncover the values, assumptions and interests underlying our educational interaction in the hope of transforming it to be more empowering and emancipatory. The project went through three stages, each of which was informed by a different interest.



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The first stage could be described as having a technical interest because it was based on positivist assumptions of reductionism, duality and linearity. In this stage art was understood as being value-free, objectively describing and reflecting visual reality. It was believed that theory and skills could be applied to achieve a predetermined product.

In the second stage of the project the positivist paradigm of perception was replaced by the assumption that our relationship to others and the world is mediated by language which needs to be interpreted in a socio-political and historical context. Art does not only have a descriptive role but it can express

subjective understandings of the networks of meanings and social rules involved in experienced reality.

Finally, the third stage evolved within a critical framework informed by an emancipatory interest. In the drawing project we looked critically at aspects of our society which frustrate and constrain individuals to sustain dependence, inequality and oppression. We tried to uncover existing power relations and the historical, social and material conditions underlying certain problems we were experiencing. We hoped to find ways in which we could contribute to the transformation of ourselves and our society. The process of making art was here seen as a form of communicative action which can be empowering, emancipatory and transformative.



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CHAPTER ONE

A PERSONAL NOTE

Since my birth in 1952 I have been a member of the minority mostly racist white ruling class in South Africa. I was taught the language of oppression and it was expected of me to maintain the power relations which secured the dominance of a small minority of white colonists over a vast majority of African people. The school, the church and the media were mechanisms through which the dominant ideology was transmitted, and the army and police force protected the interests of those who supported this ideology.

I was born into a working class family the members of which were not politically aware, informed or active but who supported the racist ideology mainly because it privileged them financially and gave them power over the disenfranchised. My family lived in Stellenbosch which could be described as a small university town dominated by Afrikaners. I attended a very old girls' school in Stellenbosch where I always felt lost and very unhappy. I later realized that it was because I was discriminated against and viewed as an inferior being because my father was not a professor or a wine farmer. Most children were made race and class conscious at a very early age and they were taught to discriminate against anyone who did not fit into the small academic or wealthy Afrikaner white elite. The other was rejected to strengthen those who thought alike. This experience of rejection at a very early age, not because of who I personally was but because of my otherness, made me aware of the irrationality and destructiveness of discrimination. I identified and sided with the oppressed, feeling myself disempowered and not capable of realizing my full potential. It was only years later while studying in Europe that I came to

the realization that one can overcome this feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness by getting involved in organizing resistance.

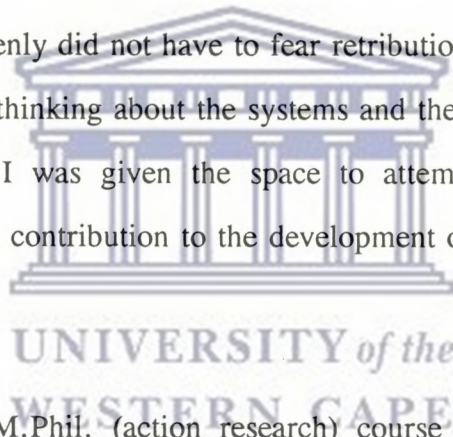
After completing a Master's degree in art at the University of Stellenbosch and the Nationaal Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunste in Belgium, I started teaching art at an art school in Stellenbosch. This school offered art as a subject to pupils of the Cape Education Department's primary and secondary schools in and around Stellenbosch. It was a government school transmitting government ideology and policy. Ruling class values and norms had to be maintained and anyone who dared question and criticize these values and norms was victimized to such an extent that critical people were often forced to leave government schools. Often only the teachers who were prepared slavishly to follow instruction from people above them in the hierarchy were secure in their posts. Every day of the eight years I taught at this school was a struggle against the misuse of power, the exploitation of workers, the indoctrination of pupils and above all a struggle to work towards a critical approach to art education.



When I was offered a post in the art department of a college of education under the Department of Education and Culture (sic) of the House of Representatives (see chapter 4.3) I did not accept this offer immediately because I believed I had an important role to play in a ruling class institution by stimulating critical thinking and by offering alternatives to the dominant views. Two years after the first offer from the college I decided to accept this post because the struggle at the school had become too painful and so much negative energy was directed towards me that I decided I needed a break from resisting this regime of daily oppression. I hoped to find myself in a new environment where I could work constructively, with other people, towards social transformation.

For the first time in my life, at the College, I worked with some people who accepted my way of thinking and who had similar views about important aspects of our society. It was such a relief not to use most of my energy fighting against but working with others. I joined the College in 1989, a year full of turmoil with violent resistance to what now seems to have been the last "whites-only" election. At the College we were confronted daily with the present socio-political and educational crisis and we had to clarify our personal and professional position in terms of which we made our decisions. I moved from passively identifying with the oppressed to actively joining the oppressed in the struggle for a just and truly democratic society.

In the classroom I suddenly did not have to fear retribution for expressing my ideas and stimulating critical thinking about the systems and the power relations in which we found ourselves. I was given the space to attempt to make, through art education, a meaningful contribution to the development of a critical and liberatory visual culture.



In 1991 I joined the M.Phil. (action research) course at the University of the Western Cape to gain a better understanding of and to improve my own practice. I was also interested in becoming familiar with the discourse around education at this university and to learn the language which is used to express ideas about educational issues. At the beginning of the course I felt myself completely disempowered because I only knew the ruling class language and could not understand or contribute to discussions. The vocabulary and concepts used from the oppressed point of view differed immensely from that of the oppressor and I had to learn this new language before I could make a meaningful contribution. It was a very enlightening experience to find words to explain feelings and ideas which had floated unnamed within me for so long.

In the very first assignment that year we had to identify one aspect of our educational practice which we would like to improve. At that stage I wrote: "I decided to focus on the following aspect: whether I, through my teaching practice, in interaction with my students, make a meaningful contribution to the development of a critical liberatory visual culture." I had to analyze my teaching practice and determine to what extent I was perpetuating or resisting the status quo. I had to develop an understanding of different approaches to art education and find ways of working towards a critical approach.

During the first year of this course I did an action research project with a group of first year students at the Bellville College of Education. Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests informed the three stages of the action research project.

The first stage of the action research project was an attempt to develop an understanding of the assumptions embedded in our thinking about art and art education. I asked the students to produce a drawing which expressed their idea of what art looks like. They also had to explain verbally what they think art was. I discovered that most students had a technical approach to art and the majority believed that art has to do with the precise reproduction of visual reality. In the art class they expected to learn techniques to be able to draw visual reality as precisely as possible. This approach is related to positivism or technocratic rationality in which the idea of progress is identified with technical efficiency.

The second project could be classified, in Habermasian terms, as having a practical interest. I asked the students to forget about art and just to draw fearlessly any own experience placed in the South African context. The drawings were spontaneous

expressions of their own interpretation of specific events. Through this project their understanding of own experiences and their own voices were, I hope, legitimized, dignified and celebrated.

In the third project I attempted a critical approach. This was far more complicated because we do not have a tradition of critical thinking in our schools. The students worked in groups formed around certain subject matters which they viewed as problem areas in our South African society. They had to do research into the problem area, bringing visual, auditive and written information to the classroom where these were discussed and assumptions and ideas questioned. The idea was that this would be an empowering process in which students had to position themselves in terms of the problem and they had to think critically about the possibilities of transforming our society by finding ways to deal with the problem. Each group then had to make a drawing in which the problem was approached critically. They had to include information about why they thought we had these problems in our society, state the problems, and offer possible solutions to them. This project was far more complicated than the other two but it was also the one in which we learned a lot about ourselves, each other and the complicated dynamics involved in groupwork. We also became more aware of people's values and understandings of our society, and about the critical and transformative function the art-making process can have.

These three projects are documented and analyzed in this mini-thesis. The aim of the mini-thesis is to look critically at Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests and at different approaches to art education, and then to offer ideas about moving towards a critical approach in which a language of critique is developed and where the presuppositions of ideas and statements are questioned. I hope that such

an approach can contribute to human empowerment, to shaping public life and social relationships towards the development of a more just and peaceful society.



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CHAPTER TWO

JÜRGEN HABERMAS' 'KNOWLEDGE-CONSTITUTIVE INTERESTS'

2.1 Introduction

Jürgen Habermas (b 1929), a mid-twentieth Century German intellectual, was a member of the Frankfurt School (see Held 1980:29). With philosophers like Horkheimer, Adorno and the early Marcuse he involved himself in challenging debates in various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. From the late 1950's his efforts have been directed towards the remoulding of 'critical theory' and "to attempt to develop a theory of society with a practical intention: the self-emancipation of people from domination" (Held 1980:250).

"One basic goal of the Frankfurt School" says Geuss (1981:2) "is the criticism of positivism and the rehabilitation of 'reflection' as a category of valid knowledge" (see also McCarthy 1984:40). The assumptions underlying positivism were criticized and rejected by the school, and the importance of gaining knowledge through reflective cognition was emphasized. Self-reflection was seen as necessary for self-understanding, liberation and happiness in an emancipated life. Habermas (1974:254) believed that

The higher level of reflection coincides with a step forward in the progress toward the autonomy of the individual, with the elimination of suffering and the furthering of concrete happiness.

The members of the Frankfurt School distinguished clearly between "scientific" and "critical" theories. For them these two theories differed in their aims (instrumental or emancipatory); in their cognitive structure (objective or reflective); and in the

kind of evidence which would be relevant for determining whether they were acceptable (empirically or reflectively). They believed that reality can be described and knowledge gained objectively and/or reflectively and that it was important "to investigate not just 'social reality' in the narrowest sense, but also the 'social knowledge' which is part of that reality" (Geuss 1981:57).

For the purpose of this mini-thesis we look briefly at Habermas' theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests'. This theory is concerned with uncovering the conditions for the constitution of knowledge. He postulates three anthropologically deep-seated interests that inform our search for knowledge and develops the theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' to explain the relationship between knowledge and human activity (see McCarthy 1984:55; Kearney 1987:224). Knowledge is understood here as the result of historical-material conditions and as the constituting activity of humans according to their interests - within history, society and nature (Grundy 1987:10). Knowledge must therefore be viewed in terms of the problems humans encounter in producing and reproducing their social and material existence.

The theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' follows from an understanding of humans as being both tool-making and language-using beings. They have an interest in the creation of knowledge which enables them to control objects as well as an interest to communicate (see Wexler 1991:57). According to Roderick (1986:7), Habermas distinguishes two categories in social practice which create these two human interests:

1. Labour, which is purposive-rational action. It is the sphere in which human beings produce and reproduce their lives through transforming nature with the aid of technical rules and procedures; and

2. Interaction, which is communicative action. It is the sphere in which human beings produce and reproduce their lives through communication of needs and interests in the context of rule-governed institutions.

A third human interest is the "interest in the reflective appropriation of human life, without which the interest-bound character of knowledge could not itself be grasped" (Held 1980:255). Because Habermas believes that knowledge is interest-bound, reflective involvement in life is for him the only way to understanding. This interest is based in the human capacity to act rationally, to be self-reflective and self-determining, and to be autonomous and responsible. This interest develops in power relations of domination and constraint. Habermas calls this the emancipatory interest.

Habermas' theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' suggests that there are three categories of possible knowledge, three media through which they are constituted, three sciences which derive from them, and three different methodologies:

1. The technical interest where we can gain control through labour (instrumental action) - empirical-analytic science;
2. The practical interest where interpretation of interaction (language) within traditions is seen as central - historical-hermeneutic science; and
3. The emancipatory interest where a critical analysis is made of asymmetrical power relations and ways of freeing the individual from constraints and dependency - critical science.

For Habermas these three sciences systematize and formalize the procedures required for the basic human activities necessary for the functioning of the human species. In these three sciences very distinct methodological approaches have existed since the nineteenth century. They are the deductive-nomological approach

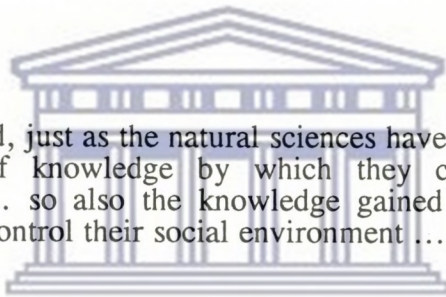
of the natural sciences, the historical-hermeneutic approach of the cultural sciences and the critical approach of the social sciences.

What follows is an attempt to discuss Habermas' theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' in more detail.

2.2 The Technical Interest

The positivist framework of thinking is based on the technical interest and sets out to explain human beings and social life in the same way as science explains the natural world.

For it is claimed, just as the natural sciences have provided men with a certain kind of knowledge by which they can control their natural environment, ... so also the knowledge gained from social science will enable men to control their social environment ... (Fay 1975:19).



It is believed that an empiricist account of natural science is adequate, and that all cognition must have essentially the same cognitive structure as the natural sciences. It entails direct observation and description of the objective world, direct because "it does not involve intersubjectivity and is not mediated by language" (Holub 1991:12).

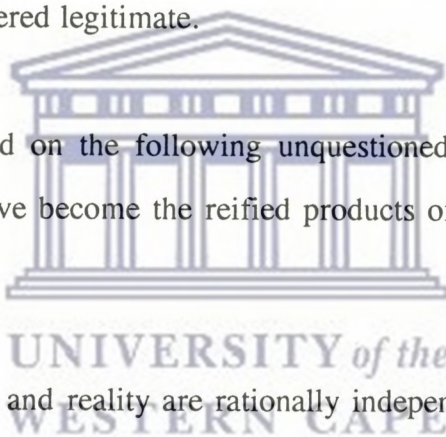
It attempts to present a consistently empirical account of scientific method (Grundy 1987:11), believing that all propositions are reducible to the elementary propositions which are immediately verifiable in experience. Habermas (1978:67) believes that knowledge here becomes identical with scientific knowledge and that

Positivism stands and falls with the principle of scientism, that is that the meaning of knowledge is defined by what the sciences do and can thus be adequately explicated through the methodological analysis of scientific procedures.

This form of knowledge is achieved through deductive-nomological and empirical methods and can therefore be measured and quantified. The aim is objectively to formulate and verify hypotheses concerning the laws governing empirical regularities. Linear explanation between phenomena creates the possibility to predict and to control (see Fay 1975:21).

The possibility that theories can be reflective and cognitive is denied because all valuable cognition is seen as objective cognition. Kearney (1987:231) explains that positivism "subordinates all spheres of communication to the single sphere of the *instrumental*. This gives rise to the reign of technical reason." Only that which is 'rationalisable' is considered legitimate.

Positive thought is based on the following unquestioned dualistic presuppositions (Fay 1975:23) which have become the reified products of the concealed interest in technical knowledge:



- That language and reality are rationally independent. Language describes and reflects reality and only the naming role of language is valued.
- That theory informs practice and practice is based on theory. The dialectical relationship between theory and practice is rejected in favour of lawlike hypotheses with prognostic value.
- Facts are viewed as value-free and objective. The realm of logic and reason is separated from the unverifiable speculation of metaphysics. Instrumental rationality depends on a subject-object relationship in which objects are isolated without reference to the totality of relations in which they are necessarily embedded. The relevance of society and history is not acknowledged.

- Means are instrumentally used to achieve certain ends. A linear cause-and-effect form of explanation makes prediction and control of objectified processes possible and essential.

The technical approach serves as a socially institutionalized regulatory system. In this system social problems are solved with technical rather than practical solutions in service of the domination of nature and human beings. Habermas (1974:255) argues that

Socially effective theory is no longer directed toward the consciousness of human beings who live together and discuss matters with each other, but to the behavior of human beings who manipulate.

The technical interest is often concealed in the intersubjective area of social action, Habermas believing that it should be located by reflecting on its unconscious presuppositions.

The usefulness of empirical methods are admitted by Habermas but he rejects the claim that knowledge so gained has universal value. According to him such methods should acknowledge their situatedness in the social totality and reflect on their methodological presuppositions. Only through dialectical thought processes can we move away from the idea that "emancipation in history can be secured by the same method that had resulted in the emancipation from natural constraint" (Holub 1991:39).

2.3 The Practical Interest

Positivism is not the only viewpoint from which reality may be disclosed. Gaining knowledge informed by a practical interest implies not only the perception of reality

but the interpretation and understanding of human interaction. Habermas (1978:176) believes it

is distinguished from the technical cognitive interest in that it aims not at the comprehension of an objectified reality but at the maintenance of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding, within whose horizon reality can first appear as something.

Because human agency has intention (see Fay 1975:71), the model for understanding natural sciences cannot be used to gain full understanding of human interaction. Interhuman relationships cannot be viewed as the same as the lawlike relations between things, and therefore the same methods cannot be used to gain understanding. Human beings are self-interpreting creatures "and these interpretations are constitutive of what we are as human beings" (Bernstein 1979:113). In the social world human beings construct reality while reality constructs their understanding of it. This understanding is mediated by language which is "embedded in practices and shaped by intersubjective constitutive rules and distinctions" (Bernstein 1979:113). Understanding is not removed from the social actors who mutually produce and define the constitutive rules which shape their interactions.

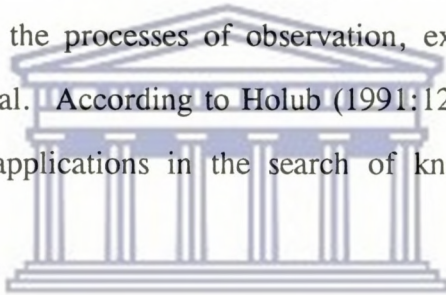
Habermas does not want to exclude the empirical and the analytical methods of natural sciences but he wants to link them with hermeneutic procedures. He wants to incorporate into his hermeneutic reflections the methodological consciousness of the natural sciences.

The historical-hermeneutic approach is directed at a traditional context of meanings and is associated with intersubjectivity, communication and overcoming misunderstanding. The interest here is to gain self-understanding and to reach mutual understanding in our daily lives. Interpretative rationality "has a deep-

seated interest in understanding the communicative and symbolic patterns of interaction that shape individual and intersubjective meaning" (Giroux 1981:12).

Understanding is not to be conceived as knowledge about the world but "rather, understanding is grasped as our way of being-in-the-world, as the fundamental way we exist prior to any cognition or intellectual activity" (Holub 1991:53). Habermas' hermeneutics concerns itself not only with understanding and interpretation of texts or speech, or with understanding the other, but with being-in-the-world.

At this level of gaining knowledge we deal with reality mediated through language. In the technical interest the processes of observation, explanation, prediction and control are seen as central. According to Holub (1991:12), Habermas believes that there are two distinct applications in the search of knowledge with a practical interest: emphasis



- 1) on understanding and explication of meaning; the semantic content of the symbolic formation;
- 2) and on the understanding of symbolically prestructured reality. He is referring to pretheoretical knowledge which lies beyond the surface level of meaning. Beyond the semantic content are the rules of pretheoretical knowledge or universal capabilities that inform the production of utterances or the linguistic interaction.

For Habermas understanding does not happen innocent of all presuppositions so historicity is a condition for the possibility of understanding. Hermeneutics can only be proper when it demonstrates the effectivity of history within understanding itself. In referring to a text Habermas explains that understanding it does not mean that the reader has to reconstruct the original context and understand the original meaning of the author. For him "meaning is conceived as a sedimentation of

signification that continually emerge and change in the course of tradition" (Holub 1991:63). Many aspects, including the reader's situatedness, field of experience, history and prior understanding of the world, will influence the interpretation of a text and also of human interaction. Gadamer (1975:263) supports this view when he states that "any conception of hermeneutic understanding as a reproduction of an original meaning is mistaken." For him meaning is historically embedded and it always goes beyond its author. "Understanding is therefore not merely reproductive, but also productive" (Gadamer 1975:263).

Tradition and its foremeanings, prejudgements or prejudices should not be seen as barriers to understanding, but as an integral part of it. Understanding cannot escape the historicity of traditions: because we are constituted by history and traditions, the process of understanding contributes to our self-formation and self-understanding. This process can never be complete, for understanding is "the original form of ... being-in-the-world" (Gadamer 1975:230).

Habermas does not believe in lawlike relations between human beings, while simultaneously avoiding the dangers of subjectivism resulting from regarding consciousness as transparently reflected in individual utterances. Understanding must combine and transcend both the procedures of a causal science and the methods of hermeneutic understanding. In the historical-hermeneutic approach the aim is not to predict and to control the world and human beings, but rather the interpretation and critical analysis of meaningful cultural phenomena which exist under a system of values handed down by tradition. In other words, the task is to analyze the forms in which reality is represented and to understand that dispositions and explanations of conditions are necessarily probabilistic and multiple because of the intentions of actions and the existence of a multiplicity of variables. As Habermas (1988:27) puts it,

the historian is hardly ever in a position to explain an event on the basis of sufficient conditions, that is, to give a full explanation of it. As a rule, he (sic) is limited to indicating a series of necessary conditions. He (sic) is left to judge when it makes sense to end the search for further "causes".

The Practical Interest sets out to understand human interactions in terms of their meanings and their relations to rules constructed in a social context. But critics (see Fay 1975:88) believe that to interpret and understand the intentions and meanings of human interaction is not the only purpose of the social sciences. Habermas also sees it as an uncritical acceptance of the underlying consensus of tradition. If the aim is only to understand, reality would never change and sources of domination and distortion in communication would not be revealed.

For Habermas the aim of social science should be not only to understand but also to transform reality through systematic self- and social critique. Critical social science goes beyond the technical and the practical interests

To determine when theoretical statements grasp invariant regularities of social action as such and when they express ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed (Habermas 1972:310).

The emancipatory interest takes this further step towards the exposure of power relations embedded in the communicative process to develop the transformatory function of the social sciences.

2.4 The Emancipatory Interest

There is often a hostile relationship between the technical and the practical approaches because "(t)he analytic school dismisses the hermeneutic disciplines as prescientific, while the hermeneutic school considers the nomological sciences as characterized by a limited preunderstanding" (Habermas 1988:2). The analytic

school is viewed as limited because it only values knowledge which is based on what are termed empirical facts, and the hermeneutic discipline is viewed as limited precisely because it does not base knowledge on empirical fact.

Habermas rejects the view that empirical methods are the only foundation for theory as well as the sceptical contention that things are arbitrary, in the sense of either being the mere products of convention or of biological adaptation. Habermas also suggests that, despite their belief in the importance of the social dimension of language, analytical philosophers were involved in creating theory in abstraction from the larger socio-economic, political and cultural context (see Kearney 1987:223).

Contrary to positivist thought and technocratic consciousness, Habermas does not believe in theory-neutral facts or neutral and timeless standpoints for inquiry. For him knowledge is interest bound and through reflective appropriation of human life a socio-historical understanding of human interaction can be developed. Roderick describes Habermas' criticism of 'traditional' theory as follows:

Philosophy and science understood as 'traditional theory' are equally criticized for obscuring the fundamental human interests and material conditions of life that underlie their 'pure' pursuit of knowledge, for their merely 'contemplative' status which tacitly accepts the status quo, and for their failure to recognize their own social and historical contextuality (1986:23).

Habermas finds it important to differentiate between decisions about moral or political problems and problems of the empirical sciences. Whereas problems of the empirical sciences can be solved theoretically by discovering rules through cause-and-effect relationships, problems of the social sciences have to be approached along rules of communicative action which cannot be grounded in empirical methods. Habermas (1971:6) believes that

From theoretical knowledge we can at best, given specific goals, derive rules for instrumental action. Practical knowledge, on the contrary, is a matter of rules of communicative action and these standards cannot be grounded in a scientifically binding manner.

In the critical social sciences the analytic and the hermeneutic approaches coexist to combine explanation of regularities with the understanding and transformation of society. For Habermas knowledge is interest bound and understanding can only be achieved through reflective involvement in meaningful communicative action. Reflective cognition involves the uncovering of the rationalization of unacceptable unconscious desires and ideologically distorted consciousness through self- and social critique.

If knowledge has an underlying interest base it follows that ideas and actions are tied to these interests and cannot be value-free and independent of standards.

Habermas (1978:312) believes that

Representations and descriptions are never independent of standards. And the choice of these standards is based on attitudes that require critical consideration by means of arguments, because they cannot be either logically deduced or empirically demonstrated.

Because the philosophy embedded in social practice is always distorted by ideology (Habermas 1972:311; 1974:235), social constraints and forms of social domination, social theory must, for Habermas, be critical. Social practice is for him the starting point of inquiry. There are no uninterpreted given, no theory-neutral facts, no timeless and absolutely neutral standpoints for inquiry. Because these interests are not visible, they cannot be verified empirically and therefore they need to be critically analyzed and understood to free individuals of the constraints they can cause in their lives. Critical theory aims at deconstructing the presuppositions and the norms and values underlying social practice to uncover different understandings of reality and existing power relations.

The theories of Freud (see Habermas 1974:214; McCarthy 1984:193; Gebhardt 1990:388; Kearney 1987:227) and Marx (see Habermas 1971:107; Ingram 1987:118; Held 1980:40) reveal important methodological guidelines for the construction of a critical theory of society. It is important to become critically conscious of how an ideology reflects and distorts moral, social and political reality and what factors influence and sustain the distorted consciousness.

In the Freudian psychoanalytic process the individual goes through a process of self-critique to uncover false consciousness and to gain self-understanding. Freud's insights into the origins and functions of social institutions also contributed to a better understanding of the concepts of social power and ideology. Habermas, like Freud, believed that institutions are empowered through the repression of human instinctual drives to create unequal power relations in a society. This results in distorted and limited communication. Based on the ideas of Freud, Habermas attempted to develop a general model of individual development and a model of the development of forms of social integration. He describes the dialectical relationship between the individual's self-formative processes and the organization of humans in nature. For Habermas (1978:313)

the interests constitutive of knowledge are linked to the functions of an ego that adapts itself to its external conditions through learning processes, is initiated into the communication system of a social life-world by means of self-formative processes, and constructs an identity in the conflict between instinctual aims and social constraints. In turn these achievements become part of the productive forces accumulated by a society, the cultural tradition through which a society interprets itself, and the legitimations that a society accepts or criticizes.

Just as the individual rationalizes unacceptable unconscious desires, so too "ideology serves, at the broader level of social interaction, to 'rationalize' the power-ploys of domination by retrospectively rearranging and justifying its motivations" (Kearney 1987:228). Such distortion of communication needs to be deconstructed through individual and social critique.

Marx's theory of society tries to give an account both of social reality and the knowledge agents have about that reality. Marx (see Leatt 1986:206) distinguishes between two dialectically related dimensions of the reproductive process of society: the forces of production (technical) and the relations of production (practical). Marx's social theory is at the same time an analysis of the dynamics of capitalist society and a critique of ideologies and social structures.

Habermas criticized Marx's social theory because he believed that although Marx "established the science of man in the form of critique and not as a natural science, he continually tended to classify it with the natural sciences" (1972:45). He believed that Marx had a strong tendency to incorporate the practical language-using characteristic into the technical tool-making characteristic of human beings. Habermas, in his critical theory, seeks to reformulate Marx's basic assumptions to prevent the critical enterprise from becoming a support of technocratic ideology. Habermas believes that the reproduction of human life is not through the forces and relations of production but mainly through communicative action.

A critical science constructed on the above two models, although it could employ empirical and hermeneutic procedures, goes beyond the technical and practical interests to reveal an interest in emancipation and transformation of the individual and society. When organized societies have institutional mechanisms for reaching decisions about collective action, it could happen that individuals accept decisions which could be harmful to them or to the society as a whole. If basic social institutions are repressive and very coercive and the members of that society impose coercive institutions on themselves by legitimizing them and participating in them, the very structure of communication and the world-picture in that society could become distorted.

Critical theory can prevent such self-delusion by reflective critique of false ideology and self-imposed coercion (see Ingram 1987:176). Self-reflection has the possibility of dissolving the power of self-generated objectivity, it can make the agents aware of their own origin - how they became the people they are - and it can bring to the surface hidden determinants of action or consciousness. Habermas (1972:197) refers to the experience of the emancipatory power of reflection "which the subject experiences in itself to the extent that it becomes transparent to itself in the history of its genesis". If people realize that their world picture was acquired under conditions of coercion and that it is reflectively unacceptable to them on the grounds of their epistemic principles, they can acknowledge that it is false and emancipate themselves from a condition of frustration caused by a social institution they thought they had an interest in maintaining. Kearney (1987:223) posits that

Habermas' model of 'interests' rests upon the conviction that all authentic human discourse aims at a regulative ideal of universal, unrestricted communication' and that ideology understood as the systematic deformation of communication by the covert operations of force, represents the betrayal of such an ideal.

Social action must be grasped reflectively from the perspective of the acting subject. Because this perspective is not observable, it has to be understood. For Habermas understanding can only be achieved through meaningful communication (see Ingram 1987:39). The presuppositions and conditions of communication have to be examined rationally if one is to gain a better understanding of social interaction. He introduces a comprehensive concept of rationality (see Habermas 1971:81) that does not exclude practical questions of values, norms, interests and commitments. Habermas is not interested in the laws obeyed by communication, nor in the explanation of the intentions or motivations of the speaker, but in the universal conditions that underlie the production of all utterances.

The exposure of peoples' ideologically false consciousness and their true interests is crucial because "it is supposed to be the case that agents who suffer from ideologically false consciousness are deluded about their own true interests" (Geuss 1981:45). The success of this process will depend on the eradication of barriers to self-reflection, self-understanding and human autonomy, and the overcoming of social structures that support such barriers. Agents should be made aware of their deprivation and frustrated unconscious desires and they must freely agree that this is true and that they wish to emancipate themselves. An understanding should be developed of human agency as being "socially constructed, humanly determined and interpreted, and hence subject to change through human means" (Giroux and Simon 1989:8). It is the task of critical theory to reveal the source of human suffering in social institutions which falsely lay claim to legitimacy, and to transform them.

Habermas uses the concept 'communicative action' which could be guaranteed only by "ideal conditions of general communication extending to the entire public and free from domination" (Habermas 1971:75). Communicative action is understood by Holub (1991:8) as a "rational discourse that is free from both domination and linguistic pathology, and oriented towards intersubjective understanding and consensus". For Habermas communicative action is symbolic interaction which is governed by binding consensual norms which "... define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects (Habermas 1971:92). "Rational consensus" occurs when sanctions enforce social norms and when intersubjective agreement within a free and equal conversation is important, rather than agreement with 'facts'.

Habermas believes that meaning is established through dialogue in a communicative practice and that it must be conceived as an effect of language. He also suggests that intention should be defined from an intersubjective perspective since it is always other-directed. He calls this level of intersubjective exchange 'discourse'

(1974:18), the type of communication where the validity claims of propositions are problematized and where the participants are directed toward the explication of meaningful connections.

The aim of such communication would be to come to an agreement "that terminates in the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding" (Habermas 1979:3). This means that the people involved in the process of communication, which is based on the presupposed validity claims, could come to mutual understanding and bring about a consensual agreement. Habermas uses the term 'ideal speech situation' (see Kearney 1987:226) to refer to a situation of absolutely uncoerced and unlimited discussion between completely free and equal human agents. The criteria for the 'ideal speech situation' are truth, freedom and rationality.

A theory of communicative action is grounded on conditions for acceptability which Habermas calls validity claims. "Coming to an understanding is the process of bringing about an agreement on the presupposed basis of validity claims that can be mutually recognized" (Habermas 1979:3). These validity claims are comprehensibility (Verständlichkeit), truth ((Wahrheit), rightness/correctness (Richtigkeit) and truthfulness/sincerity (Wahrhaftigkeit). He describes these validity claims for understanding in communication as: "*uttering* something understandably; giving the hearer *something* to understand; making *himself* (sic) thereby understandable; and coming to an understanding *with another person*" (Habermas 1979:2). It is believed that because these validity claims are testable and criticizable they form a guarantee for rationality. When intersubjective understanding cannot be reached it is possible that utterances are not valid in terms of the validity claims and that they are not in accordance with either *the* world of existing states of affairs, *our* world of legitimately ordered interpersonal relations, or *each participant's own* world of subjective lived experience" (Habermas 1990:137).

It would then help to analyze utterances and to accept or reject the claims to validity. Such a theory of communicative action, grounded in the validity claims inherent in normal speech, provides a vehicle for criticizing the distortions of communication that have characterized human history. Fay (1987:187) writes about the process of overcoming misunderstanding through discourse by the analysis of the validity claims that "when this analysis is raised to a very high level, made explicit, and inspected according to canons of argument and evidence there is what Habermas calls 'discourse'".

Habermas (1971:119) posits that rationalization of society could be measured by changes in three dimensions:

By a decreasing degree of repressiveness (which at the level of personality structure should increase average tolerance of ambivalence in the face of role conflicts), a decreasing degree of rigidity (which should multiply the chances of an individually stable self-presentation in everyday interactions), and approximation to a type of behavioral control that would allow role distance and the flexible application of norms that, while well-internalized, would be accessible to reflection.

Unlike rationalization of purposive-rational subsystems, this form of rationalization of society does not lead to an increase in technical control over objectified processes of nature and society. Habermas believes that it could "furnish the members of society with the opportunity for further emancipation and progressive individuation" (Habermas 1971:119). McCarthy confirms this notion that emancipation could be made possible through acknowledging that reason is subject to the interest in reason. When reason can become transparent to itself by providing its own foundation we can say that it obeys an emancipatory cognitive interest which aims at the pursuit of reflection. "In self-reflection, knowledge for the sake of knowledge comes to coincide with the interest in autonomy and responsibility" (McCarthy 1984:95).

Habermas presupposes that only a rational consensus can ultimately serve as the ground for truth claims, and that if we do not intend truth then rational discussion itself is called into question. He assumes that if we intend truth, then we must also intend freedom and justice.

When deconstruction has exposed the tensions, conflicts and contradictions in a society, rational critique could form a basis for processes of social transformation. Critique can only take place collaboratively through rational discourse and consensus where rationality does not exclude practical questions of values, norms, interests and commitments. Concepts like truth, freedom and justice are presupposed in an "ideal speech situation" which requires equality and freedom from inner and outer constraints for all participants. The aim of this process is the attainment of genuine agreement through discourse, the enlightenment and emancipation of the participants and the creation of a more rational, just and peaceful society.

To move beyond description and understanding requires a critical science and a critical theory of society. It requires the ability to reflect critically on our own presuppositions and to open up the world to bring enlightenment and emancipation to human beings. Raymond Geuss explains that emancipation and enlightenment refer to a change from one state to another. He suggests that the initial state is one of false consciousness which is inherently connected to an unfree existence of bondage, delusion and frustration. This unfree existence is a form of self-imposed coercion of which the person is not aware. False consciousness is a kind of self-delusion: "The desired state is one in which the agents are free of false consciousness - they have been enlightened - and free of self-imposed coercion - they have been emancipated" (Geuss 1981:58).

Habermas attempts to supply an adequate model of critical theory with practical intentions incorporating an emancipatory interest (Ingram 1987:31). For him an emancipatory interest secures freedom from self-imposed and structural constraints and conditions of distorted communication. The basis of this interest lies in Habermas' belief in the human capacity to develop self-understanding, to act rationally with greater consciousness and autonomy, to be self-determining and reflectively involved in constructing history willfully and consciously.

The knowledge I gained from studying Habermas' theory of knowledge-constitutive interests informed the critical analysis of my own educational practice and specifically the action research project which is documented in this mini-thesis. Chapter three explains action research as the research methodology of the project, chapter four describes the context of the project and in the following five chapters the project is documented and critically analyzed.



CHAPTER THREE

ACTION RESEARCH AS METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

I decided on action research as a methodology because I reject the positivist idea that theory and practice are logically independent of each other. I also reject the notion that an outside "expert" comes into the educational situation to do research "objectively" with the aim of formalizing theories to be applied by the educator (see Carr and Kemmis 1986:70).

Walker and Flanagan (1987:17) describe action research as follows:

Action research is the qualitative research method we see as offering the greatest potential for teachers wishing to become transformative intellectuals. It gives teachers the opportunity to inquire systematically and critically into the patterns of teaching and learning going on in their classrooms.

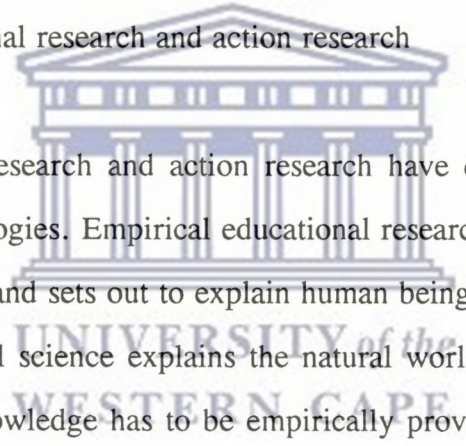
Action research, based on the following fundamental principles as Winter (1989:38) presents them, is an empowering, emancipating and transformative process for all the participants in the educational process. Winter's six principles are:

- reflexive and dialectical critique which suggest ways of redefining the processes of observation and reflection;
- collaborative resource, risk and plural structure which is the redefinition of the relationship between the initiator of an investigation and the other members of the situation being investigated;
- and theory, practice and transformation which is a redefinition of the process of implementation.

This chapter starts with a brief explanation of my understanding of traditional empirical educational practice and how action research differs from this form of research. The action research process itself is discussed by looking at who the action researchers are, the field of action research, the action research process, the constraints on educational action research, and the interpersonal ethics of action research.

After sketching the context of the action research project in the following chapter the project is documented and critically analyzed.

3.2 Empirical educational research and action research



Empirical educational research and action research have different aims, cognitive structures and methodologies. Empirical educational research is based on the natural science research model and sets out to explain human beings and the social world in the same way as natural science explains the natural world (Winter 1989:27). Its aim is instrumental, knowledge has to be empirically proven to be valued, and the cognitive structure is objective (see Zuber-Skerritt 1991:62).

In positivist thinking and traditional educational research language and reality, theory and practice, facts and values, means and ends, are seen as logically independent of each other (Fay 1975:23). The research process consists of a disinterested subject studying an object or a situation objectively to come to certain conclusions. Knowledge so gained is seen as value-free and neutral, positively certain and empirically proven. Researchers do not personally become involved with what they study and what or who is studied does not contribute actively to the development of the research process.

In the natural sciences this type of research can be useful because facts can be established as a basis for determining general laws for prediction and control. In the human sciences, however, this type of research is highly problematic (Bernstein 1979:112) because the variables are so diverse; humans act intentionally within certain frameworks of thinking, values and norms; and people and situations change continuously (Fay 1975:73).

In education action research could be a more viable form of research because it takes these aspects in consideration and does not attempt to determine "facts" with the purpose of controlling people. Action research sets out to empower and emancipate individuals (Davidoff & Van den Berg 1990:51) and to transform society through dialectical and reflexive communicative action.

Positivist thinking and educational theory sees description as the essence of language. Only the naming role of language is valued, and as a means of gaining knowledge of and control over the world. The use of language in the educational situation is limited to the description and reproduction of facts. Other uses as in reflexive and dialectical critique are seen as trivial or meaningless. This limited use of language is rejected by the action researcher because using language is not a private act in which perceptions are only described. Language is seen as inseparable from lived experience (Giroux 1988a:116) and humans interpret what is said in terms of their own social and historical framework of thinking. Carr and Kemmis (1986:181) refer to language as a shared activity which takes place "in and through history", and that the truth of a statement can only be discovered by acknowledging that it is socially constructed and historically embedded.

Reflexive critique is explained by Winter (1989:41) as a process in which judgments in communication are "bent back into the speaker's subjective system of meanings" to discover one's own interpretations, assumptions and concerns. He believes that

underlying assumptions and values are embedded in observation and reflection, so to understand what is observed and reflected upon, these assumptions and values should be analyzed. A deeper understanding can be gained by uncovering the foundations on which the research is based.

Reflexive critique creates, by questioning claims, the possibility of relating these claims to the experiences on which they are based and to consider other interpretative judgments.

Dialectical critique is "a method of analysis which genuinely prizes apart our familiar ideologies, without suggesting that we have available an *infinite* choice of alternative interpretations" (Winter 1989:46). When we do research and reflect on possible interpretations we have to consider the multiplicity of meanings that could be constructed in the process of explaining situations and interpreting data instead of being reductionist in order to formulate certainties. Dialectical critique opens up questions about internal and external relationships in and between phenomena.

Winter believes that the contradiction between unity and diversity inherent in all phenomena effects continuous change. To understand phenomena and to analyze this change it is necessary to think of phenomena as consisting of different but interdependent elements which form a unity. The tension between being one and being diverse at the same time creates instability which is not fixed and final. Winter (1989:49) explains it as follows:

The dialectic approach suggests that in order to understand a phenomenon we treat it as a set of relations between elements which are different and, in some sense, opposed (i.e., 'contradictory'), and yet at the same time interdependent (i.e., form a unity). It is this instability in the structure of a phenomenon which provides it with a specific and inherent tendency to change.

This contradiction of a phenomenon - being a unity concealed behind apparent differentiation, related to the phenomena in an outside context and having different interdependent and related elements within itself - defines its complexity, diversity and its dynamic instability and changeability (Winter 1989:49). The relations within phenomena and society are in perpetual change with the consequence that the meanings people construct cannot be one dimensional, universal and permanent. A multiple of relations of meanings in connection with observations should be acknowledged and considered in an attempt to find the most truthful and significant interpretations.

Traditional quantitative-empiricist methods of educational research are based on scientific methods which demand scientific expertise (see Zuber-Skerritt 1991:81). The assumption exists that there is a distinction between theory and practice and that theory should inform practice. It is expected of teachers to adopt and implement decisions based on scientific knowledge and constructed by "experts".

Teachers are not held professionally responsible for doing research, but only for the efficiency with which they implement the theories of researchers. Hopkins (1985:24) compares the top-down organizational structure of schooling with factories

which operate on a rational input-output basis, with pupils as raw material, teachers as mechanics, the curriculum as the productive process, and the school administrators as factory managers.

The notion that theory and practice are logically independent is rejected by the action researcher in favour of seeing them as dialectically related. The aim is then for all the participants in the educational process democratically to become involved in research to develop a better understanding of their interaction within a specific context. To study the multiplicity of possible interpretations as a collaborative

resource from which negotiated and more representative ideas of what exactly happened can be constructed. Winter believes that observation does not take place to collect data but rather to develop a set of resources which need to be deconstructed and reconstructed to develop a multiple of categories and interpretations.

McKernan describes action research as "a practice in which no distinction is made between the practice being researched and the process of researching it" (McKernan 1991:3). All the participants should be actively involved and self-monitoring in the research process. They should attempt to negotiate, describe, critically analyze and evaluate the process in its context collaboratively in order to effect personal and social development and transformation.

The aim is not only to describe and state facts about a situation and the people involved in it, but also to contribute to the transformation of individuals and the context while the research takes place. The success of the research process will depend on whether there is enlightenment and transformation which makes interaction in the school situation and in society more meaningful and just. It will depend on whether the research contributes to

a democratic social and political ideal, the ideal of a creative and involved citizenry, in opposition to the image of a passive populace awaiting instruction from above (Winter 1989:4).

In action research the notion of the logical independence of facts (which are viewed by traditional researchers as true, objective and verifiable) and values (matters of choice, decision and preference) is also rejected because it is believed that any person attempting to do a study enters that field from a certain framework of thinking. Therefore knowledge about educational interaction cannot be objective, universal and value-free, but it is context bound, normative and political. The paradigm within which research is done is informed by a whole complex of beliefs,

values and assumptions which are seldom made explicit but which structure the perceptions of researchers and shape their subsequent theorizing.

The action researcher acknowledges these frameworks of thinking and that the research process should also include ideology critique and the deconstruction of those values and assumptions which inform practice. Through exposing and critically analyzing underlying values and assumptions participants can develop deeper personal and social understanding.

Human interaction is intentional, with no known universal and eternal laws on which it can be based and through which it can be controlled and predicted. Because of this intentionality of agency and the acknowledgement of an element of change inherent in and between all phenomena, the desire to discover laws for prediction and control is rejected. To gain understanding, resources should be developed which can contribute to the identification and critique of the relationships which define what happens in and between elements and the unity.

In positivist research the formulation of certainties creates a false sense of security. For positivist researchers theories are based on fact, which exonerates them because they do not have to take responsibility for the claims made and the effect they have on people. The implementers are also doing what others expect of them and so cannot be held responsible or accountable. In an interpretive approach to research the focus is on the interpretation of own and social understanding, but the researcher taking a passive role without risking social transformation.

In action research everyone involved is held responsible for the process and its outcome (see Zuber-Skerritt 1991:102). The primary aim is for everyone to work collaboratively towards transformation without the securities of universal laws and being able to make predictions based on these laws. Winter believes that

observation, reflection and resource development need to be opened up to expose all the contradictions and insecurities in others but also in ourselves (Winter 1989:58).

For Winter (1989:60) the initiator of the process is an implicated participant. To be able to cope with uncertainties and the threat of the transformation of the situation, others and yourself, the participants must be brave enough to render themselves vulnerable and to place their practices and viewpoints at risk (Winter, op cit.:60). This risk will include engaging in the threatening world of reflexivity and dialectics and to transcend the position of comfortable and unquestioning security. The process demands trust and considerations of ethics and prudence to ensure the psychic comfort of everyone concerned and to reduce the possibility of undesired consequences.



3.3 The action researchers in education

Action research is done by the participants in the educational process. The process of educational research is claimed by the people actively involved in education and they reject being disempowered by outside "expert" researchers who often create the mindset that educators are not knowledgeable enough to make their own decisions about the content and methodology of the educational process. The more educators internalize this patriarchal view of themselves, the less overt force is needed to keep them powerless in their position within the hierarchy. McKernan (1991:39) believes that the role of implementing other peoples' theories in school "serves not to liberate teachers and pupils but to place them in bondage as it disinherits them of their intellectual rights".

Educational research is seen as a self-assertive activity but not without accountability. Teachers' accountability, however, is not to outside "experts" but to

the human beings entrusted to them in the educational process and to the society in which they live. This accountability requires rigorous and systematic processes of research informed by an understanding of the intrinsic qualities of the practices themselves, of democratic processes and of the desired role of the school in a society.

Action researchers will have to be able to observe carefully and accurately, to problematize what they observe, to be informed about methods of research, and to be capable of analyzing and synthesizing collected data. Reflexive and dialectical critique should be directed towards the transformation of educational practice, the community and society.

Some action researchers place more emphasis on the teacher as educator and see the other participants as helpers in a collaborating team (McKernan 1991:7). I believe that everybody involved in a genuine action research process is an action researcher. This includes, as in the traditional teaching situation, the "teacher", the "students" and others, like "triangulators", who contribute to the research. When I think of an ideal action research situation I find the terms "teacher" and "student" problematic because everyone involved would at times play different roles in which "teachers" can learn and "students" can teach. Robinson (1989:16) suggests that interactive teaching methods "demand a much less rigidly defined separation of the roles and duties of teacher and learner".

The aim is to interact in such a way that knowledge is shared through an investigative and reflective process to create a better understanding of the knowledge itself and the process through which it is shared. Interpretation of what is happening develops from equal but different points of view, the investigative and active role of each participant being equally important and valuable. Action

research becomes in this sense an educational process as much as the researching of processes.

What happens in the educational process is observed and problematized by everyone involved. There is never a point at which the research can be said to have been completed. The end of the year may come and the specific group of researchers may part ways, and that could mean the end of the specific project, but the research will go on in the lives of the individuals in other forms and in other groups. I believe that if you have once understood and seriously been involved with this form of interaction you will have developed a critical approach to what happens around you and a sense of responsibility and accountability to participate in the transformation of yourself, others and society.



3.4 The field of action research

The characteristics of action research should inform all action, but here the focus will be on formal educational interaction. All aspects of education should be action researched in the field by everyone involved.

This will include problematizing and gaining an understanding of personal development; research and philosophical reflection; interpersonal relationships between all participants in the teaching process; the teaching methodology; the overt and the covert curricula; the community of discourse about education; and the structure and character of the institution and its socio-economic and political context.

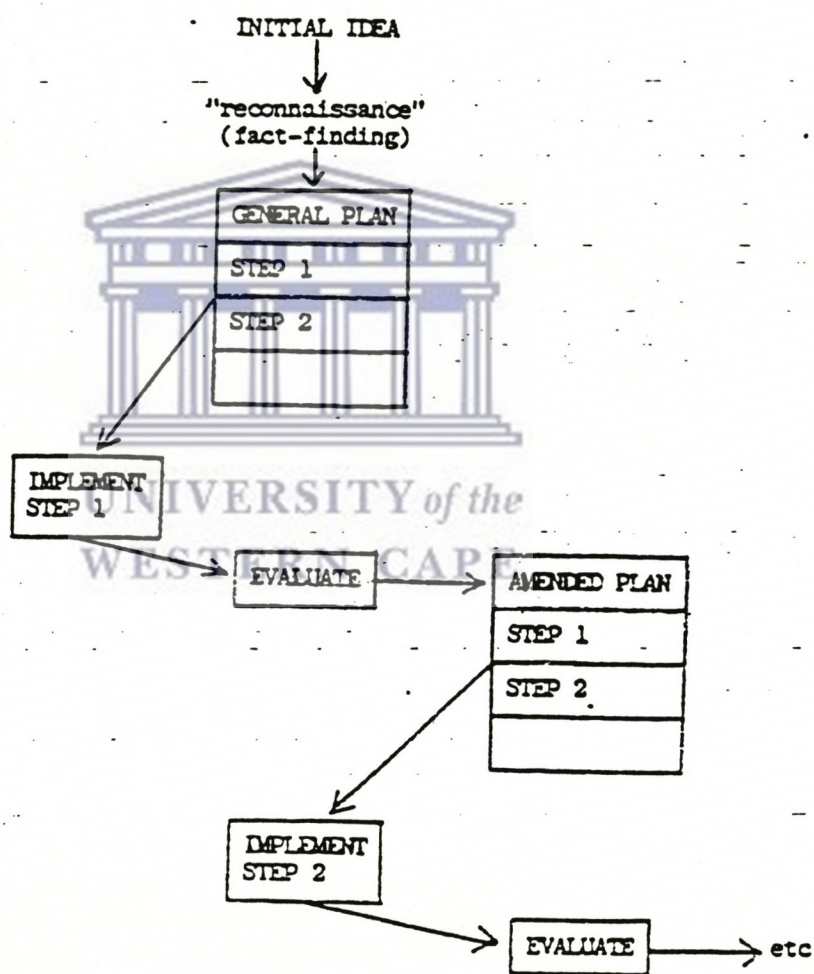


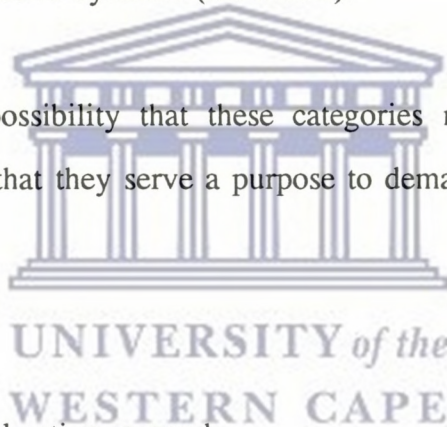
FIGURE 1 LEWIN'S MODEL

3.5 Action research models

All the models of the action research process include planning around a general idea or a problem, fact-finding, implementation, analysis, evaluation and replanning. McKernan (1991:15-34) explains the difference between these models by referring to four types of action research:

- scientific-technical action research (Lewin);
- practical-deliberative action research (Stenhouse and Elliott);
- critical-emancipatory action research (Kemmis and his colleagues);
- rational-interactive dynamic (his model).

He acknowledges the possibility that these categories may be "contestable and rough-hewn" but argue that they serve a purpose to demarcate what is done in the action research field.



3.5.1 Scientific-technical action research.

Lewin was the person who first coined the term action research. His model of action research (see Figure 1) consists of a spiral of cycles involving analysis, reconnaissance, a general idea, planning, implementation, evaluation, an amended plan, and so on through a succession of cycles.

Lewin's scientific action research is described by McKernan (1991:13) as "a form of rational management, or social engineering" because it was closely related to positivist forms of research and was based on introducing changes in practice and systematically and scientifically observing what the effect of these changes were.

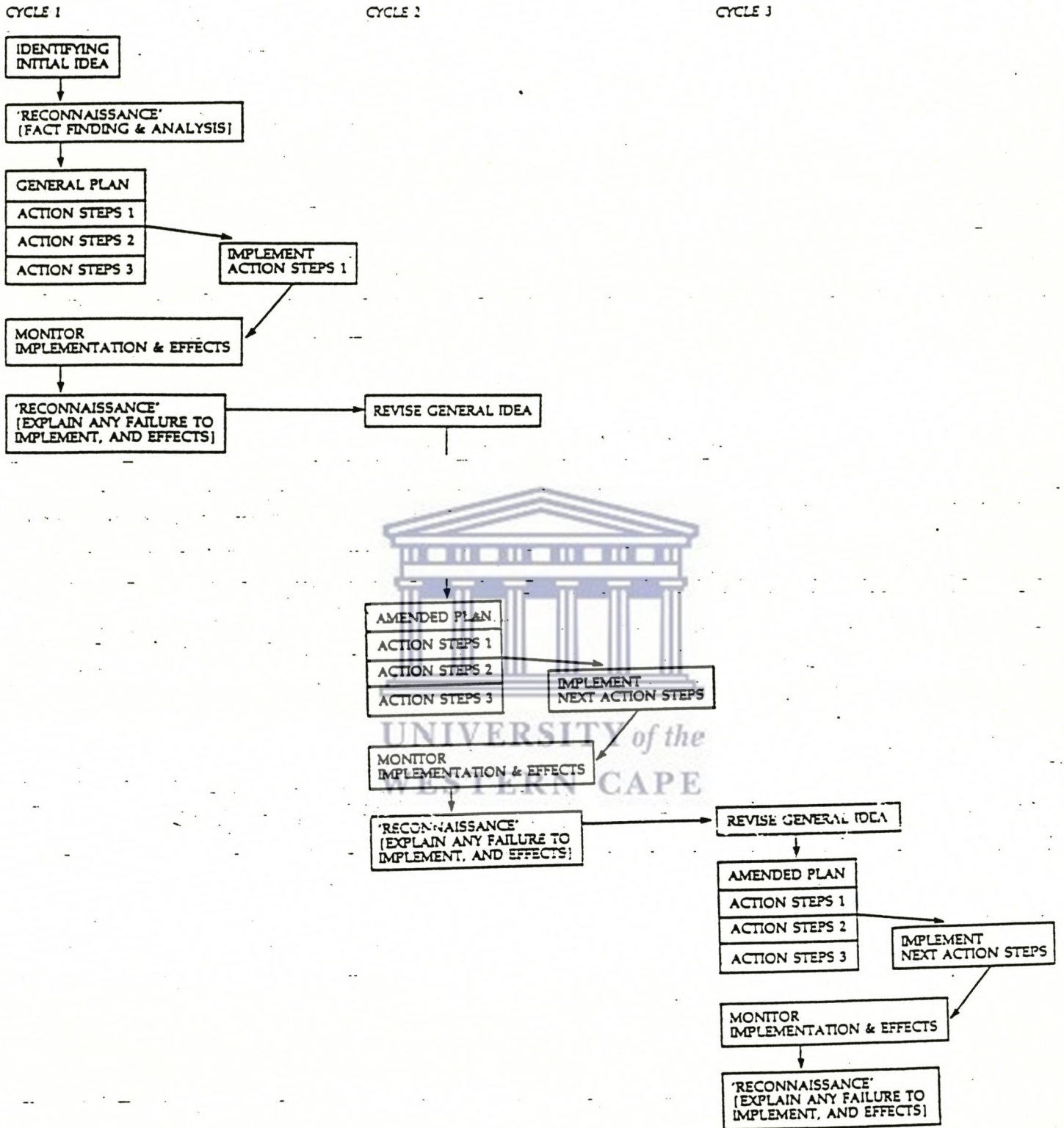


FIGURE 2 ELLIOTT'S MODEL

Lewin argued for empirical evidence instead of reflective observation. Hopkins (1985:39) refers to the "functional values" in the work of Lewin which are seen as contradictory to his ideas about democratic processes with the aim of transforming society.

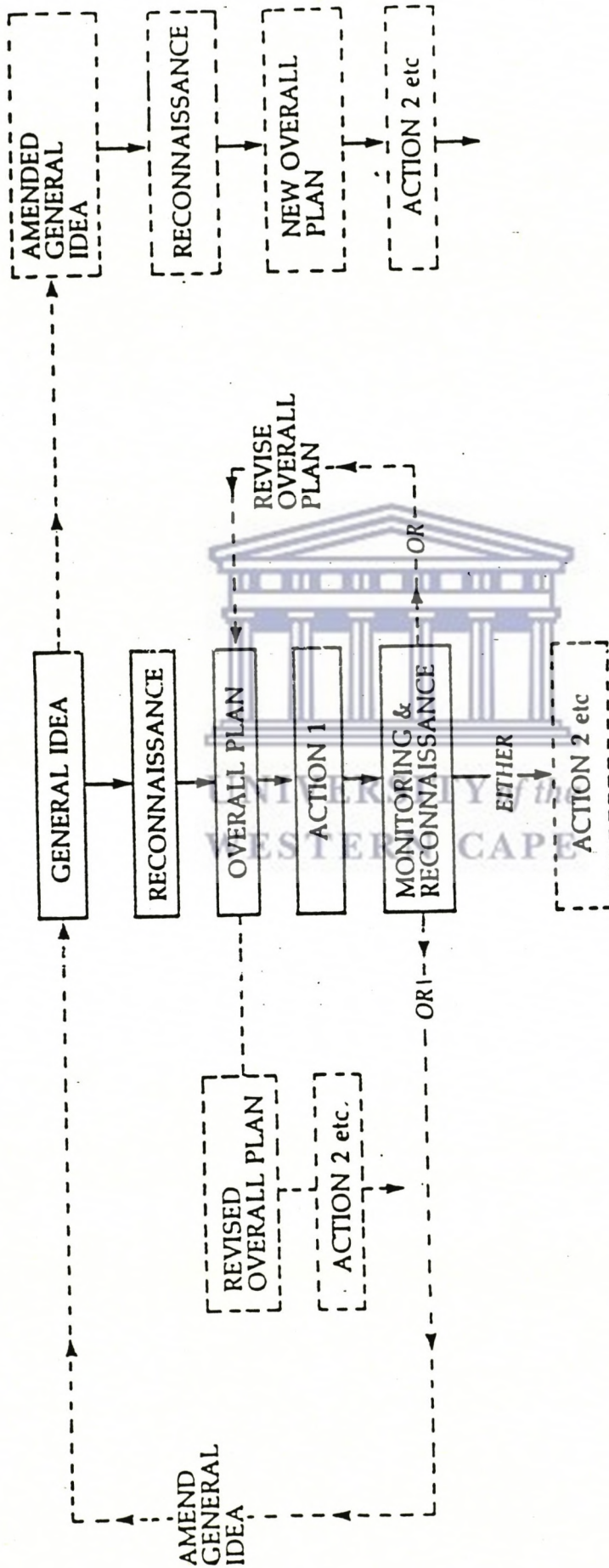
3.5.2 Practical-deliberative action research

McKernan describes the practical-deliberative action research model (McKernan 1991:20) as an immediate practical problem solving, school-based and human deliberational process. He sees Stenhouse's contribution as focusing on deliberation towards emancipation and Elliott's in the interpretive nature of understanding.

Elliott believed that all practice is informed by theory and that practitioners should reflect on their practice and the theory embedded in it while they were active in the field. He and Stenhouse moved away from rigid technical control to a more ethical and philosophical (Elliott 1989a:5) approach in which sensitivity is developed towards the meanings (and the values that underpin them) which unfold during initial cycles and which are researched in subsequent cycles.

For Elliott action research improves practice not because an analytical or theoretical understanding is developed, but because educators enlarge their capacity for "discrimination and judgement in particular, complex, human situations" (Elliott 1989a:6). "Practical wisdom" rather than theoretical abstraction is emphasized. He believes that

the action researcher develops a personal interpretive understanding from working on practical problems, and that theoretical understanding is constitutive of practical action and discourse" (Elliott 1987:157).



Idealized Representation of the Process of Action Research

FIGURE 3 EBBUTT'S MODEL

Elliott's model of action research (figure 2) states that the general idea is not fixed but can change; that reconnaissance is not only fact-finding, but that it also includes ongoing analysis; and that implementation is very complex and difficult. He also believes that the extent to which an action has been implemented should be monitored before evaluation of the effects of that action. Ebbutt criticized Elliott's metaphor of the spiral staircase used to explain the steps in action research. He argued that one would have to go through all previous steps to get back to the start, which is not how he understood the process. He describes the process as a series of successive cycles between and within which there is the possibility of feedback of information. (figure 3).

3.5.3 Critical-emancipatory action research

This form of action research is represented by the work of Kemmis and his colleagues. The positivist approach to educational research is rejected because they believe in transforming and not merely interpreting educational actions. The emphasis is on "equipping practitioners with discursive, analytical and conceptual skills" (McKernan 1991:25) to be able to problematize, critically analyze and understand all aspects of the educational process within its context with the aim of enlightening and empowering participants to transform it. Educators are involved in the transformation of the micro school context as well as the macro social context.

The basis of this approach is the realization that self and social understanding can be distorted by certain forces and pressures and that the development of an undistorted understanding can be impeded by institutional structures and political constraints. Built into these assumptions is the possibility of a dogmatic "expert", who has the "insight" as to when understanding is undistorted and who has to prescribe to those with distorted understandings how they can transform them.

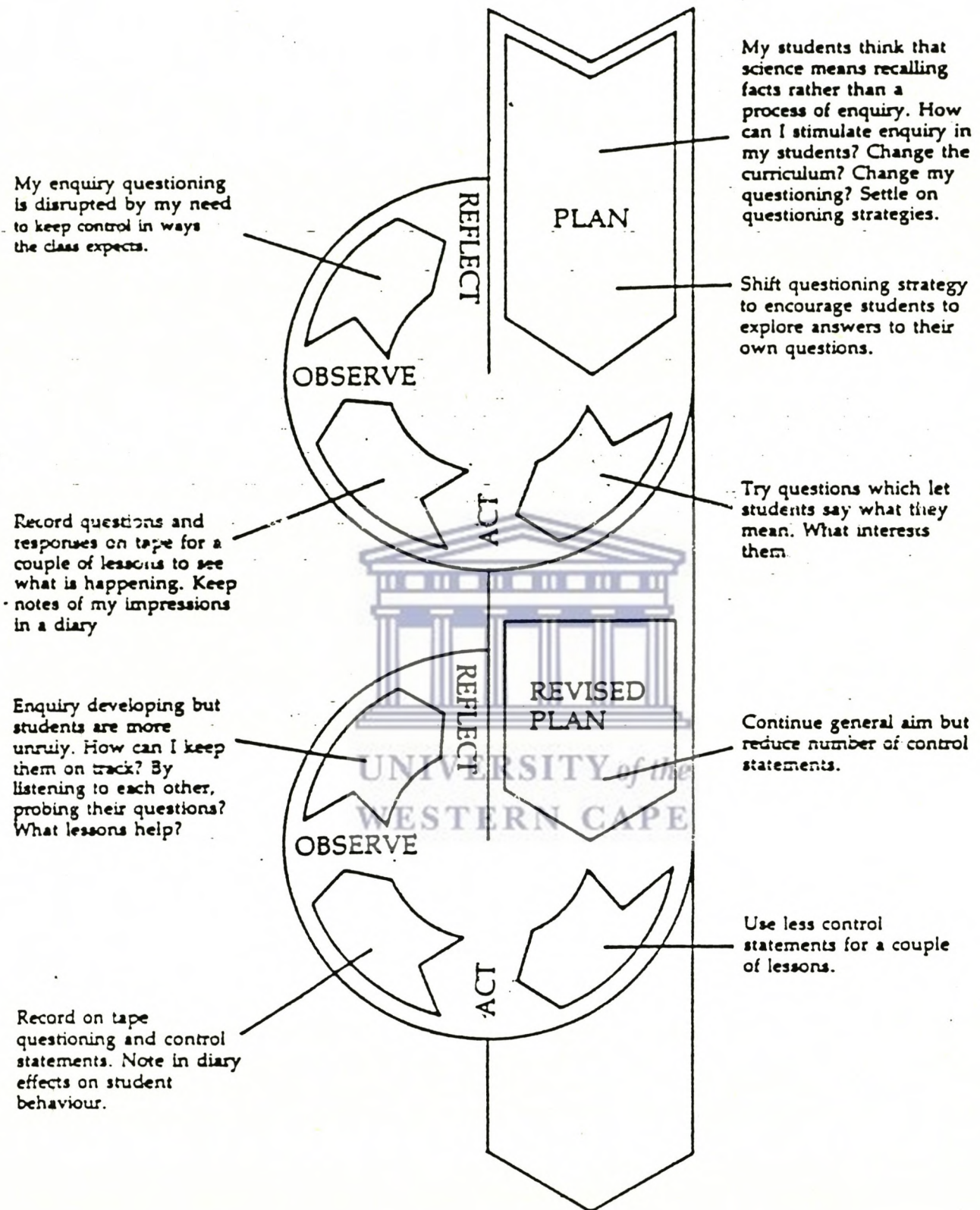


FIGURE 4 KEMMIS' MODEL

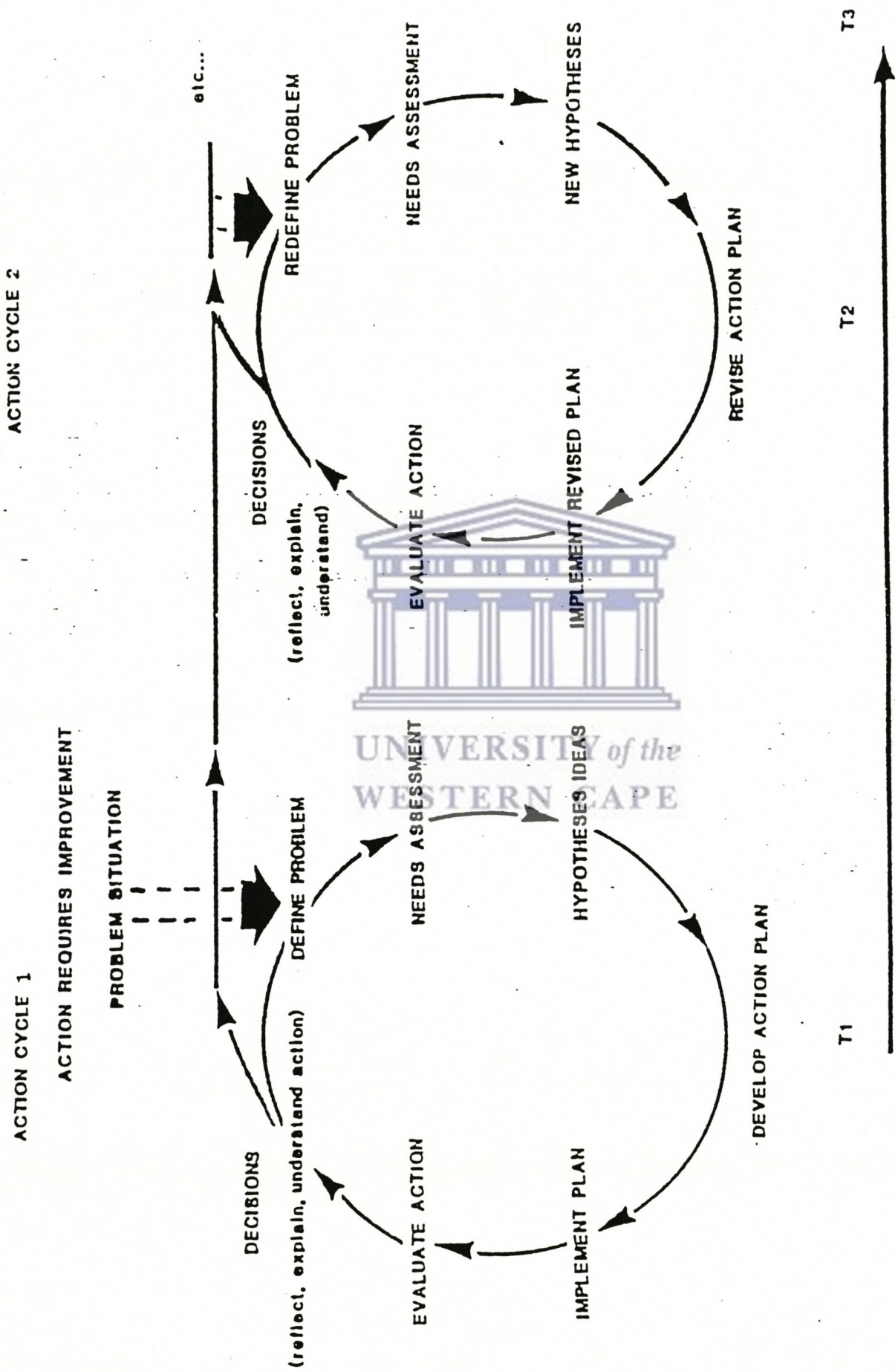


FIGURE 5 MCKERNAN'S MODEL

Winter (1989:11) describes the process (figure 4) as starting with a general idea that change is desirable, deciding on an area which needs improvement, fact-finding, a general plan of action, action, monitoring the effects of action, description and evaluation followed by further cycles as necessary.

3.5.4 Rational Interactive action research

McKernan (1991:29) suggests that total curriculum planning should replace gradual processes of change in practice. He proposes that the practitioner needs technical, practical and critically reflective skills and that parents, practitioners and pupils should be involved in the process of transformation. Scientific-rational methods of problem solving are used and democratic ownership by the self-critical community of researchers is considered important. His model of action research (figure 5) consists of two cycles of action where the relationship between theory and practice is dialectical in that "action cannot be set apart from the entity it explains" (McKernan 1991:30). The first cycle starts with the identification of a problem; defining the situation and the problem; "needs assessment", which includes a statement of the school-situated and community constraints; and the formulation of hypotheses which function as strategic ideas for practice. In the second stage of the first cycle a plan of action is developed, implemented and reflectively evaluated.

In the second and subsequent cycles of action the problem is recast and a review of the situation takes place. A revised action plan is tested and observed empirically. With every next cycle there is a wholly reconstructed action plan.

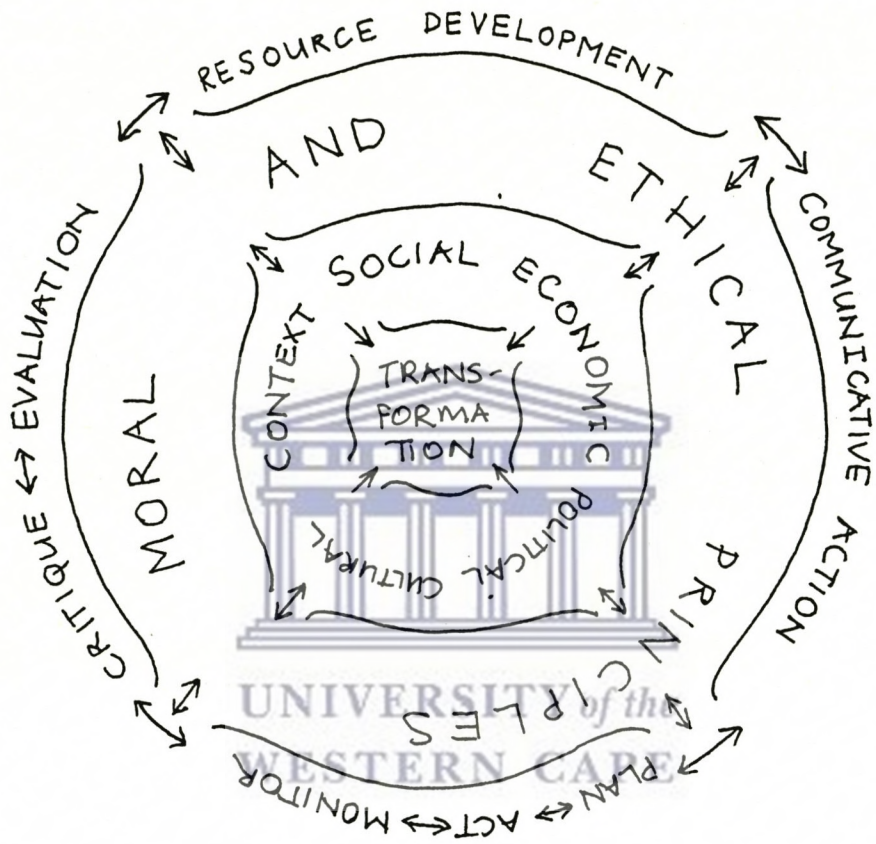
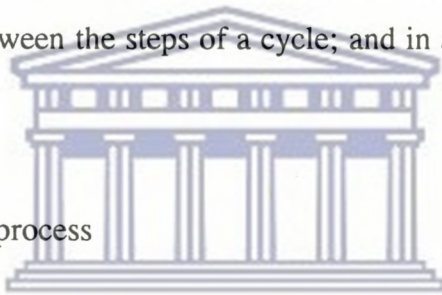


FIGURE 6 THE BREAST MODEL

3.5.5 The breast model

Because I believe that the five above figures are still constructed to indicate linear processes by explaining action research in a cause-and-effect manner, I include a drawing of my understanding of dialectical reflective action research (figure 6).

This model also includes dialectical processes of problem identification and reconnaissance, planning, action and critical reflection before recasting the problem and revising the action plan. Although I believe that it is impossible to make a graphic representation of this complex process, I attempt to indicate the dialectical relationship in and between the parts of the process; in and between the macro and micro context; in and between the steps of a cycle; and in and between cycles.



3.6 The action research process

The Action research process is discussed in terms of the ideal educational situation, the problematizing of existing educational situations, fact finding and data collection, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation, and making meaning of the data.

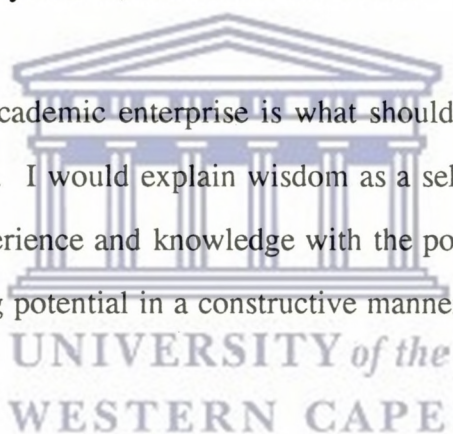
3.6.1 The ideal educational situation

I believe that action researchers should develop a very clear idea of an ideal educational situation during practice. They should also analyze the value systems and assumptions embedded in their practice to become aware of areas which need to be transformed (see Carr and Kemmis 1986:133). All areas of practice will be

informed by these values and assumptions so, by deconstructing them, all areas of practice will be affected.

To be able to develop a desire to transform practice, an awareness should be developed of an ideal educational situation. How does one develop such an awareness? If it does not happen at home or in the school you attend it should happen at the educational institution where you prepare yourself as an educator. Through multi-disciplinary studies a holistic approach to the multiplicity of possibilities for human development and social organization should be realized. At the center of this awareness should be an understanding of principles like justice, equality and caring about yourself, others and the world.

Wisdom far more than academic enterprise is what should inform the development of an ideal for education. I would explain wisdom as a selfless involvement to find a way of combining experience and knowledge with the power of critical awareness to work towards realizing potential in a constructive manner.



3.6.2 Problematizing the existing educational situation

When you have developed a sense of what could be, you can study the situation in which you are and decide where incongruencies exist between what is and what could be. Instead of choosing an area in which to effect change, one should start by analyzing the values and assumptions embedded in one's practice, in order to determine how these assumptions are working against the set ideals. In dealing with changing harmful assumptions, all areas of educational practice will be affected and hopefully improved.

3.6.3 Fact-finding and data collection as resource

In any educational situation fact-finding is important and should take place on an ongoing basis using different methods. A living interest in all aspects of the educational process is of primary importance. Everybody involved in the educational process should gain information about and understanding of the structure and policy of the system and the institution in which they work, an awareness of the socio-economic and political context affecting the members involved, and knowledge about the level of involvement and experience the participants have about the discourse and content of the specific subject.

Data should be collected, studied, interpreted and analyzed by all participants at all stages of the action research process. Data can be collected by using different methods like questionnaires, diaries, observation notes, checklists, tape recordings, interviews, triangulation, shadow studies, video-recording, photographs and slides, and the study of existing documents relating to the situation. Having collected and described the relevant "facts" and data

one needs to explain them. How do they arise? What are the relevant contingencies, or 'critical factors', which have a bearing on the state of affairs described (Elliott 1981:6).

3.6.4 Planning, action, monitoring and evaluating

Planning, action, monitoring and evaluating cannot be seen as separate steps in a linear process. When these steps are seen in a cause-and-effect manner, they resemble positivist ways of doing research. It is only when these aspects are viewed dialectically, when they are identified within the set of relationships which define them in a certain context rather than separately, and when the mutual influence they

have on one another is acknowledged, that the dynamic character of action research can be grasped.

In the process of action research there is a dialectical relationship between the parts of the process (monitoring, evaluation, planning and action) and between the parts and the whole. Only by allowing doing and monitoring to be influenced by critical evaluation can problems be exposed and addressed, and solutions offered. Planning cannot be seen as independent of practice. That would mean that a plan is constructed and forced on the teaching situation, ignoring or even denying what is already in existence. Meaningful planning will grow out of a solid attempt to understand what is, in the process of doing. Monitoring and evaluating is necessary at all times to generate ideas and the revision of ideas, planning and replanning, action and reaction.

Planning will consist of collaborately finding ways of transforming what is in order to achieve the ideal. Projects could be designed to expose and to develop a clear understanding of the existing situation and its underlying assumptions and values. Everyone involved should collaborate to come to this understanding through communicative action and research. In the process participants could offer ideas of what aspects of the process could be transformed and of ways this transformation could be achieved.


It is very important for all participants to be involved in the planning while different people could facilitate the questioning process. The planning needs to be done collectively to empower all participants and for everyone to commit themselves actively and to develop a sense of accountability.

Monitoring and evaluation involves the close study of what happens during interaction and between interactive sessions. Observations, ideas and explanations

should be documented and critically analyzed and evaluated. A reflexive approach to observation, explanation and analysis will generate a multiplicity of meanings which should be open to questioning and different interpretations in order to stimulate further argument and discussion.

The language used to describe and analyze shared reality and to make sense of it should also be discussed to expose values and assumptions which determine interpretation, and an understanding should be developed of how language structures consciousness and human interaction. Meanings and understandings so constructed could be validated by evaluating the profundity of transformation in thoughts and practice.

3.6.5 Triangulation



I find the concept "triangulation" problematic and limiting because as Elliott explains it refers to three components of the research situation: the "teacher", the "student body" and the "outsider" (McKernan 1991 p190). I do not believe that the "student body" can be seen as a unity, but that all the individuals in the educational situation will offer a multiple of viewpoints and interpretations. I would prefer to refer to someone who comes from outside the group involved in the educational process as an outsider perspective.

This perspective is of central importance in education in general as well as in the process of action research. Members of an action research group can become so involved in each other and in the internal dynamics of the process that they can develop a framework within which they operate and out of which they can hardly move. The outsider can enter such a group from a different framework, initially hopefully from a neutral position, with the aim of discovering exactly what the

power relations are, what the values and assumptions of the participants are. Through this temporary involvement such a person can effect change and be changed by the experience.

It is important for such an outsider to study intensely what is happening and how it is happening and to write a report as well as get involved in discussions about all these experiences and perceptions. These discussions and reports are of cardinal importance to stimulate further understanding from different viewpoints and perspectives and to compare the understanding of the outsider with those of the insiders.

3.6.6 Making meaning of data as resource

It is important that action researchers understand that the whole process is an act of constant meaning making. Meaning can be made in a qualitative and quantitative manner following different methods of data analysis.

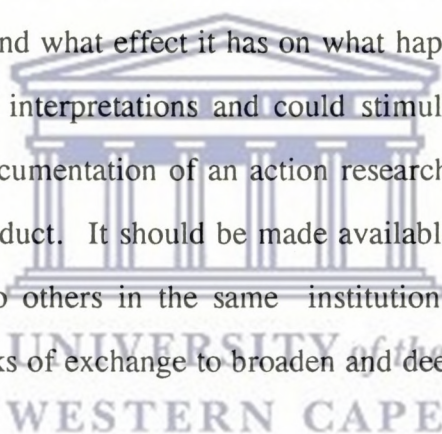
Quantitative statistical methods are based on scientific principles of data analysis but they are always informed by the underlying assumptions of the researcher and so they are still open to interpretation. Qualitative modes of research are based on processes of editing data, selecting definitions of concepts and coding categories, perceiving, comparing and connecting categories, and developing personal and preferably collaborative meanings.

The data should be collected, analyzed and carefully dated and systematically filed right from the beginning of the action research process. The same data could be reproduced to be filed under different headings because it could be relevant for the study of different aspects of the process. When a certain part of the action research

process needs to be written up, relevant data should be selected and focused on. All data will not be relevant for every written task.

The analysis of data to make meaning of what is happening is perhaps the most complicated part of the action research process. If a clear idea is developed of the contradictions and incongruences prevalent in educational practice and in the socio-political context it could be easier to make collaborative sense of gathered data. Speculation and guessing on reflexive activity could generate different possible explanations and analyses should be offered in a tentative manner.

It is important that shifts in ideas are documented and analyzed carefully to explain how minds are changed and what effect it has on what happens. These ideas should always be open to other interpretations and could stimulate further argument and analysis. The written documentation of an action research process should never be seen as a final closed product. It should be made available to everyone involved in the process as well as to others in the same institution and other institutions in order to establish networks of exchange to broaden and deepen the process.



3.7 The constraints on educational action research

Some of the most important constraints on action research in education are the attitudes of the participants; resistance to change; the limitations set by authoritarian, hierarchical systems of educational institutions; and a lack of research skills.

McKernan (1991:45) lists other constraints like lack of time, lack of resources and Stenhouse's list of impediments, such as obtaining consent/support to research; the language of research; the pressure of student examinations; disapproval of students,

colleagues and principal; beliefs about the role of the teacher; and professional factors.

3.8 The interpersonal ethics of action research

Moral considerations are fundamental in interpersonal interaction and therefore also in action research. Existing moral rules and conventions could be questioned and analyzed to develop an understanding of the relativity of what is "good" and what is "bad" for an individual and for a society. Elliott (1981:9) suggests that

one must ask the question: can the information I gather about other people's activities and views be misused by me and those I disseminate it to? (and whom could such misuse harm?)

A sense of responsibility and accountability could help in determining collaboratively what can be viewed as constructive or destructive thinking or action in a certain situation. Physical or mental harm through exploitation and abuse can never be sanctioned, no matter how justified the ends are.

Because action research aims at making sense of what people feel and think, and of situations of interaction between people, it has to go below the superficial surface and deal with often hidden aspects which could cause vulnerability and painful feelings of being exposed. This should be considered and negotiated in a caring, respectful and responsible manner to protect the interests of individuals and groups. Consultation is necessary on matters of involvement or noninvolvement of individuals and groups and on the possible publication or exposure of the research. Also, all aspects of the development of the research should be made available to members for observation and evaluation throughout the whole process.

In conclusion I want to pose the question whether it is possible to distinguish between action research and meaningful education. Should the qualities of action research not be inherent in all educational practices? When Winter (1989:10) quotes Elliott describing action research as "the study of a social situation, with a view to improving the quality of action within it" he endorses Elliott's idea that action research is a study of a social situation and not the inherent structure of that social situation. I prefer seeing action research as a way of being involved in education and not as merely a study of educational practices.

Some of the characteristics of action research are described as follows:

- action research should involve the questioning of its own approaches to improving the quality of educational practices;
- that increased knowledge should be gained of what actually happens in the classroom (Winter 1989:10-11);
- that it is a strategy for development, a continuing openness to the development of practice;
- and that it is the scientific ideal of the continuing growth of understanding through critique and revision (Winter 1989:14).
- It is also described by Mc Niff (1988:1-3) as a form of self-reflective enquiry; intervening in one's own practice; the participatory improvement of the rationality and justice of one's own social or educational practices; and that its social basis is involvement and the educational basis is improvement.

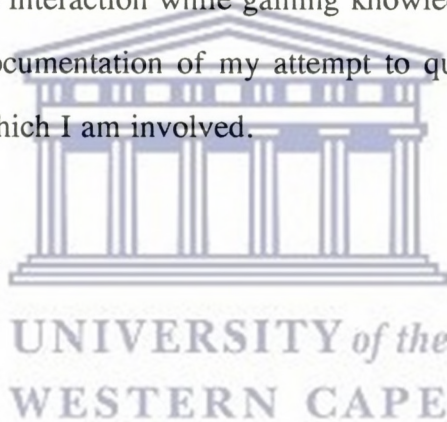
If we believe that action research should have these characteristics, the question arises whether all educational processes should not have exactly the same characteristics built into it to be authentic in nature.

Mc Niff (1988:9) says that

Action research implies adopting a deliberate openness to new experiences and processes, and, as such, demands that the action of educational research is itself educational.

Education itself demands the action of educational research as it happens in action research. Meaningful educational practices should always have the characteristics ascribed to action research, but in the South African schooling situation very few of these characteristics are part of everyday practice.

In South Africa, therefore, action research could be seen as a process through which major transformation could be achieved to create educational practices which satisfy norms set for democratic interaction while gaining knowledge. What follows in the next six chapters is a documentation of my attempt to question and transform the educational practice in which I am involved.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT

4.1 Introduction

In doing my action research project I discovered to what extent our interests define approaches to formal art education by developing an understanding of Habermas' theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests'.

In this theory, as was outlined in chapter two, Habermas posits that our interests inform our search for knowledge and by offering his explanation of the relationship between knowledge and human activity. In terms of this theory, the type of knowledge we gain about art education and its relationship to our activities in art education have an underlying interest base.

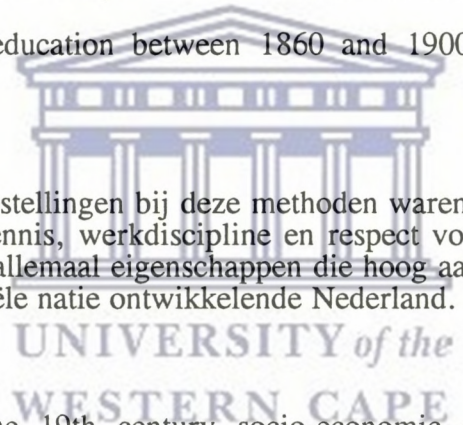
In the following action research project an attempt was made to uncover and critically analyze the underlying interest base in my own practice. Each of the three stages of the action research project was informed by an underlying interest base. These could be classified as technical (a positivist framework) in the first stage, practical (an interpretive framework) in the second stage, and emancipatory (a critical framework) in the third stage.

The next three chapters therefore constitute an exploration of art education pursued in terms of a technical, a practical and an emancipatory interest base. In this chapter some background is given about art education in general, about art education in "Christian National Education", and about the specific situation in which I teach.

4.2 Ideas about art education in general

Art education in South Africa is strongly influenced by and structured on European models. It is therefore meaningful to look at ideas about art education as it developed in Europe during and after the 19th century to gain a better understanding of its development in South African schools.

In 19th century Europe visual reality was seen as the basis of all knowledge and in art this visual reality had to be represented. In art education the general aim was to provide students with skills to be able to draw objectively what they saw; to copy visual reality precisely and neatly. B. Oostra (Oostra 1980:57) describes the most important aims of art education between 1860 and 1900 in the Netherlands as follows



Belangrijke doelstellingen bij deze methoden waren vooral het aanleren van netheid, vormkennis, werkdiscipline en respect voor natuurgetrouwheid in de uitbeelding, allemaal eigenschappen die hoog aangeslagen werden in het zich tot industriële natie ontwikkelende Nederland.

Towards the end of the 19th century socio-economic changes as a result of industrialization, urbanization and greater transport and communication efficiency, had an important influence on theories of art education. The development of sociology and psychology as independent disciplines also contributed to an interest in the role schools could play in individual development and the structuring of societies. This interest remained to a great extent theoretical and for a long time it had very little effect in the pedagogic sphere.

Ideas about relativism and evolution were slowly accepted and these ideas stimulated thought about human and social development, change, and the relativity of educational values and aims (Oostra 1980:58). An attempt was made to serve

different needs of different individuals and societies, and education became more specialized to concentrate on these differences.

In contrast to the positivist and materialist approach to art education in the 19th century, the focus shifted in early 20th century Europe to the idea of personal development through art education. Despite strong resistance to this movement, greater emphasis was placed on the training of the senses, and the expression of one's own experience, emotions, feelings, dreams, fantasies and imagination. Free intuitive expression was encouraged although problems arose around the integration of this principle of freedom into educational practice which was to a large extent authoritarian.

The ideas of Viktor Lowenfeld and John Dewey had a very strong influence on art in education. For them the aims of art education are determined by the values people hold, but there is an important basic difference between the values that inform these two authors' ideas about art education. Eisner classifies Lowenfeld as a "contextualist" with instrumental interests and Dewey as an "essentialist" emphasizing the inherent qualities of art.

In the contextualist approach an understanding should be developed of the micro and macro context in which art education takes place. Art education "would take as its starting point not art, but children, and would take from the arts what was appropriate for them, given some set of educational values" (Eisner 1972:2). Lowenfeld emphasizes the personal and social functions of art education, believing that the needs of individual children, the community and society (which are based on certain value systems) should influence the aims of art education. The justification of art education lies in the contribution it can make to the physical, emotional, spiritual, creative and cognitive development of the child.

In the essentialist approach there is an emphasis on the aesthetic contemplation of visual form, on what is indigenous and unique to art. The notion that art should serve other ends is rejected. Dewey's focus is on the intrinsic value of art and the kinds of contributions to human experience and understanding that only art can provide. Essentialists believe, says Eisner (1972:5),

that art is a unique aspect of human culture and experience, and that the most valuable contribution that art can make to human experience is that which is directly related to its particular characteristics. What art has to contribute to the education of the human is precisely what other fields cannot contribute.

Between the mid 1950's and about 1970 a phenomenological approach to art teaching developed and spread in Europe, England and America (Oostra 1980:72). The phenomenologists suggested that the study of the created image as a phenomenon consisted of an understanding of certain formal elements which could be analyzed. This understanding could contribute to a more profound experience during the art making and teaching processes. By looking at the different elements of the work of art, and by understanding the principles according to which these elements were organized, the viewer and the creator of the work could understand the process and the product more fully. It was also believed that it was easier to teach and evaluate art in terms of the basic art elements and principles. Oostra (1980:73) suggests that

Kennis van de beeldelementen brengt de onderwijzer gemakkelijker tot een didactische analyse van het wordingsproces van de tekening; zonder deze kennis is het moeilijker om het kind gedetailleerde aanwijzingen te geven.

For the phenomenologists the work of art was something different, more than mere representation of visual reality. It was also a process during which technical problems could be solved, through which the person dialectically discovered and reproduced the expressive aspects of their world, each in their own way, according to their own potential, and in relation to their own time and place. Although this

approach contributed to self understanding and development, it did not question the status quo and thus perpetuated existing power relations. It did not attempt to stimulate critical thinking about the self and the society and it did not see art education as a process through which a contribution could be made to self and social transformation.

In the early 1970's an interest in critical theory created the desire to analyze the underlying ideology of the participants and the way it manifested itself in art education and in the work of art. The values underlying educational aims and practices were to be analyzed and evaluated critically. Art was viewed as visual communication, so that in art education "visual literacy" became important. The analysis, understanding and production of visual information against socio-political reality was emphasized. Oostra (1980:78) suggests that

In de wereld van de beeldende vorming zou het gevoel voor maatschappelijke realiteit terug moeten keren, werkelijkheid die te maken heeft met socialisering, democratisering, mondigheid en motivatie.

The relationship between art education and sociology, social and development psychology, critical pedagogy and political science was emphasized. A critical approach to art education sets out to stimulate social and political awareness through democratic and collaborative processes. The emphasis was placed on the contribution art education could make to the emancipation of the individual to become a committed, responsible and accountable social being involved in the transformation of society.

4.3 Art education in the 'Christian National' schooling system

In 1948 the "Christelike-Nasionale Onderwysbeleid", which was to form the general policy in government schools, was published. This educational policy was the

outcome of political struggle and based on the political aspirations of the Nationalist Government.

It was strongly influenced by the Logical Positivist movement of the time in its emphasis on the possibility of objective truth and empirical forms of research. Unless a statement was empirically verifiable through observable proof, it was seen as meaningless. The positivists also believed that what is in the world is logically independent from the human understanding of that world. The only reliable function of language was to describe the world by stating facts: it had to be free of value and ideology. A distinction was made between means and ends, facts and values. These assumptions often formed the basis for educational research and practice in the "Christian National Education" (CNE) system.

In "Christian National Education" the aims of education were determined by "experts" according to educational policy based on the values of the policy makers. The most efficient ways of achieving these aims were based on theories of learning developed through scientific research. These theories of learning "will yield us 'laws' of learning, universal, neutral and impartial between various goals of learning" (Morrow 1989:44).

The policy makers in CNE did not believe in a general philosophy of education, but in different "philosophies" for different "cultural" groups. The different groups of people in South Africa had to have different departments of education with different "cultural" values. Control of education in South Africa is fragmented under seventeen departments of education:

11 for Africans (one in each of the 10 homelands and the Department of Education and Training (DET) for 'Africans' in the 'white' or 'common' area), 4 for 'whites' and 1 each for coloured people and Indians. Education for whites is controlled by the four provinces ... 'Coloured' education is controlled by the House of Representatives and Indian education by the House of Delegates (see Pillay 1990:30).

The ruling groups dominated the discursive field by establishing and selling their idea of what a people is as if it is the truth and incontestable, while also presenting themselves as the bearers of general interest in that society. The governmental policy makers decided strategically what the values of the different groups were to be and, above all, what values could best serve the needs of the status quo, and designed curricula accordingly.

The notion that all the different departments were to perpetuate "Christian" and "National" values; that some groups were forced to receive schooling in what was for them a foreign language; and that, for instance, Christian and Moslem pupils were forced to attend the same schools because they were all classified as 'coloureds' contradicts the stated policy that education should be culturally organized. It is clear that the values and "culture" of the dominant group were viewed as superior and that they were to be perpetuated in the schooling system.

The CNE system can be seen as a structural feature of a racist capitalist system. It supports the reproduction of the current relations of domination and exploitation. Through schooling the values of the dominant group are naturalized, critical capacities are repressed and through hegemonic processes consent is gained from the subordinate groups to support the oppressive existing order. Tomaselli (1989:17) argues that, amongst other organs of the state, schools are used to

repeatedly signify, and thereby naturalize, the social relations embedded in ideology. When this happens, when classes of "I's ('workers'; 'women'; 'blacks') learn to know 'their place' in society then it is said that the people have consented to governance.

In the hegemonic process state ideology organizes the actions and the consciousness of the people. Schooling has economic, social and political functions by reproducing state ideology through their organization, content and forms of

practice. Giroux (1988a:113) believes that in the reproductive theory of schooling schools are not seen as

public spheres engaged in teaching students the knowledge and skills of democracy. On the contrary, schools are to be viewed in more instrumental terms and should be measured against the need to reproduce the values, social practices, and skills needed for the dominant corporate order.

The dominant position of the educational ideological apparatus is clarified "in the reproduction of the ruling ideology, and thus of the relations of production in capitalist social formations" (Kallaway 1990:139). Giroux (1988:114) states that in the reproductive theory of schooling "schools, teachers, and students have been written off as merely extensions of the logic of capital."

In the CNE schooling system the subject art is included in the program of all governmental primary schools in South Africa, but it is offered by only a few secondary schools. Because of the positivist approach of the CNE system the subject art is viewed as inferior to other more "scientific" subjects and art has a very low status in the hierarchy of offered subjects.

Current art teaching often fits into the positivist framework in terms of its aims to be objective, technical and value free. This leads to a form of pedagogy "that enable students to master skills and specific forms of understanding with respect to predetermined forms of knowledge" (Giroux 1988:117).

Art educators often "teach" students how to produce predetermined products by introducing different media and techniques. The aims of art teaching, determined by government policy, are implemented by subject advisors who expect of teachers to follow their instructions.

This autocratic organization of relations within art education empowers those in top positions to perpetuate state policy by imposing state ideology on their subordinates. Only people who are prepared to follow the ideas of their superiors are appointed in these positions, although they are often insufficiently qualified in and poorly informed about the subject. People who are capable of critical thinking and who attempt to question and criticize existing policy are considered a threat to the status quo.

Art education is structured according to the social relations of the school which correspond to and are largely determined by the social relations of the workplace. In CNE this means that art education encourages the perpetuation of dominant power relations by legitimizing and reproducing knowledge valued by the dominant group. As such it perpetuates relations of production in capitalist social formations.

4.4 The context in which I teach

I am, since 1989, employed by the Department of "Education and Culture" (House of Representatives) on a temporary basis in the Art Department of Bellville College of Education. At this college students who complete three academic years can be employed as educators in the primary schools of this department. If they want to teach in high schools they have to complete a fourth year of study.

In the Art Department we offer only a three year course. Students often do not choose to do art as one of two specialization subjects in their third year because they need two academic subjects in their third year to go on to the fourth year course. If they choose art in their third year, they have to do an extra third year academic subject in their fourth year.

Art is viewed as a practical subject and is classified with needlework and woodwork under the Department of Handwork of the College. This classification indicates the positivist assumption that art education is a process of learning practical skills to produce products. At the college there is also a Department of Performing Arts which consists of drama and music.

In 1991 there were two lecturers in the Art Department with 405 students offering the subject. We offer a general first year course, a Junior Primary and a Senior Primary course. The students who choose to do the Junior Primary course have to do art but first year and Senior Primary students have a choice between art and other subjects. Most first year students and very few Senior Primary students choose to do art. Many first year students choose art because they have to do three practical subjects, while the Senior Primary students often do not choose art because they fear they will not get a teaching post if they specialize in art which is generally seen as a subject with little value.

The existing syllabi prescribe two modules for the first year and three for second and third year students. The first year course consists of a practical and an art appreciation module while the second and third year courses consist of these two plus the didactics of the subject. In the practical component the focus is on a formal approach to media and techniques. The mark for this component consists of year work and no examination is prescribed. In the art appreciation component the focus is on the formal analysis of works of art in all the first and second year courses and also the third year of the Junior Primary course.

Examination papers are set internally by the lecturer involved. The third year Senior Primary students must be prepared for a national external examination paper in art appreciation and history of art which is set by a person appointed by the education department. The syllabus prescribes a course in the formal analysis of

works of art and 19th and 20th century European art movements. In the syllabus the following movements are specified: Naturalism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism and Fauvism.

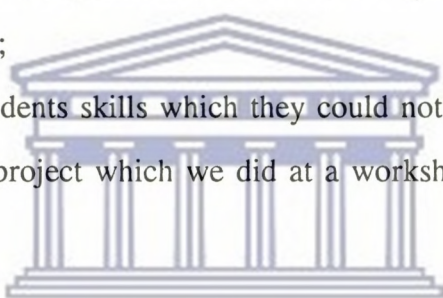
The preparation for this external paper in art appreciation and history of art is obviously very problematic. The prescribed work covers an extensive period with no specification of artists. This means that lecturers have to select what they view as important information, which does not necessarily correlate with what the examiner (whose identity is supposed to be kept a secret) views as important. It could also happen that art lecturers see their third year students for only one hour thirty minutes per week and for approximately twenty-two weeks a year (with practice teaching and examination periods excluded), in which time the three components need to be dealt with in a satisfactory manner. Very little time is available for history of art, nor do the syllabi for the first two years prepare students for the complicated nature of the prescribed work.

To overcome these problems and to prepare students for the external examination lecturers are inclined to hand out very poor memoranda of previous examinations for students to memorize and reproduce in exams in which the same old questions appear year after year. Examination results are usually very poor because this system does not contribute to the development of an understanding of the history of art and it is therefore largely a futile exercise.

Since my first year at this college I have interpreted the syllabus to suit my own approach to art education. I have added courses in "community art" and the history of art by black artists in South Africa, and I use examples from local artists to explain styles and movements in the history of art. I also integrate the "practical", "didactics" and "theoretical" modules and emphasize their dialectical relationship.

My emphasis is on promoting critical visual literacy by stimulating verbal and visual communication. For me art education is about critically constructing meaning. At the end of my first year at the college the "inspectors" were very critical of the exhibition of third year Senior Primary work and subtracted five percent from each student's mark. When I insisted on an explanation they were surprised at being questioned and by my lack of respect for their position and power. Eventually they gave the following reasons:

- All the colleges should have the same average and the average for this class was five percent above the other colleges;
- The work was too political (there was one project with explicit socio-political content);
- I taught the students skills which they could not use in schools (referring to a silk-screen project which we did at a workshop during the September vacation).



When I discussed this with the rector of the college it seemed as if this was regular procedure and there was nothing I could do to change their decision.

I believe that since then the attitude of the inspectors has changed because the students' interest in the subject has grown and because I did not allow myself to be victimized by the former. I proceeded to do what I believed in and it might even be that I am slowly gaining their support for my ideas. In the college itself I have experienced no overt objection to my approach and feel absolutely free to pursue my ideals. To me this is a very novel and energizing experience.

It is within the above context that my action research project evolved and the following documentation of the project should be understood against this background.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROJECT: FIRST STAGE, FIRST SESSION

5.1 Introduction

My original plan had been to do my action research project with thirteen students in a third year class. Because I found it difficult to decide how to start, I began working with a group of 114 first year students, viewing this as a way of getting familiar with action research. These sessions revealed so many problematic and interesting aspects about art teaching that it became the action research project documented below.

Since primary school none of the students in the first year class had had any active participation in any form of formal art education. I decided that working with this group could provide valuable material about the state of art education in our schools and about the understanding that these students have developed about art and art education.

I believed that valuable knowledge could be gained by documenting and analyzing their understandings as the project developed, to discover shifts in their thinking and production, and to consider how this came about and what effect it had on their attitude to and involvement with the subject.

Because the work I did with the first year group was viewed as part of my preparation for the main action research project with the third year group, I started it without having an explicit plan of action. I felt that not to start until a clear plan was formulated would have wasted time because I believed action itself would

generate ideas and a multiplicity of plans in the process. I also believed that a formulated plan of action could have restricted creative interventions when the situation offered unthought of possibilities.

The concept "plan" could also be interpreted as a detailed method of proceeding towards an end. This reminds me very much of positivist cause-and-effect linear thinking, where means and ends are seen as logically independent of each other. I believe that means and ends are dialectically related and that the process will open up ideas which will influence the direction of the project. The idea was to start with the action and to allow the reflective process to determine the development of the project.

The general idea I had was to see what students would draw when asked to express with pencil on paper how they thought art looked. They had to draw a frame on a piece of paper and make a drawing representing their idea of what a drawing as art will look like. The underlying assumption was that this assignment was possible and that the students would be able to create an image which would be expressive of their idea of what art looked like. I realized that this was a very difficult task, but I trusted that the assignment would give the students the opportunity to translate their abstract ideas into some visible form.

They also had to answer a few questions in writing. They had to formulate ideas about their understanding of what art was and they had to give me an idea of what they would like to learn about art in the first year course.

I found the drawings and their ideas about art so meaningful that I decided to make this information part of my action research project. When I saw this group of students again I discussed the action research process and the possible project with them. We discussed the collaborative and participatory character of action research,

that we as participants in the educational process would critically monitor our interaction and reflect on and evaluate what happened in these sessions. We committed ourselves to the project.

5.2 The session

This was my first meeting in 1991 with one of the four first year art classes. As I waited for all the students to arrive I became aware of the silence in the class and the discomfort of the students who did not really know what to do and did not ask or talk to anyone else. I noticed how some of them looked at what others were doing and then followed them. This was different from students who are familiar with and feel at home in the classroom and who usually enter with lots of noise and interaction. I realized that the way I wanted to conduct the session had to be adapted to accommodate this foreignness. I had planned mainly individual work, but decided also to include a group discussion session in which they could introduce themselves to the other members of the group.

After introducing myself and explaining the course as it is formulated in the syllabus, I asked them individually to answer a few questions on a piece of paper. I explained that these answers could help me in deciding the course content.

Apart from questions about identity and address, they were asked:

1. Describe how you understand the term art.
2. What would you like to learn in the course this year?
3. How do you see the role of art in schools?

At the same time I gave them a piece of white paper and a pencil and asked them to draw a frame around the paper and to draw inside the frame their idea of what art

looks like. They were given 30 minutes to answer the questions and make the drawing. Examples of these drawings can be seen at the end of chapter five.

Everyone was quiet and as I walked through the class, I detected insecurity because it seemed that students did not know what to do and waited quite a while before they started, again looking at what others were doing. They made very simple drawings and wrote very little when they answered the questions.

In a following session I asked them in a questionnaire how they had felt that first day and 57,9% of the class indicated that they had felt positive while 41% said they had felt insecure, nervous or negative. I was obviously more sensitive to the insecurity, or when they filled in the questionnaire they had forgotten how they had felt that first day. I should have asked them this question in the first session.

When everyone had completed the drawing and the questions, I asked them to form groups consisting of both male and female students, choosing people they had not yet met. They had to introduce themselves and discuss the questions they had had to answer. One person was supposed to report back to the class what the group had discussed. This part of the session took 15 minutes. Because they formed the groups quickly and immediately started shaking hands it looked as if they were grateful for being given the opportunity to meet the other people in their group. Although the group session started quietly and discussion initially seemed reserved and formal, the sound in the class very soon increased and I deduced that people were feeling more relaxed. The report back session, which took 10 minutes, was taken seriously in the sense that the speakers had summaries on paper which they shared formally with the rest of the class.

When the students left at the end of the session there were far more smiles, so I felt happy about the way the situation had offered me the opportunity to contribute to

making them feel more at home in the class. I sat down and tried to evaluate what had happened. It was supposed to be an exercise to try to work at a plan of action to start an action research project with another group in which I wished to improve my practice by making art education more of a process of "enculturation" for me and the students than simply a sharing of techniques. Because of what had happened in this session I immediately felt very involved with this group.

From deductions made in previous years at the college, and in this one session as well, I was under the impression that the majority of the first year students did not really want to do art. The two people in this session who felt strongly that they did not want to be in the art class were very outspoken and I assumed that their views were representative of a more general feeling. I thought the students were in a way being forced to do art because they had to do three out of five practical subjects. When they later answered this question in a questionnaire it became clear that 60,1% of the first year art students definitely chose to do art, and a further 11,9% chose art because they preferred it to other practical subjects. I was very surprised by this information and realized how one can so easily generalize on the basis of listening to the outspoken few in the class.

I enjoyed looking at the drawings and reading the answers to the questions very much. It was wonderful to get input from each student and to read how they view art and what they wanted to learn in the course. I had never before, in many years of teaching, asked each individual in a class of students to give this sort of information in written form. It was usually discussed in a big group, or if you were lucky with some individuals in special circumstances. There was often only enough time to hear a few ideas and usually those of the students who were extrovert, articulate and self-confident about speaking in public. In a sense the voice of each student was heard, not in a test of factual reproduction, but by sharing their own

ideas and desires. I believe that the students were empowered as individuals and not disempowered as nameless parts of a group.

I wrote in my notebook that day that I felt so much closer to the students and that I was feeling tender and warm towards them. In my mind they immediately became individuals with their own thoughts and they were not simply the OD1c group. I felt empathy with and a lot of respect for the way in which they were so brave to make a drawing and to try to formulate ideas about a subject to which they had had so little access. They were so fully prepared to trust and to contribute. I wondered why they did not want to do art as a subject. Was it because of a lack of awareness? Because of a distorted idea of the subject - that it would be expected of them to do things they could not? Their experience of art as being boring? I realized later that all these questions were based on distorted assumptions and generalizations on my part.

If I had not been so busy thinking about an action research project for my Masters course I would have started the first year art course offering bits of theory about the art-making process and we would have started applying it in practice - a totally positivistic approach where "making art" consists of applying superficial analytical theories in practice to achieve a predetermined technical "value-free" product.

5.3 Critical analysis

The general idea behind the first session was to attempt to see what the students would draw when asked to make a drawing showing their idea of what art was. I was interested in seeing what images they would create and what meanings they would construct through the drawing and the written work.

In analyzing this session one has to keep in mind that the students were in a very new and foreign environment in their second week at the college, they were in big groups of people they did not know and they had not been involved with any form of making or experiencing art formally. For them to walk into a foreign class and to be asked by an unknown person to draw what they see as art could have been an alienating and frightening experience.

The task was also very superficially formulated and open to interpretation and misunderstanding. The students who started first also influenced the work of those who were more insecure or confused. The results should be seen in this context and as a product of this specific interaction in time and place. It is problematic to make generalizations based on this specific encounter.

By asking the students to draw what they thought art was, I could have created the impression that this was possible to do in one drawing and that a singular homogeneous something existed which is called "art". Art could have been understood as something out there, a value free product which must comply with criteria set by "experts". They could also have adapted their views to satisfy what they thought I expected.

I was interested in seeing whether the students, despite their lack of involvement in formal art education, production or distribution, had naturalized the ruling class legitimization of specific forms of art. I also wondered whether they would express their own ideas, feelings and interests, or whether they would copy a legitimized image of what art is; whether they had been coerced into maintaining and recreating dominant ideas. I hoped to uncover, through studying their drawings and written ideas, possible

ideologies that legitimate and distribute specific forms of culture as if they were unrelated to ruling class interests and existing configurations of power (Giroux 1988b:116).

In trying to discover the meanings constructed in these drawings, I looked at them in terms of an explanation of cultural production viewed as resource and discourse. If we think of cultural production as a resource, we have to see how differing access to and specific use of cultural resources are reflected in cultural production to construct meanings about the self and the society. Thornton (1988:24) argues that

while there are differences in the way people behave and think and live, this reflects their differing access to cultural resources, as well as their use of these resources to make statements to each other and about themselves.

An understanding of culture as a resource therefore refers to statements about identity and group membership, a knowledge of differences between people and groups and why and how these differences came about. It is clear that concepts of power and control are involved and that officially pre-defined groups of individuals are allocated profoundly differing access to cultural resources and that culture is "controlled, distributed, owned, restricted, given and taken" (Thornton 1989:9).

In South Africa the state supports or restricts cultural production in terms of its own interests to perpetuate the dominant ideology. In a book on posters as images of defiance the following is written:

The posters in this book were not produced by an artistic elite, but by the people of South Africa. They reflect a grassroots vision of the struggles of the present and hopes for the future. They were produced in the face of enormous odds, ranging from a basic lack of skills and resources to outright bannings, detentions, and sometimes death (The Poster Book Collective 1991:2).

The restriction of cultural production is achieved by controlling cultural venues "so as to prevent the free flow of cultural ideas and to monitor the accessibility of liberatory visual ideology" (Sack 1989:74). After 1976 state policy and control was

challenged by the creation of alternative community organizations, art schools and exhibition venues which created a space for the development of a meaningful critical visual culture. Sack (1988:25) believes that

whereas the art of the urban areas was previously only seen in galleries, churches, and private homes, it has begun to have a far wider impact through addressing the needs of the broader community.

This visual culture was more accessible to the broader community, it expressed the values, interests and desires of the disenfranchised members of the society, and the artists felt themselves accountable to their communities.

In cultural production viewed as discourse the statement made, the art elements used, and the meanings of these elements used, depends on where and against what the statement is made (Macdonnell 1986:1).

The variety of discourses in which people take part reflects the position of individuals in a specific society as well as the multiple relations of power between such individuals and social groups. Social, political and economic inequalities are expressed in discursive formations which are ideological by nature.

Discursive formations are embodied in signs and "wherever a sign is present, ideology is present too" (Volosinov 1973:151). Signs have semiotic value and they have to be interpreted by human consciousness which is never "neutral" and "objective". These interpretations are embedded in ideology which is conceptualized not in relation to consciousness, but to unconscious categories. Coetzee (1990:20) argues that it is "precisely because they are unconscious that their 'lived' effect appears to be so 'natural' and 'obvious' - and is consented to without question." Only through processes of ideology critique can understanding be developed of the multiplicity of meanings constructed in and between discourses.

I wished to question the assumption that sets of relationships between signs are fixed in a formally prescribed way "isolating the text or the work of art from the rich texture of human experience and the political, social and economic conditions which co-determine both the creation and the understanding of artifacts" (Degenaar 1987:2). I also hoped to discover the norms and values and common-sense assumptions embedded in these drawings, and to consider whether they were forms of production which perpetuated or resisted the dominant ideology. The following exposition is based on my personal interpretations.

After looking at the drawings I realized they had very little to do with the personal experience of the students or with their lived reality. In the drawings they seemed to reproduce images which could, in positivist terms, be called "objective" and "value-free" representations of visual reality. This visual reality was mainly landscapes, still-lives and portraits - familiar subject matters in European "high" art (sculpture and painting).

The following information is a more complete exposition of the subject matter in 73 drawings which were made in the first session.

LANDSCAPE	60,3%
- with mountains, trees, and perhaps an animal	21,9%
- with the above plus a person or/and house	28,8%
- with big flowers, no mountain or trees	4,1%
- city, high buildings	2,7%
- water with swan	1,4%
- train behind mountains	1,4%
STILL LIFE	12,3%
- pot with flowers	8,2%

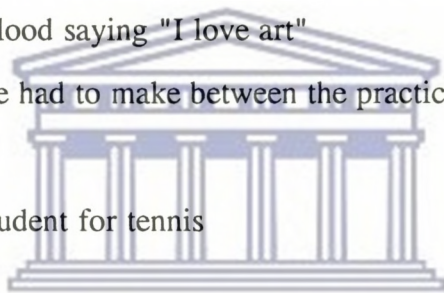
- fruit in bowl 2,7%
- a pot 1,4%

PEOPLE 13,7%

- a figure 12,3%
- two figures playing tennis 1,4%

IDEAS 6,8%

- prison door with mountain visible through bars; building prisons instead of schools
- art materials and different images you can create
- a skull with knife and blood saying "I love art"
- drawing the decision she had to make between the practical subjects
- a cup received by the student for tennis



OTHER 8,2%

- an air balloon with no people
- odd forms called a portrait
- light and dark tones in diagonal lines
- 3 examples of lines forming patterns

In art it is possible to reproduce and produce one's own reality, reality from someone else's perspective, escape from reality by idealizing and romanticizing it, or uncover and reveal values and norms forming the base of power relations in order to resist it.

Because 93,1% of the drawings represent external reality as experienced by the sense of seeing, it is likely that the majority of this group of students thought of art

in terms of the reproduction of visual reality. The landscape was the visual reality which was reproduced most often in these drawings and it is possible that the students were influenced by a state-signified idea of what is acceptable as art.

State mechanisms repeatedly signify, and thereby naturalize, the dominant ideology and through hegemonic processes the ruling class dominates the discursive field by establishing and selling their idea of what a people and their art is as if it is the truth and incontestable. Leatt (1986:209) supports this notion:

The dominant ideas in any period are the ideas of the ruling class. Morality, philosophy, religion, art, and literature usually serve the economic interests of those in power ... They sanction and help maintain their privileges under the mask of law and order, of justice and obedience.

In a system where people through legislation were from birth forced through their classification to know "their place" in society, this state-signified idea of what art is, is easily accepted, especially if one's place is very low in the social structure.

It is perhaps possible that the above argument could be taken as a reason why the majority of the students drew landscapes when asked to draw what they thought art was. South African ruling class art has a long and valued tradition of landscape painting.

In the written part of session one the question, what is art, was answered by 77 students in the following way:

THE EXPRESSION OF A VISUAL REALITY	20,8%
- to create a clear image	1,3%
- create what you see	13%
- to create a scene	6,5%

THE EXPRESSION OF AN INNER REALITY	35,1%
- emotions	20,8%
- thoughts	14,3%
- deeper meaning	7,8%
- imagination	9,1%
- inner images	13%

ART SEEN ACCORDING TO ITS FUNCTION 11,7%

- to give colour to life, to express yourself, to relax, to enjoy yourself, to create something which is wonderful to see, to use talents, to reproduce the beautiful, to make people aware of nature.

It is ironic that in the written work far more students thought art was the expression of an inner reality, while in their drawings on the same day 93,1% made drawings in which visual reality was represented. Is it possible to explain this contradiction, this gap between what they think art is and what they do to describe it? Perhaps it is because they had had more exposure to art as the reproduction of visual reality. Perhaps they had no idea of how inner reality could be expressed by using art materials or they did not have the technical skills or self confidence to do this. Perhaps they were not as connected to their inner reality as they were to the outer reality. It has also been suggested that, as they did not know me, some students tried to "guess" what I wanted and so they gave me a "philosophical" answer but a "technical" drawing. Another possible reason could be that their thinking was informed by the positivist assumption that "facts" are separated from values; that the reproduction of visual "fact" is meaningful whereas the production of images which communicate values and inner invisible realities is not meaningful.

Although this session differed from the way I was used to approaching an art class, it was still much informed by a technical interest and a positivist approach. In a

positivist approach and also in this project visual language is seen as logically independent of reality, and the descriptive function of visual language is valued. It is assumed that the visual language can be used to describe one's idea of what art objectively looks like. In the art-making process the descriptive role of visual language and the reproduction of visual "fact" is seen as a means of gaining knowledge of and control over the world. As Ewert (1991:348) puts it: "Instrumentally rational actions are goal-directed, feedback-controlled interventions in a presumed objective world".

For positivists facts are neutral, free of value judgments and ideological bias. It was possible that the students involved in the project assumed that the production of art was an objective and value-free process. There was no understanding of art production as revealing or celebrating their own norms and values, as being socially constructed and historically constituted.

The students believed that by discovering the laws according to which the visual world can be reproduced through art materials and techniques, the product can be predicted and prescribed. They wanted to learn the technically best course of action to follow to produce a predetermined product. The focus will be on the techniques used to create a product which will fit into the dominant idea of what art is. Technical knowledge is transmitted and students are evaluated in terms of their technical ability to produce the wanted product.

Students felt themselves lost and disempowered because they believed that to produce an "acceptable" image of what they thought art looked like they needed skills. The desired end product was predetermined - a representation of visual reality - and they thought they only needed the means to achieve it.

In a positivist approach educational decisions can be divided into factual questions of means and value questions concerned with ends. Questions of means can be rationally answered because the best way of achieving an end can be scientifically tested and instrumentally implemented. From an instrumental point of view the best means should be applied to achieve a predetermined end.

In the art making process it entails direct observation and description of the objective world. The aim is to reproduce the visual world of objects as objectively and visually precisely possible. In this approach to art education it is believed that a technical "expert" knows exactly how art should be created and how the art object should look. This knowledge is reified and it determines the standards and norms used to assess art objects. Art education is viewed as a process in which techniques are taught with the aim of producing an art object which satisfies these norms and standards.

This view limits the visual form of communication to mere statement of "fact", while critical reflection and argument about the human and natural world are seen as trivial and meaningless. This view seemed to have been internalized by the students, most of whom in their answers to the question, what would you like to learn in the art class, stated that they would like to learn skills to be able to draw things the way they look.

In the positivist approach theory and practice are also seen as logically independent of each other. Scientific theories of art production can be developed and employed as the basis for practice. Outside "experts" make decisions and construct theories about art education without consulting with educators, who are simply expected to adopt and implement these decisions efficiently in their practice. The students assumed that I was the "expert" who would have the theoretical knowledge - the means - to teach them how to draw - to achieve a predetermined end. They

expected to learn law-like regularities to apply to the art making process to improve their efficiency. Art teaching is viewed as a skilled craft based on technical expertise. Ewert (1991:349) states that the instrumental view of education, and I include art education, "leads to the idea that education can be improved by gaining a more complete mapping of the cause and effect relationships in education."

A mindset is thus created in which both students and even educators are taught to mistrust their own ideas and experience and to hand over power to "experts" and "specialists", technicians and authorities who gain control over the educational process. It is expected of students and educators to adopt and implement decisions made by "experts" based on "scientific knowledge". Students and teachers are not expected to participate in educational research or in the decision-making processes, their role being one of passive conformity. They are not professionally responsible for making educational decisions and judgments, but only for the efficiency with which they implement the expert decisions and standardized curriculum packages. In this powerless position students and teachers have no autonomy, they lose their own voice and become mechanisms alienated from themselves and their power from within. The more this patriarchal view is internalized by students and educators, the less overt is the force needed to keep them powerless and in their position within the power hierarchy.

In this hierarchy the "experts" believe they have knowledge which is superior to that of those who are taught and they see themselves in a higher position which gives them power and control over the students. In this situation of unequal power relations the students are made to believe that their knowledge of the production of art objects, if it differs from their standards and norms, is not valuable but inferior to that of the "expert". Students are rendered powerless if they cannot achieve the standards set by the "expert" teacher and it often happens that such students lose their interest in creative production and in the subject art. Students are made to

believe they cannot do art if they cannot do it the way the "experts" believe it should be done and in the process the individual creative potential of the student is not valued and often suppressed or destroyed. In this project the students, because of being conditioned in a positivist manner, rendered themselves powerless by giving the educator the power by believing she was the "expert" who had the superior knowledge.

In the classroom the educator is viewed as the "expert" but the inspector of art is again above the teacher in the hierarchy of the education system. They are the "specialists" who determine the criteria for the evaluation of a product, and who therefore form the dominant ideas about what sort of product should be valued and reinforced by giving it high marks. The creativity of the student or the creative process is of little or no consequence. Because the inspector has the power to change the marks given by the teacher, the teacher has little autonomy and if the students are to get good marks, the prescriptions of the inspector have to be followed. The decisions of the inspector are immune to attack from the educators and the students because they view their knowledge as superior.

In a broader context this approach to art education serves as a socially institutionalized regulatory system. People's creative potential is regulated and controlled through the construction of rules and regulations for production and distribution. The norms and standards for acceptable and valued art are set by the ruling class and determine what products are taken up in exhibitions, collections and in the history of art. The monetary value of artworks is also determined by the extent to which the works satisfy these set norms and standards. Cultural production which does not satisfy the dominant idea of what art is, disappears unseen unless the dominant ideology is eroded before the work is.

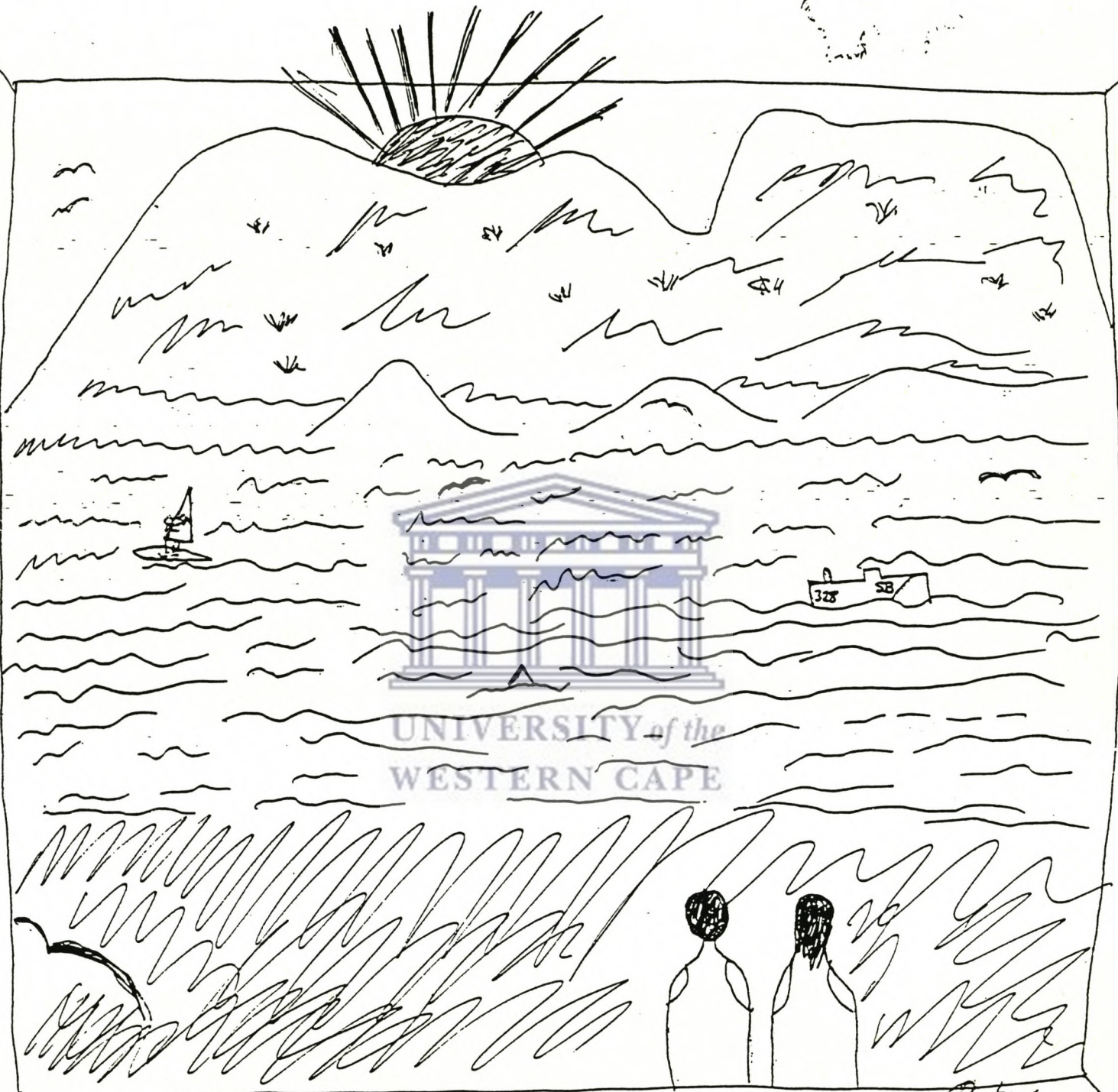
The values implicit in the empirical analytic tradition emphasize control, accountability, certainty and predictability, and result in an educational system which militates against uniqueness, creativity and individual autonomy. My action research project is an attempt to discover to what extent I perpetuate these values through my own practice and to work towards a transformative and emancipatory interaction in the classroom.

When I started my documentation and analysis of what happened in the first session of the first stage of the project, I discovered that much of my understanding of the students, the context in which they live and their subjectivities was based on generalization and assumption on my part. I therefore compiled a questionnaire which is documented and analyzed in the next chapter.



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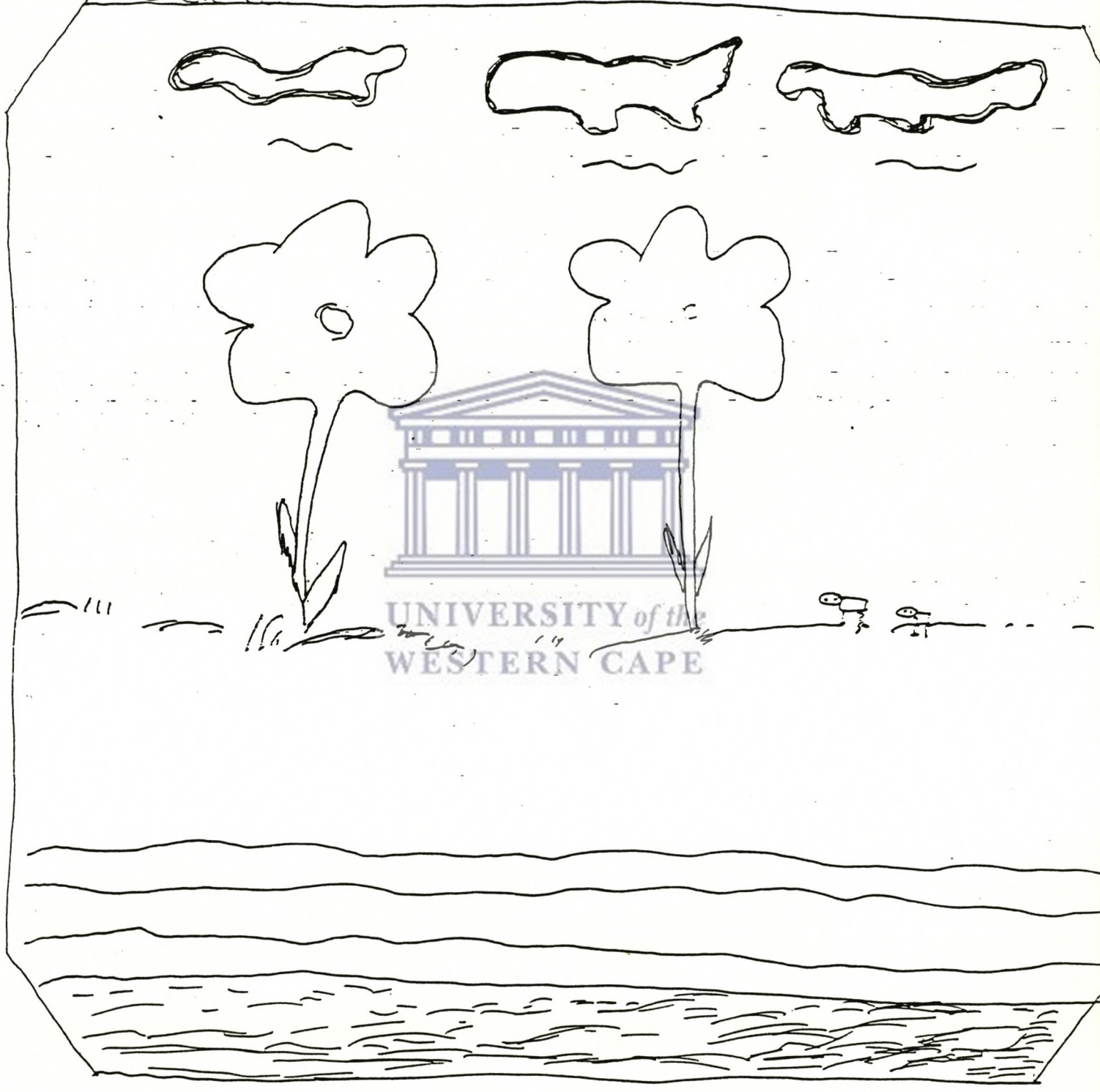




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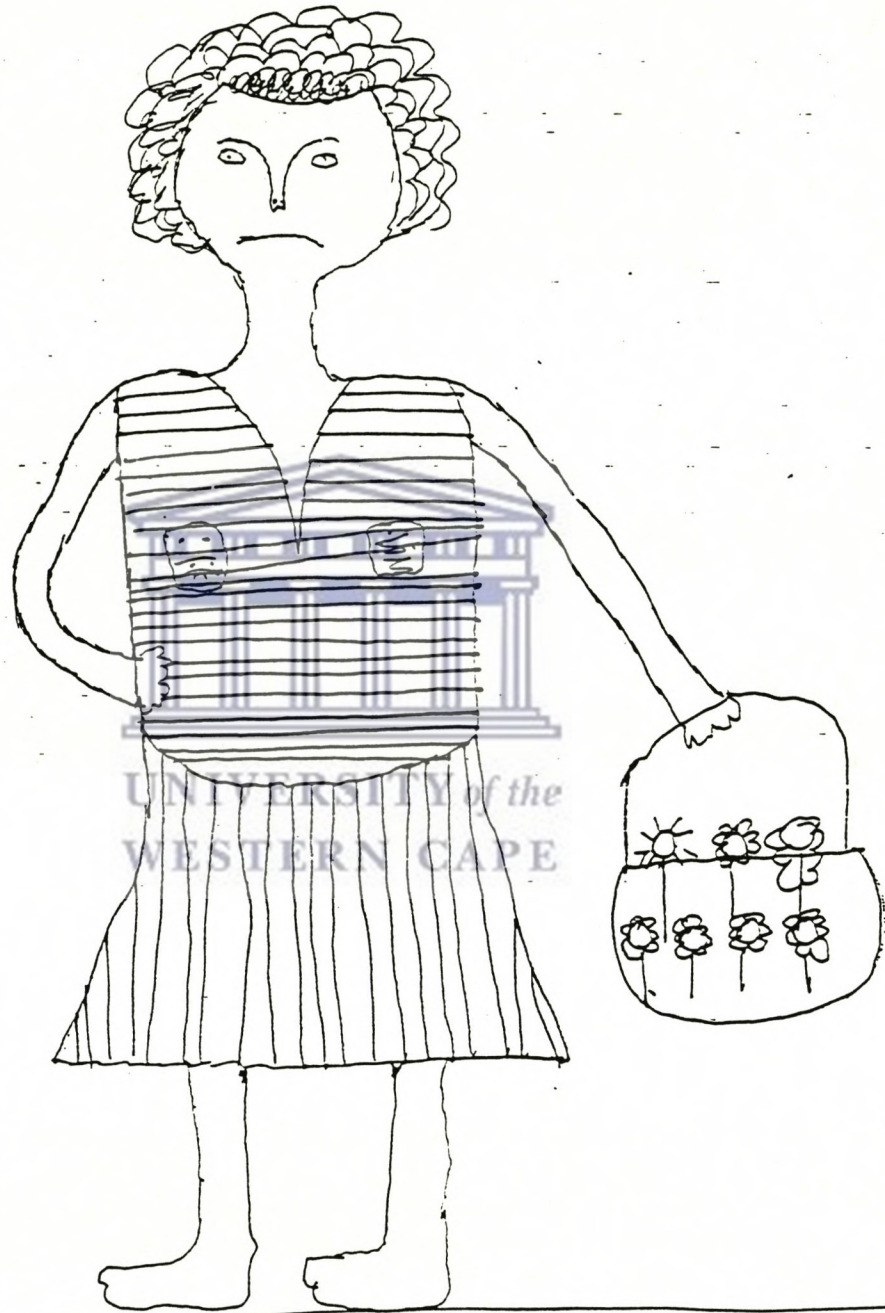
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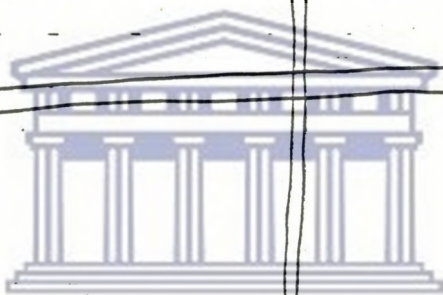


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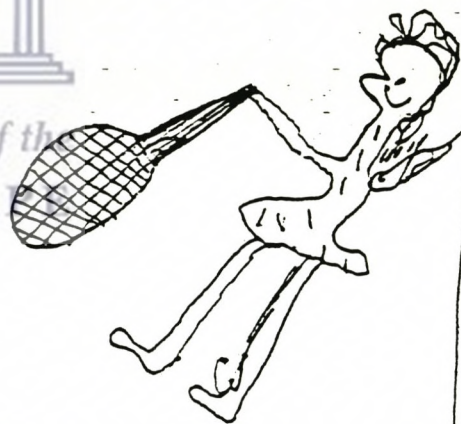
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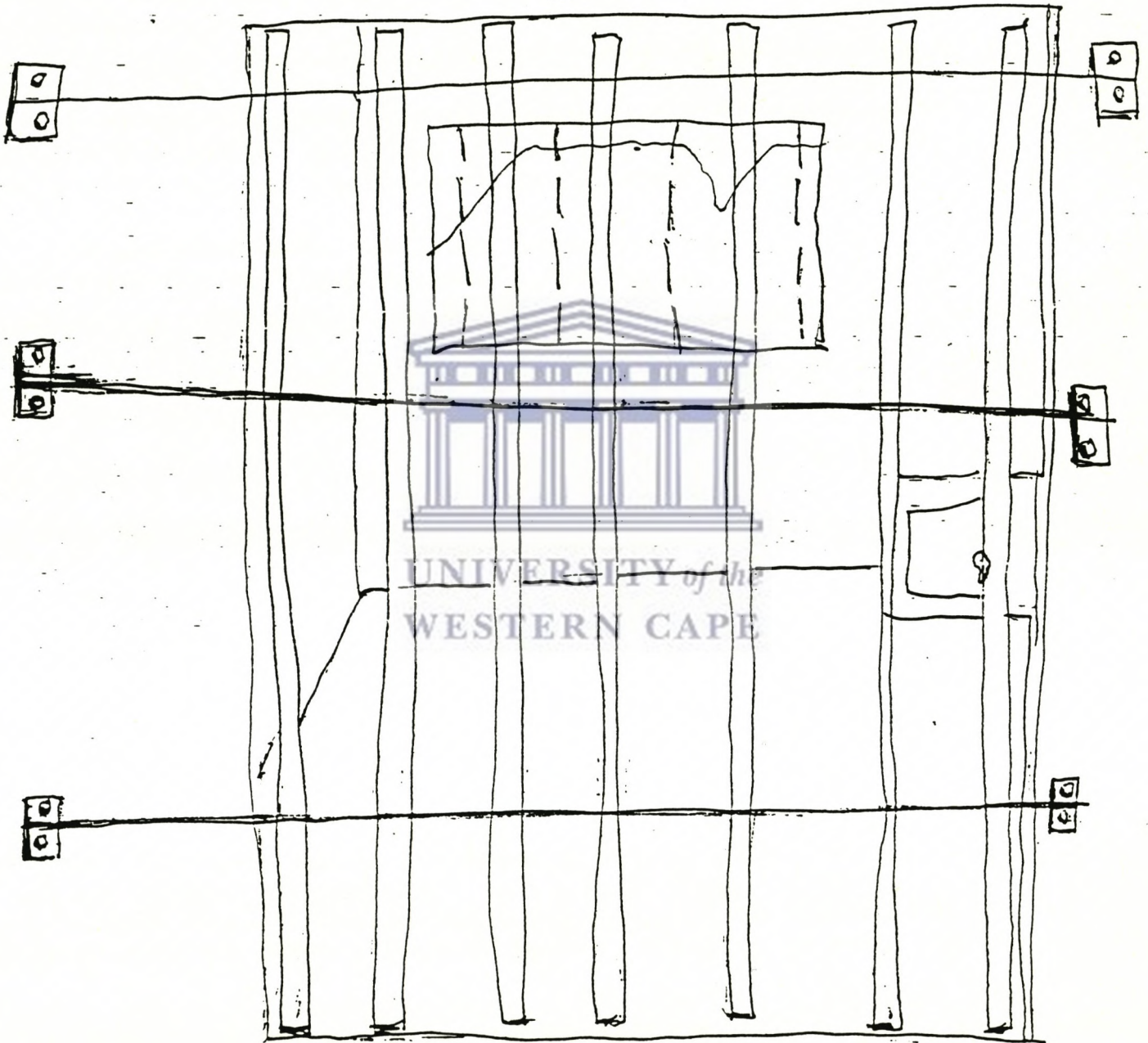
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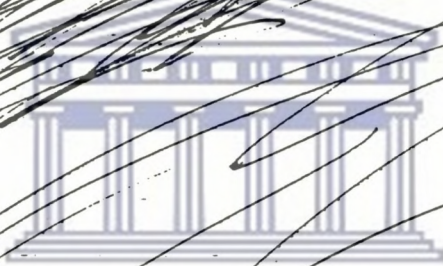
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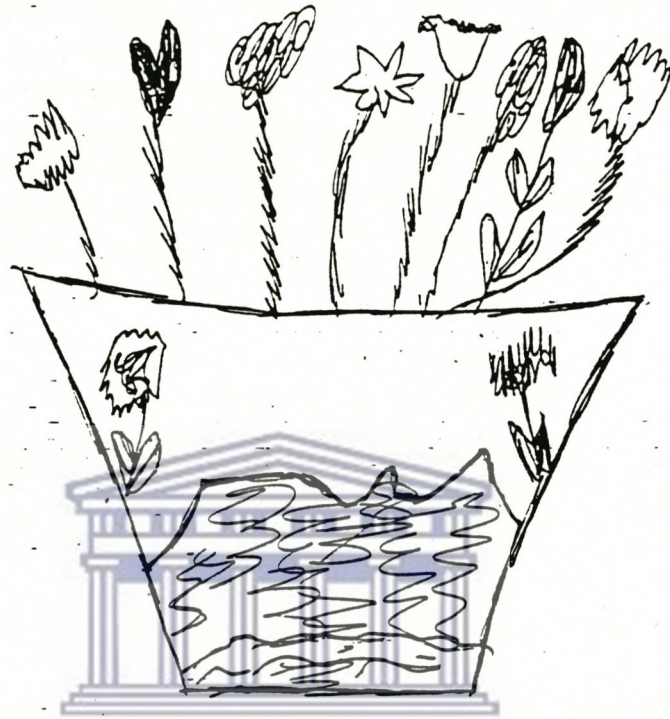
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CHAPTER SIX

THE PROJECT - FIRST STAGE, SECOND SESSION

6.1 Introduction

In a following session I asked the students to complete a questionnaire through which I gained some information about who they were, where they came from and what their previous experiences of visual cultural production and their exposure to discourses in this field were. An example of a completed questionnaire is included at the end of this chapter.



6.2 The questionnaire

I realized that this method of gaining information and the specific questionnaire was limited because the questions could have been unclear, ambiguous and open to interpretation. The questions and answers could also be seen as reductionistic because complex ideas often need to be reduced to simple concepts.

The information gained was therefore not viewed as "scientific fact", but I felt its use was justified in terms of gaining general information to develop a better understanding of the background and ideas of the 114 first year students involved in the project. The positive aspects of questionnaires are that they are easy to administer, they provide direct responses and information is easily quantifiable. It does, however, take time to analyze, responses may not be truthful, it could be difficult to formulate questions and answers. The completion of questionnaires could also depend on comprehensive competence.

While the students were busy completing the questionnaires I asked them not to share their answers because the information gained from the questionnaire would then not be of their individual experience and knowledge. It seemed to be very difficult for them not to share although I was present all the time. I explained to them that the questionnaire was not a way of evaluating them personally, but to get an idea of their experience and knowledge in general and how this reflected the state of art education in schools under the "Department of Education and Culture" of the House of Representatives.

Despite this request, the naming of artists was specifically a shared attempt. It seemed as if the students were embarrassed about not knowing the names of artists and that they thought it their own limitation. This is an indication of the success of the dominant group who, in their own interest, withhold certain forms of knowledge from those they view as subordinate and create the idea that these people do not have the knowledge because they are inferior human beings.

McLaren argues that students from the dominant and subordinate groups inherit different cultural capital, and that educational institutions generally value and reward the reproduction of the dominant culture. He believes that cultural capital is symbolic of the social structure's economic force and that it becomes in itself a force in the reproduction of social relations. If the cultural capital of the disadvantaged students is not valued, and they are prevented from, or find it difficult to enter into the ruling class discourse, there is a very small chance of their being successful in dominant class institutions and improving their position in society. He suggests

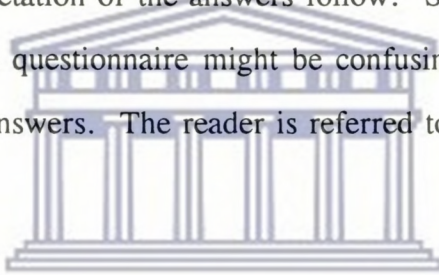
(t)he end result is that the school's academic credentials remain indissolubly linked to an unjust system of trading in cultural capital which is eventually transformed into *economic* capital, as working class students become less likely to get high paying jobs (McLaren 1989:191).

Giroux also describes educational institutions as reproductive and he believes that they are implicated in reproducing oppressive ideologies and social practices

in that they provide different classes and social groups with forms of knowledge, skills, and culture that not only legitimate the dominant culture but also track students into a labor force differentiated by gender, racial and class considerations (1988a:114).

Educational institutions are often mechanisms used to disempower people and to protect the interests of the ruling class. The students, disempowered by blaming themselves, did not want me to see their ignorance in this area and they did not recognize it as an opportunity to expose the limitations of the education system.

The relevant questions of the questionnaire and the attempted subjective quantification and interpretation of the answers follow. Selecting certain questions out of the context of the questionnaire might be confusing and add to the cryptic nature of questions and answers. The reader is referred to the full questionnaire at the end of this chapter.



The following are some of the questions in the questionnaire. (114 answers):

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1 Did you have art at school? If yes, which standards?.

No students had done art beyond a few years in primary school.

0 years	7,8%
1	10%
2-3	17,5%
4-5	36,8%
6-7	27%

The majority of the students thus had had between 3 and 7 years of art in primary school.

2 What did you think of the art at school?

wonderful	2,7%
good, enjoyable, ok.	33,3%
relaxing	11,7%
boring	10,8%
terrible	24,4%
superficial	13,5%
no answer	3,6%

About 47,7% of the answers could be interpreted as being positive, and 48,7% as being negative about the art classes in primary school.

3 Did you immediately decide to do art when you arrived at the college? Why?

yes	60,6%
yes, but	11,9%
no	26,6%
no answer	0,9%

About 61% of the students thus said they wanted to do art from the beginning. The rest apparently do art because they do not want to do any of the other practical subjects from which they could choose.

4 Have you been to an art gallery or art museum?

art gallery	yes	13,6%
-------------	-----	-------

	no	86,4%
art museum	yes	19,1%
	no	80,9%

The absolute majority of the students have not had access to collections and exhibitions of visual cultural production. I am tempted to deduce that lack of this exposure could imply illiteracy in terms of formal presentation of visual cultural production.

5 Name one artist.

no answer		46,4%
Da Vinci		25,4%
Michelangelo		7,3%
van Gogh		13,6%
Other		7,3%



Nearly half the class could not at that moment remember the name of even one artist. Most of the students who knew a name said they had learnt about this artist on television or in high school history.

6 Name one South African artist.

no answer	94,6%
wrong answer	5,4%

Not one student could correctly identify the name of a South African artist.

7 Why do you think you know so much/little about art?

not interested	44%
----------------	-----

no access, opportunity	35,7%
no answer	19,3%

I deduce that 44% of the students think their ignorance in this field is their own fault, their own lack of interest. It could be that the dominant group creates the impression that the ignorance of the subordinate group is due to their own limitations and not the limitations of the education system.

8 Do you think it is because of political reasons (referring to their knowledge about artists)?

no	51,8%
yes	18,2%
don't know	1,8%
no answer	28,2%



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It is possible that the term "political" could have been interpreted in different ways or that its meaning was not clear in this context, and that no deductions should therefore be made. I do suspect, though, that the 18,2% who answered "yes", represent the percentage of politically aware students in the class.

9 What is your mother's occupation?

housewife	48,9%
domestic servant, laborer	4,1%
clerk	13,3%
supervisor	4,1%
teacher	11,2%
factory worker	4,1%

nursing, dressmaker	11,2%
no answer	3,1%

Different occupations were loosely classified in the above categories. It is not clear whether the mothers who are housewives are trained for other occupations.

9 What is your father's occupation?

supervisor	4%
trade	29,7%
laborer	4%
teacher	11,9%
fisherman	0,98%
clerk	10,9%
driver	12,9%
policeman	4%
architect	0,98%
church minister	0,98%
pensioner	1,98%
no answer	18,8%



Once again occupations were loosely classified in the above categories. I do not know what "no answer" would mean.

10 How many children are there in your family?

1	2,1%
2	13,2%
3	27,5%
4	18,7%

5	14,3%
6	15,4%
7	4,4%
8	2,1%
9	2,1%

Conversely, 61,5% of the students came from families with four or fewer children.

11 From which school did you matriculate? Where is it?

Western Cape and Boland	64,8%
West coast, Swartland	8,3%
South coast, Eastern Cape	22,2%
Karoo	4,6%

The information gained by this questionnaire can hopefully contribute to a better understanding of the action research project.



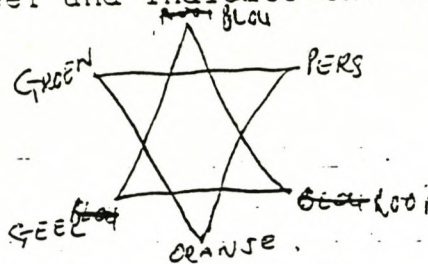
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During the first stage of the action research project I had gathered visual and verbal information about the group's ideas about art and their expectations of the course. I then gained more information about them as individuals through the questionnaire. The second stage of the project was an attempt to develop an understanding of art with a practical interest as an expression of personal consciousness and experience within a socio-political and historic context.

QUESTIONNAIRE/VRAELYS

NAAM/NAME DAWIN J. SEPTEMBER
 ADRES/ADDRESS (NIE/NOT HOSTEL) NELLE STR. 83
SCOTSDENE KRAAIFONTEIN 7512

- 1 Teken 'n kleurwiel en dui die 12 kleure aan.
 Draw a colour wheel and indicate the 12 colours.



- 2 Waarna verwys die term intensiteit
 What does the term intensity refer to
Dit verwys na helderheid.
 Waarna verwys die term toonwaarde
 What does the term tonal value refer to
Dit verwys na lig en donker.
- 3 Noem die 5 formele elemente wat ons so ver gebruik het.
 Name the 5 formal elements we have used so far.
Lijn, vlak, vorm, kleur, tekstuur.
- 4 Het u kunsonderwys op skool gehad. Indien wel, watter standerds.
 Did you have art at school. If yes, which standerds.
J.A.S. 2, 3, 4, 5.
- 5 Wat dink u van die kuns wat u op skool gehad het
 What did you think of the art at school.
Dit was interessant.
- 6 Wat is die redes dat u so dink
 Give the reasons for thinking this.
It was mainly because of some serious things I drew
 and for my own development of my school work. It was a relief
 and tension.
- 7 Het u gedink dat u kuns op kollege sal neem. Waarom
 Did you think that you will take art at college. Why
Nee, ek het gedink dit eindig as jy klac
 is met hier skool.

- 8 Het u onmiddellik gekies om dit te doen toe u hier kom.
Waarom.
Did you immediately decide to do art when you arrived at
the college. Why.
- JA.
DIT DIEW HS N BOME GOEIE ONTSPANNINGS DOELLEINDE
EN TERSEWETYN LEER JY BOME DINGE WAT OUITRENT
KUNS.
- 9 Het u eers 'n ander vak gekies? Waarom het u na kuns
oorgeslaan. Hoe voel u oor die verandering.
Did you originally choose another subject? Why did you
change to art? How do you feel about the change.
- NEE.
- 10 Hoe het u gevoel toe u die eerste dag na die kunsles
geloop het.
How did you feel when you walked to the first art lesson?
- WONDERLIK.
- 11 Beskryf u ervaring in u eerste kunsles by BOK OKB
Deskribe your experience of your first art lesson at BOE
- OM WEEER JOU EIE DING AAN TE VANG OP W PAPIER
WAS WONDERLIK JY HET NET GETEKEN EN GESKRYF
WAT W JOU GE DAGTES BEVIND HET.
- 12 Voel u dat u van toe af al iets geleer het in verband met
kuns. Wat behalwe die informasie in vraag 1.2 & 3
Do you feel that you have since then learnt something
about art. What except the information in Question 1.2 & 3
- JA SLEGS HEE OM DINGE TE VOOR EN HEE
OM GESIGTE BETEKT TE TEKEN.
- Hoe voel u nou oor die jaar in die kunsklas wat voorlê
How do you feel about the coming year in the art class?
- LEKKER.
- 13 Was u al in 'n kunsgallery NEE of kunsmuseum NEE
Have you been to an art gallery or art museum

- 14 Noem die naam van een kunstenaar. Waar het u die naam gehoor. Hoekom onthou u die naam?
Name one artist. Where did you come across this name. Why do you remember this name?
.....
LEONARDO DA VINCI IN DIE GEREKIDENIS KLAS
.....
HY WAS 'N ANIE GOEIE SKILDER EN BEELDHOUER.....
- 15 Noem die naam van een Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar. Waar het u van die persoon gehoor.
Name one South African artist. Where did you hear about this person
.....
EK KEN NIE N AMMIE IN HAR EK HET AL EEN GEVEN
OP TV.....
- 16 Waarom dink u weet u so Baie/min van kuns
Why do you think you know so much/little about art.
.....
OMDAT EK AL NIE KUNS OP HOER SKOOL GEHAD HET NIE.....
- 17 Dink u dat daar politieke redes voor is. Waarom
Do you think it is because of political reasons. Why.
.....
NEE BAIT.....
- 18 Wat is die beroep van u moeder
What is your mother's occupation
.....
HUISVROU.....
Wat is u vader se beroep
What is your father's occupation
.....
DRIVER.....
Hoeveel kinders is in u familie
How many children are you in your family.
.....
6.....
- 19 By watter skool het u gematrikuleer. Waar is dit?
From which school did you matriculate. Where is it?
.....
SCOTTSDENE HOER.....
- 20 Sal u volgende jaar weer wil kuns neem?
Would you like to do art again next year?
NEE WANT KUNS WOULD NIE OP HOER SKOOL AANGEBIED NIE
- EK BEDANK U VIR U SAMEWERKING
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR SO-OPERATION.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PROJECT - SECOND STAGE

7.1 Introduction

The second stage of the action research project was an attempt to develop an understanding of art education from a historical-hermeneutic perspective and a practical interest. The positivist paradigm of perception is replaced by the paradigm of language. Degenaar (1987:3) explains that

To take perception as basis of understanding is to assume that the mind has an immediate access to the world. To take language as basis of understanding is to assume that our relationship to the world is mediated. The shift from perception to language is a shift from immediacy to mediacy.

The basic assumption in the historical-hermeneutic approach to the constitution of knowledge, is that our experience is not "objective" and "value-free" but mediated by language which has to be interpreted in a socio-political and historical context. It is believed that nothing is anywhere ever simply present and the contextuality and intertextuality of phenomena is emphasized. The focus is on understanding which McCarthy (1984:56) explains as follows:

The general orientation guiding the "historical-hermeneutic" sciences is rooted in an anthropologically deep-seated interest in securing and expanding possibilities of mutual and self-understanding in the conduct of life.

The interpretive approach to art teaching will involve not only description of personal and social reality, but also an attempt to express subjective understanding of the networks of meanings and social rules involved in such experienced reality. It is believed that extended understanding could result in more rational, authentic

and informed communication and action and that it could contribute to the transformation of personal and social consciousness.

Ewert (1991:352) suggests that the interpretive approach can be enlightening for those involved in the educational process by providing practical knowledge about the interpretation and understanding of actions. This practical knowledge involves:

- revealing the contextual social rules and assumptions that underlie their actions;
- identifying the social norms and expectations bounding the range of acceptable policy actions;
- and revealing how their actions are, or will be, perceived by other participants in the educational process.

The criterion should be whether the interpretation is right and it will be right when it is authentic for the individual involved and mutually comprehensible for everyone involved.

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It is also believed that in the social world humans construct reality while reality constructs their understanding of it. Knowledge is seen as "a social construction tied to the interests, perceptions, and experiences of those who produced and negotiated its meaning" (Giroux 1981:13). It is believed that meanings are produced and reproduced by individuals and groups in a society and that they are constituted and sustained through the interpretive activities of individuals.

Understanding is seen as context bound and influenced by presuppositions, situatedness and value systems handed down in history by tradition. This belief creates the possibility of multiple and probabilistic approaches to formulating understandings about art and art education. The idea is for people, including

students and educators, to problematize what counts as valuable knowledge, to determine how knowledge is socially organized, transmitted and assessed in society and in the educational situation. To uncover underlying values and assumptions embedded in their understandings and to analyze set norms and standards in terms of their social and historic context.

The idea that superior ruling class "expert" understanding of cultural production should be reproduced through education is rejected. Subjective understanding is valued and the individual's own interpretation of reality is accepted in creative production. The rejection of one "right" answer to the problems of creative production leads to the rejection of objective superior knowledge, the hierarchy in the education situation and the unbalanced power relations. The students learn to trust their own interpretations and understandings and they are empowered in the process. They do not have to fear being viewed as incompetent if they develop an individual and subjective understanding through the creative process. They can reveal the network of meanings constituting their reality while being reconstituted by them.

When one's own interpretation and reflective understanding of relational reality in art production is allowed and appreciated, cultural life is enriched and production is not choked with rules and regulations, norms and standards. It opens up possibilities of the expression and sharing of deep and personal understandings and commitments which could contribute to the construction of a healthy society.

In the second stage of the project we explored the notion that the function of the language of art is not only the description of visual reality in isolation from its position in the social totality, but that it "interacted with, and sometimes determined, other social dimensions" (Held 1980:80).

We also realized that the signs that constitute the work of art do not have fixed meanings and final interpretations. The signs we choose to use and their interpretation are socially constructed and historically embedded. In the drawings the students made in the second stage they communicated their own understanding and interpretation of their experienced reality instead of drawing somebody else's idea of what art is. These experiences were mediated by a sign language which is not neutral but qualified by, among other things, culture, context, ideology and relations of power. Gadamer (1975:261) describes understanding of the text (language or image) as

the interplay between the movement of tradition and that of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning which guides our understanding of the text is not an action of subjectivity; it is determined instead by what is common to us and the tradition and binds us to it. What is common, however, is constantly being developed in our relationship to tradition.

I hoped to move away from the understanding that "art" is a homogeneous product which is determined, controlled and owned by the ruling class; that the ruling class norms are naturalized and valued above others; and that hierarchies privilege certain signs and meanings to the disadvantage of others.

It was important to understand that all signification is equally valuable because it communicates relations in and between phenomena and people. It reveals norms and values of societies and it can contribute to a deeper self- and social understanding.

7.2 The session

In this stage of the project there were many new students who registered late. I explained what had happened the previous week and shared with the class my

interpretation of the drawings and the written answers as well as my emotional reaction on the first session of the first stage.

I then introduced the second stage of the action research project. The students were asked to make a drawing in which they communicate something about their own lives. I explained that, in contrast to the previous week when they had to draw their idea of what art looked like, they had to try not to make what they saw as art, but to draw anything which communicates something about themselves, the time and place in which they live, their thoughts, fantasies, dreams or whatever else is important to them. I asked them to be as honest and sincere as possible and I suggested they should make something happen in the drawings. The idea was for them to tell a story about their lives by making a drawing. They had 35 minutes for this activity after which we had a group discussion session.

I emphasized the idea that they had to communicate their own lived experiences by recalling and drawing their understanding of something that had happened to them. I suggested that they recalled the event and that they should then concentrate fully on the paper because as they drew, the drawing would start making suggestions as to what they should do to give form to what came to mind. I warned that if they did not concentrate, they would not hear those suggestions. They also had to keep what they wanted to communicate in mind all the time to ensure that it will flow through their fingers onto the paper even if they believed they could not draw.

This time I gave them pen and ink as a new medium, and explained the quality of the medium and the possibilities of the technique. When they started working it was absolutely quiet in the classroom and everyone concentrated on their own work. I kept myself busy and did not interfere or move through the class. Fifteen minutes before the end of the art period I asked them to put their drawings out on a series of low cupboards and to form groups to discuss and report back on how they found

this session. When they put their work out, there was great interest in each other's work. They stood looking at what they had drawn and made jokes about and comments on the work.

Serious group discussions followed in which the following were shared:

GROUP ONE: They felt more relaxed this week and they could share their feelings. They found the previous week very stressful because everything was new and foreign. This week they felt more relaxed and they felt free to express their feelings. It was a better experience than last week.

GROUP TWO: They found the process very interesting, enjoyed drawing and it was a new experience for them. They found that they were starting to form a new image of what art is and they hoped to learn a lot more. They also felt that they learnt something about giving vent to their feelings through the art making process.

GROUP THREE: They were excited the previous week, but some felt restless during this session. Others enjoyed drawing but found it difficult, because it did not come naturally. It is not easy just to draw when you are not artistic. Some of them also learnt that it is not very easy to express your feelings by using art materials.

GROUP FOUR: Last week they were restless because they did not know what to draw. They felt off the track. This week they at least had an idea of what they had to draw. Some of them enjoyed using their imagination, and realized that it was not necessary to be an artist to be able to make a

drawing. If you use your imagination you can draw. They came to the conclusion that every person is an artist in his or her own territory.

After the second stage of the action research project I offered a slide show on and an introduction to the production of cultural workers active in places like Guguletu, Mitchell's Plain, Khayelitsha, Soweto, and Venda. The social and political aspects of cultural production were emphasized and placed within historical context. This information is not a requirement in the syllabus, but because there is often no desire to gain knowledge unless it will be examined, I expect the students to prepare these notes for examination purposes. I do this because I believe in the importance of being knowledgeable about the cultural production of the broader community who are giving visible form to their experiences of reality which could help us to understand our own and other people's social and political subjectivities.

They have subsequently received notes on the "experience of the work of art" which cover my personal interpretation of the requirements of the syllabus. The syllabus prescribes the distribution of knowledge about the "formal analysis of the work of art" referring to the analysis of a work of art in terms of its elements and principles.

This expectation is informed by a formal approach to looking at art. The assumption here is that the work of art consists of elements that are organized according to principles to form a unity and that these elements can be analyzed separately and in relation to the whole to gain an understanding of the work.

In this positivist approach the ideological nature of art and its socio-historical context are ignored. Subject and object, form and content, fact and value, means and ends, parts and whole, work of art and society are seen as logically independent of each other. Hadjinicolaou (1979:67) refers to the autonomy of works of art and art history when he posits that the only reality that exists for positivist art historians

"lies in the works themselves, each considered as a single concrete world standing on its own." Looking at the work of art from a positivist framework includes for the viewing subject a description and analysis of what can be seen in the work as an object. Hadjinicolaou further says that "whatever is not 'fact', whatever is not an unalloyed description of 'what you see', whatever 'deviates' towards 'non-artistic realities' is eliminated."

Giroux and Simon (1989:12) believe that dominant bourgeois culture is often characterized by such a formal approach to art which is "a celebration of a formalism, an elective distance from the real world, with all of its passions, emotions, and feelings" and an "investment of form - a celebration of stylized detachment." They also believe that there is

often a space in the cultural forms embraced by subordinate groups that is organized around a sensibility in which the needs, emotions, passions of the participants largely resonate with the material and ideological structures of day-to-day life".

I believe that students, through the process of self-reflection while expressing their own reality in the art making process, can become more aware of and legitimize their own conscious, subconscious and unconscious subjectivities to empower themselves. They can also become more aware of the underlying processes through which meanings are socially constructed and power relations created and maintained.

7.3 Critical analysis

In the second project I suggested to the students that they forget their preconceived idea of what art was to express in a drawing their own understanding of an experience of their own. I also suggested that they could use words in the drawings

to indicate what was happening and to show what people were thinking or/and saying. I introduced them to a new medium and technique which they probably have never used to further alienate them from previous preconceptions and experiences in drawing.

They were to construct meaning through using art materials ignoring existing norms and criteria for making art. These existing norms and criteria are naturalized by the ruling class through state mechanisms like the media, school and church. Fitzgerald (1989:161) refers to ruling class culture "as a mechanism of social control by international (and sometimes local) monopoly capital." It is conceptualized as an alien imposition on the authentic culture of the people. Freire (1972:121) refers to "cultural invasion" in which the potential of the invaded is ignored and the views of the invaders imposed: "Cultural invasion is thus always an act of violence against the persons of the invaded culture, who lose their originality or face the threat of losing it."

Those who are invaded begin to respond to the values, standards and goals of the invaders whom they empower while disempowering themselves through cultural inauthenticity.

The values of the latter (invaders) thereby become the pattern for the former (invaded). The more invasion is accentuated and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, talk like them (Freire 1972:122).

I hoped to create an understanding of this form of dehumanizing oppression and the possibility to resist it by legitimizing the students' own experiences told in their own voice. Their individual intrinsic meaning structures could be revealed and their own understanding and interpretation of the events could be expressed by using art materials in any possible manner.

The students produced very authentic pictures in the sense that they were mostly very honest and personal expressions of their own values, thoughts and experiences. When I displayed about forty of these pictures in the passage where students pass all day long, there was immediate interest and big groups of students gathered to look and comment on them. This enormous interest lasted for at least two weeks. When I asked the students who made the drawings why they thought people were so interested, one student said that it was because the pictures were about their lives. In the rather smug expressions on some faces and the self-confident attitudes of other students I deducted that they were very proud of their work and the fact that people were looking at it. A few lecturers also commented on the work saying it was very meaningful. Some of these drawings are included at the end of chapter seven.

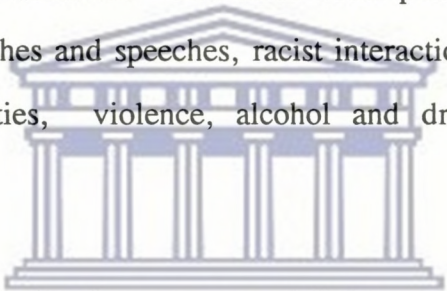
118 Drawings were made by the students in the second stage of the project and the subject matter in these was:



LANDSCAPE	87,2%
- more socio-political	50,8%
- more personal	28,8%
- not much happening	7,6%
PEOPLE INSIDE A ROOM	8,4%
- personal dreams	3,4%
- enjoying themselves	4,2%
- a woman being raped	0,8%
OTHER	5,9%

political issues, washing on line, graffiti, a portrait of a crying woman, abstract forms with recognizable elements, a surrealistic drawing about apartheid education.

When I looked at the 118 pen and ink drawings made by the students in the second session I was very surprised to find that 87,2% of these drawings were representations of people in a landscape. The landscapes differed in the sense that they described different environments like scenes in townships, rural and urban areas. These landscapes differed from the drawings in the first stage of the project because they were now filled with people who were not passive spectators but involved in a whole spectrum of activities. 79,6% of the portrayed activities I interpreted as being either of a more personal or a more socio-political nature. The more personal subject matters referred to romantic encounters, enjoyment in nature, sport, dancing and a car accident. The more socio-political images referred to political actions like marches and speeches, racist interaction between people, class distinctions and inequalities, violence, alcohol and drug abuse, poverty and religion.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with columns and a pediment.

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In the majority of these drawings a very definite personal interpretation and understanding of reality was visible and the student's own voice was heard. If I compare these with the first drawings it seemed that there was a vast difference in the involvement of the student with the creation of the image. The first drawings could be interpreted as neutral, value-free and lacking in emotional involvement. Some of the second drawings indicated strong subjective and emotional involvement in the use of form and in the way the materials were applied to express the specific emotional content of the experience. In quite a few drawings, as in the rape scene and the drawing about satanism, the figures were drawn in line and then partly covered with big blotches of ink.

This stage of the action research project had a practical interest and a historical-hermeneutic approach. When art education has a practical interest, the objective

approach to reality is replaced by an intersubjective approach to the interpretation and understanding of human interaction.

Actions cannot be observed in the same way as natural objects. They can only be interpreted by reference to the actor's motives, intentions or purposes in performing the action. To identify these motives and intentions correctly is to grasp the 'subjective meaning' the action has to the actor (Carr & Kemmis 1986:88).

The constitutive interest of the interpretative approach lies not only in subjective interpretation but actions must also be understandable to other participants within a social context. It lies in intersubjective consensus, understanding, and communicative discourse.

Interpretative rationality ... has a deep-seated interest in understanding the communicative and symbolic patterns of interaction that shape individual and intersubjective meaning (Giroux 1981:12).

But understanding and interpreting reality is only the first step towards a critical approach to life. Habermas criticizes the interpretive approach because he believes that it does not acknowledge distortion of social and self-knowledge. It seems to be possible that the "norms, expectations, and understandings of action can be both meaningful to its members and totally false" (Ewert 1991:353).

The next step is to render the nature of one's own individual self and that of social life problematic. Habermas describes this form of critique as

relentless criticism of all existing conditions, relentless in the sense that the criticism is not afraid of its findings and just as little afraid of conflict with the powers that be (Giroux & Freire 1986:xii).

Although the drawings made in this stage were personal interpretations of the experienced reality of the students, nearly all the drawings were uncritical in that they stated an understanding without asking the question "why": what are the underlying conditions, the social consequences and implications of our activities. In the interpretative approach to education

the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the action are taken seriously, but without any deliberate attempt to contextualize this within an understanding of power relations within society (Nicolson & van den Berg 1989:16).

Critique of personal and socially constructed meanings can be a way of liberating one's mind and setting oneself free to resist powers of oppression. This is exactly what critical theory sets out to do. In the next two chapters the third stage of the project which was informed by critical theory is documented and analyzed.



DAWIE SEPTEMBER TE

CLASKER CAFE
Coca Cola

H.L.K. NOET HARD
LIVING

die MOBSTERS
SE MASE
VAN SPIKREK

the stop where
you pay law

NOG NYN WAF
PERCELI in die
VALLEY

SPIKREK COLIN
BOET HOME
HAMMER AND ONE SMINT



NOG AMERICAN

HOSH

NYN TOWER

TIDELIA



DAWIE SEPTEMBER

u21





H.A.T. VELOEN CD 121

TERUGKEER VAN DIE BOESMANS
NA DIE CEDERBERG



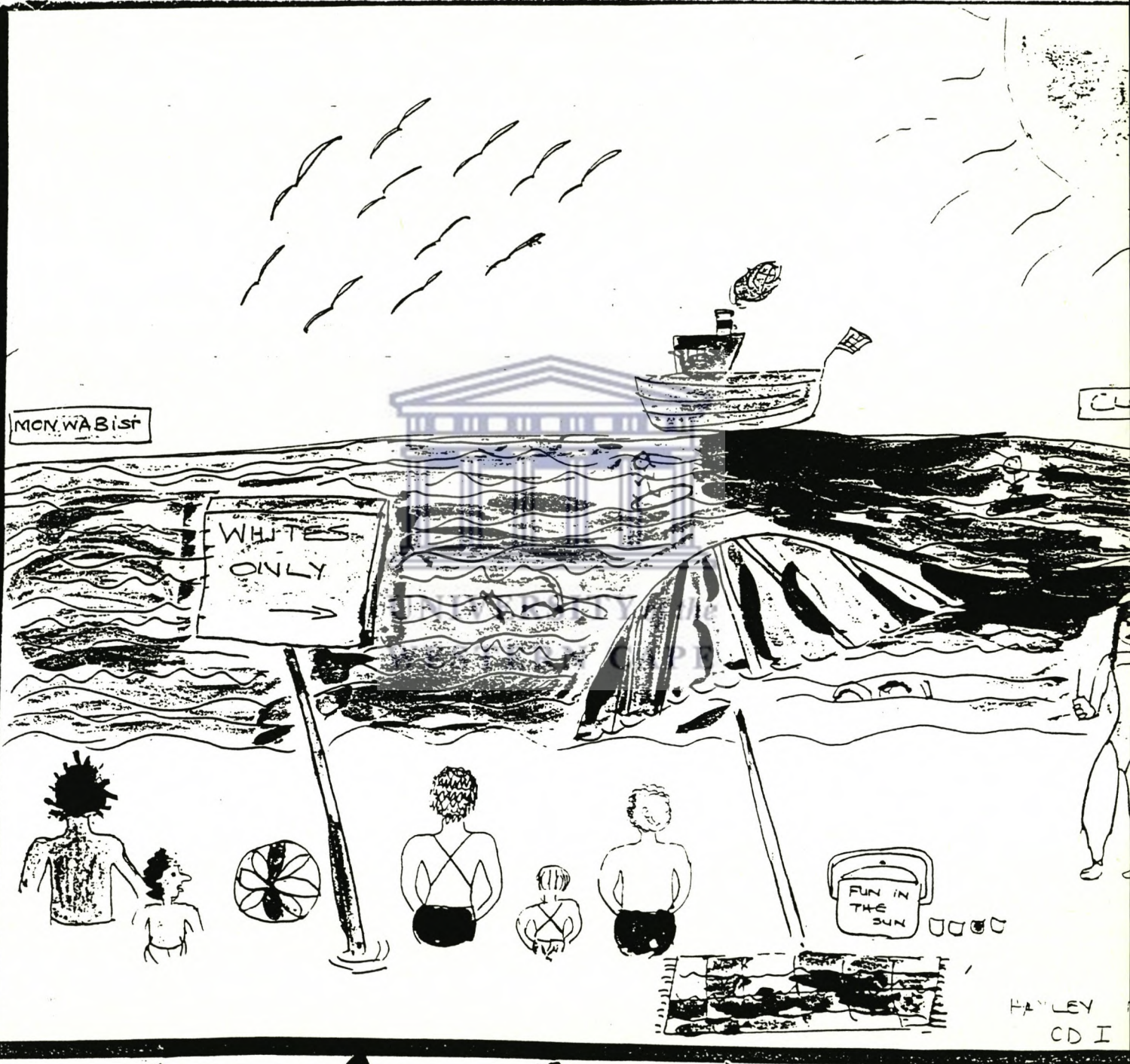




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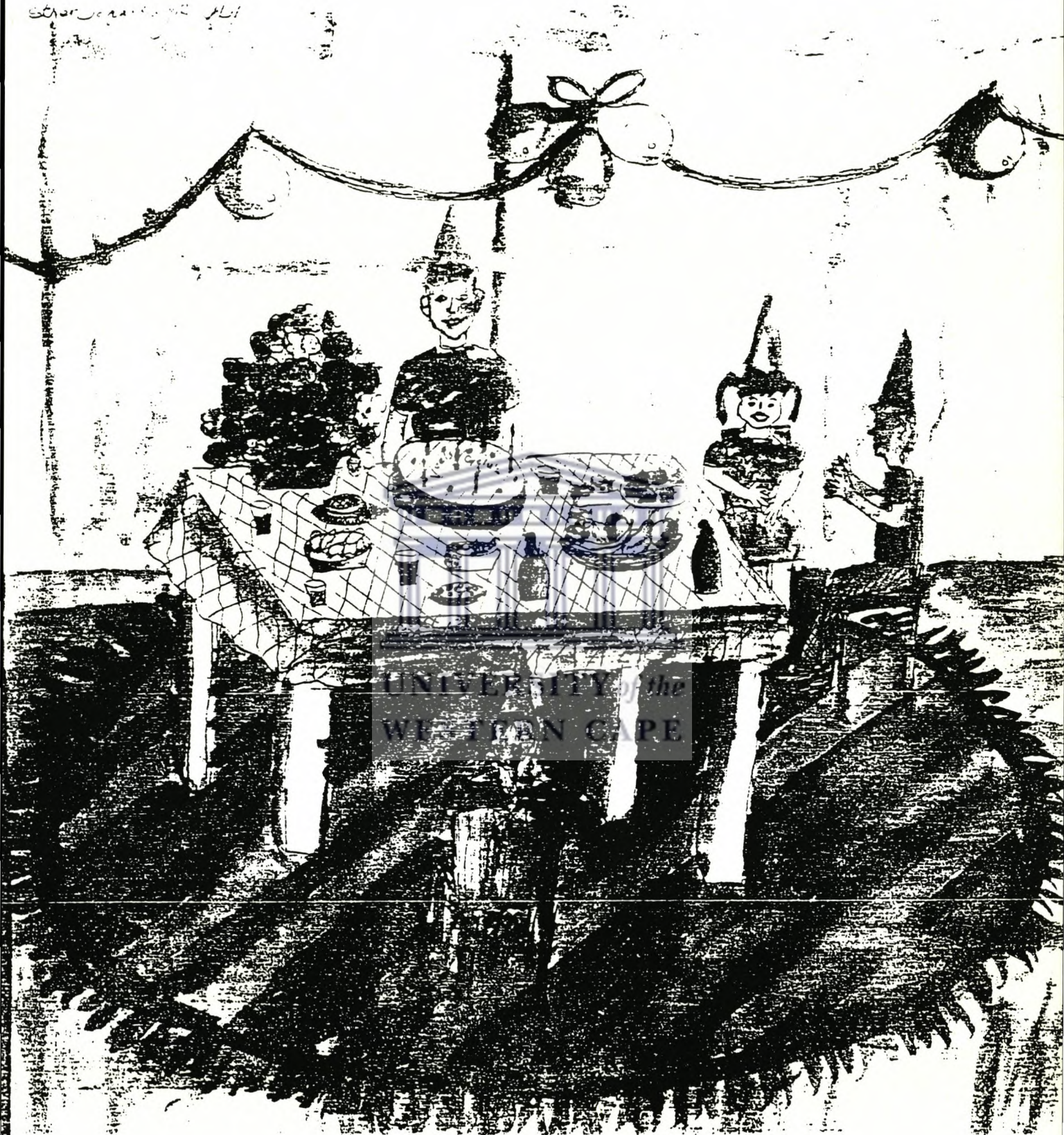


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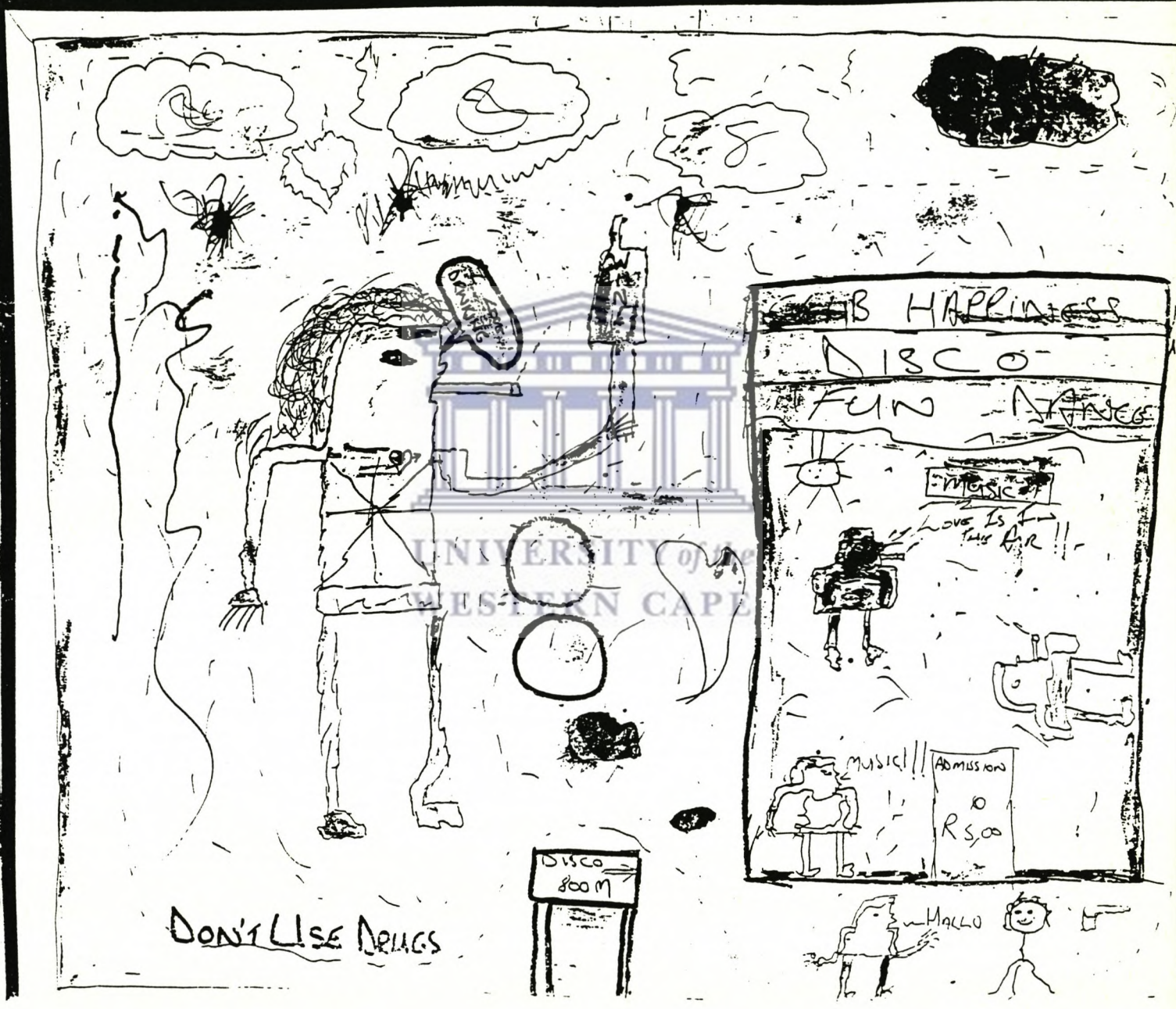
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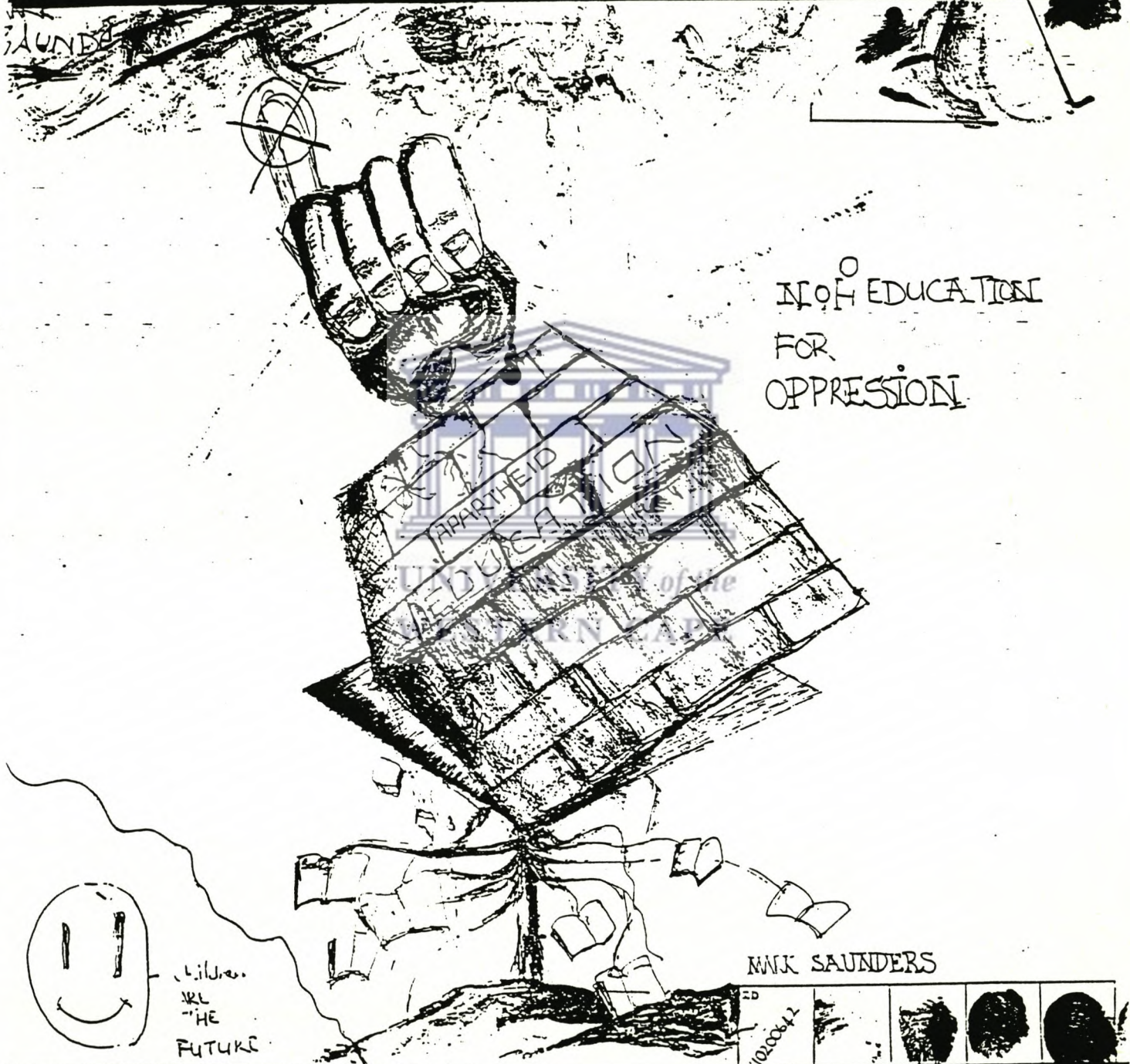
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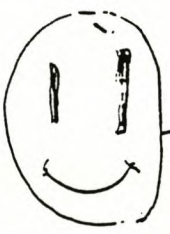




Pace



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ARE
THE
FUTURE

MARK SAUNDERS

10100642

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PROJECT - THIRD STAGE, FIRST SESSION

8.1 Introduction

I now view the first two sessions of my action research project as reconnaissance. It was a process of resource development in which I gained a better understanding of the students involved in the project and of our ideas about art and art education. During the third stage we attempted to gain a better understanding of the values and assumptions underlying our educational interaction with the hope of making it more empowering and emancipatory.

The first stage of the project was informed by a technical interest and much of what happened could be described as a positivist approach to art teaching. I had gathered information about the students and their idea of what art is in a very positivist manner. Similarly, the expectations of the students were based on positivist assumptions.

The second stage evolved very much within the interpretive framework of thinking which is informed by a practical interest. I asked the students to draw their understanding and interpretation of any personal experience placed within the South African context.

The third stage, which will be discussed below, was an attempt to work within the critical framework informed by an emancipatory interest. The aim was to develop skills to think critically about our lives in relation to others, the society and the world. I hoped that this stage of the project would be collaborative, reflective,

enlightening and emancipatory for all the participants and that our involvement would be transformatory on a micro and macro level.

We had to integrate theory and practice as described by Carr and Kemmis (1986:146-148) as including all knowledge-constitutive interests and scientific methodologies by: the formation and extension of critical theorems (technical); the organization of processes of enlightenment (practical); and the organization of action (emancipation).

8.2 The session

Because emancipation and transformation are central interests of critical pedagogy I decided, for the third stage of the action research project, to look at aspects of our society which frustrate and constrain individuals. We had collaboratively to develop critiques of self and social conditions which sustain dependence, inequality and exploitation in order to prevent us from being liberated and emancipated members of a just and truly democratic society.

This stage of the project was informed by the idea that the purpose of education (Misgeld 1975:36) is the development of critical capacities (enlightenment) and of commitment to action (emancipation). Cherryholmes (1981:137) advocates a change in "citizenship education" from the presentation of social reality as fixed and stable to critical reflection on social reality.

Collaboratively we had to identify problem areas in ourselves and our society; we had to uncover the historic, social and material conditions of these problems; and we had to develop ways of dealing with these problems and finding possible solutions to them. We had to find ways, in the process of communication through

word and image, of transforming ourselves and the society in which we live. The first session of the third stage began by including the following question in an art appreciation test: identify a few aspects of our South African society which you personally experience as problematic.

The decision that we would look at certain "problems" in this project was made unilaterally by me. I did not consult with the students about this decision and from subsequent discussions with them I gathered that some students felt art should be the creation of something beautiful rather than dealing with problems. When a student touched on this issue again in one of the classes, I recognized this as an opportunity to open discussion on the topic and an unplanned but very meaningful and interesting debate followed in which the purely aesthetic and the socially involved approaches to art were discussed.

The students who believed art should be the creation of decorative and beautiful objects argued with those who thought art could play a social role in communicating and exposing unjust and undemocratic aspects of our society. Some students adopted very clear positions, making for a discussion that was very lively. I played a neutral role to keep order and to allow everyone to state their views and to argue their points. I noticed that some students, who were not outspoken and who possibly did not have an opinion at the beginning of the discussion, started thinking about this aspect of art and speaking their minds in the course of the session.

After the test I went through all the problems the students had identified and made the following list:

- politics and economics: racism, domination, suppression, discrimination, lack of human rights, ideological conflicts, unemployment, housing;

- education: injustices, inequalities, autocracy, illiteracy, cultural deprivation, inarticulateness, uncritical attitudes;
- social: unemployment, housing, crime, violence, gangsters, pollution, child abuse, alcohol and drugs, aids, licentiousness, adolescent pregnancy; and
- religion: conflict between different religions and interpretations, satanism.

When the students came to class again I explained to them the basic principles of a critical approach to educational practice. We discussed characteristics of a critical approach to art education and tried to work out how we could organize the next project to be informed by these principles. I asked them whether they would prefer to work individually or in groups. The majority preferred group work. I suggested that we divide the class into groups according to their interest in any of the above problem areas. I circulated the list of problems, asking students to write their names next to the problem they wished to investigate and base their next project on. From the list we formed groups of a maximum of six members. More than one group could work on the same problem if they so desired.

There were twenty groups in three different classes. Six groups chose to work on adolescent pregnancy, four on drug abuse, three on satanism, two on child abuse, one group each on pollution, AIDS, black and white dominance, illiteracy, and art in South Africa.

The groups then had to define the specific problem they were choosing and discuss it in terms of the underlying conditions and possible solutions to the problem. They had to make notes of the main points, report back to the class and hand the notes in to me. The discussions were active with what seemed to me lively contributions by the members of the groups, while the report back session was formal and significant in terms of the content reflecting involvement with the problems.

I have decided to include some of the most comprehensive reports here to give a flavour of the discussions that had taken place.

REPORT ONE: Tiener swangerskappe.

Dit is 'n groot wêreld probleem. Dit is op die oomblik 'n groot kopseer vir Suid-Afrika. As ons kyk na die kwaliteit van ons lewenstandaard, d.w.s. die lewenstandaard wat 'n laagtepunt bereik. Die statistieke is nog steeds 'n bron van kommer omdat dit elke jaar steeds toeneem.

Ouers moet meer gesels saam met kinders oor seksualiteit en dit nie probeer wegsteek onder 'n kombers nie. (Omdat hulle nie openlik saam met kinders gesels nie.) Hulle verwag dat die onderwyser die kinders moet inlig. Min inligting. Baie meisies probeer op so 'n manier 'n ou kry. Seuns probeer hulle vriende beïndruk. Kinders rebelleer teen ouers, omdat hulle hul ouers wil wys dat hulle groot genoeg is en nie meer kinders nie. Eksperimenteer.

Dit is baie belangrik vir ouers om openlik met kinders oor hierdie soort probleme te gesels. Kinders moet altyd vry voel om saam met ouers te gesels. Voordat kinders puberteit stadium bereik moet hulle al die inligting het.



REPORT TWO: Satanisme

Dis duiwels wat meestal onder die dekmantel van sataniste moord pleeg, aanrandings laat gebeur ens. Meestal in swart geklee.

Mense laat hulle te maklik beïnvloed deur satanistiese sektes. Onskuldige mense kry seer. Mense wat nie sataniste is nie word geoffer bv. klein kindertjies. Mense wat reeds aan die sataniste behoort leef so in vrees dat hulle nooit daaraan dink om die satanistiese groep te verlaat nie. So vererger hulle die probleem en so bestaan satanisme net voort. Sataniste speel op gevoel van mense deur danse, rituele, seks.

Mense gaan dood. Aanrandings kom voor. "Geredde" sataniste is vir die res van hul lewe emosioneel en geestelik geruïneer.

REPORT THREE: Satanisme

Die begeerte na seksuele molestering. Baie mense verlang ook om sekere bonatuurlike magte te besit. Ook die feit dat sommige begin te glo daar is verwarrings in die Bybel. Omdat God onsigbaar is glo die mens nie in die bestaan van 'n God nie.

Van kleins af moet die kinders baie geestelik opgevoed word. Alle onduidelikheid wat hulle het, moet probeer beantwoord word. Mense wat betrokke is in die satanisme moet onmiddelik behandeling kry. Indien hulle nie wil hoor, moet daar streng met hulle opgetree word, want hulle is 'n bedreiging vir ander mense. Ek stel voor hulle moet ernstig gestraf word sodat hulle kan besef indien hulle nie staak nie, hulle streng gestraf sal word. Daar moet gedurig aandag geskenk word aan die sataniste.

REPORT FOUR: Dwelmmisbruik

Die misbruik van dwelmmiddels en alkohol wat die lewenspatroon en gedrag beïnvloed. Soorte dwelms: Mandrax, dagga, alkohol, LSD, gom, kokaine, heroïne.

Wat gee aanleiding tot dwelmmisbruik? Depressie, maatskaplike probleme bv. kindermishandeling, werkloosheid, huweliksprobleme. Puberteitstadium (ervaar moeilik).

Die gevolge van dwelmmisbruik: Korttermyn - vergeet probleme, leef in fantasiewêreld. Langtermyn - Verslaaf daaraan. Verloor vriende, gesin (huwelik). Verloor werk. Sterf.

Hoe kan dit opgelos word? Oplossing lê by jouself (deursettingsvermoë). Moed hê om daarvoor te wil praat. Sielkundige hulp die beste. Kry ander belangstellings.

REPORT FIVE: Kindermishandeling

Kindermolestering, seksuele molestering, geweld, lyfstraf. Dit is wanneer jong kinders van die ouderdom omtrent vier jaar seksueel gemolesteer word of gewelddadige lyfstraf toegedien word wat hul fisies sowel as geestelik knak.

Ouers ontwikkel drankprobleem. Frustrasie en stres is deel van die probleem deurdat die ouers hul probleme op die kinders uithaal. Finansiële probleme lei ook tot mishandeling. Ouers wat tiranniese houdings toon.

Geestelik versteurde persone wat kinders molesteer bv. Pedofiel. Dwelmverslaafdes (ouers). Kinders moet vrymoedigheid ontwikkel om openlik met iemand te praat wanneer hy/sy mishandel was. Ouers moet kinders inlig oor die gevare op straat.

Gemeenskapsorganisasie moet gemeenskap bewus maak van probleme en streng optree teen kinder-mishandelaars / molesteerders.

REPORT SIX: Swart en wit dominansie

Probleem apartheid. Rasse diskriminasie, geen politieke stemreg. Korrupsie vier hoogty in land. Landloosheid (ontsê). Onderlinge uitroeiers.

Swartes onderdruk, kapitalisme, blankes alleen stemreg, blankes besit grond. Apartheid moet uit die weg geruim word, sosialisme, nie-rassige onderwysstelsel. Revolusie. 'n Worker's parlement.

REPORT SEVEN: Vigs

Oorsake: Heteroseksuele gedrag, rondslapery, spuitnaalde (onhigiënies), kondome.

Gevolge: Dood, smart, pyn, lyding, afsondering.

Moontlike oplossings: Veiliger seks bv. een seksmaat, ken seksmaat se gewoontes. Dra van kondome, inligtingsveldtogte, monogamie.

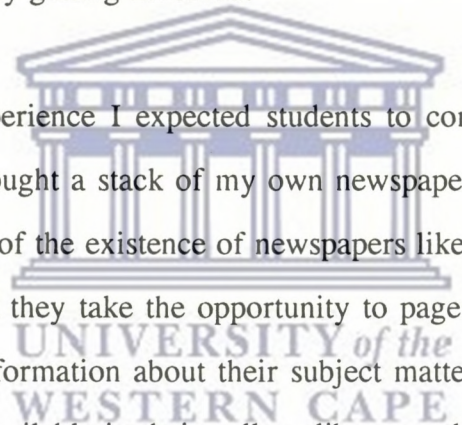
After the report-back session I asked the students to start doing research and collecting resource materials such as magazine and newspaper articles, poems, literature, photographs and any other information about the problem areas on which they would be working. This information would then inform and extend our understanding of the problem, help us to uncover the different historical, material and social conditions surrounding the problem and give us ideas about the different ways of dealing with or finding solutions to this problem.

I asked the groups to try meeting to discuss the problem before the next art class. I also asked them to bring all the collected information to the classroom because not only would it provide us with ideas, but the resources could also be used in the works by physically integrating them into the drawing and painting process.

All the students arrived at the next art class without having discussed the problem and without any collected resources. I asked them why this had happened. The given reasons included not having time for research because of a too full program,

not having access to newspapers and magazines, that they forgot about the project, that they were too lazy to do extra work.

I carefully reminded them that collaboration involved commitment and a desire to be active in making decisions and to contribute to the development of a process. It excludes passively awaiting instruction from others and the uncritical reception of knowledge. If they wanted a democratic teaching situation they had to become creatively involved with what happened in the classroom. I tried to explain to them that they were perpetuating an autocratic and undemocratic process by not being prepared to think critically and to change the power relations by informing themselves and by actively getting involved.



Because of previous experience I expected students to come to class without any resources and so had brought a stack of my own newspapers to class. Most of the students were not aware of the existence of newspapers like SOUTH and WEEKLY MAIL. I suggested that they take the opportunity to page through these papers to see if they could find information about their subject matter. I also told them that these newspapers were available in their college library and that for the next session they should try to photostat articles and photographs from these papers.

They expressed amazement at the content of these magazines and throughout the session there was discussion and interested activity. Some students brought parts of newspapers to me and asked me to keep them aside for them to photostat during the coming week. At the end of the session I again reminded the students of their responsibility to become involved actively with the development of this project.

Because of a mass meeting the next art session was cancelled and the vacation and practice teaching followed. When they arrived in class first period on the Monday morning after practice teaching two students had collected some information while

the others came empty handed. We discussed the situation and decided to postpone the project until the next week because they were feeling a bit disorientated after such a long absence from the college.

In the meantime I had decided to ask a "triangulator" to join one of our sessions to help us gain a better understanding of what happens in the class. Although I find the concept "triangulation" problematic and limiting because, as Elliott explains, it refers to three components of the research situation: the "teacher", the "student body" and the "outsider" (McKernan 1991 p190). I do not believe that the "student body" can be seen as a unity, but that all the individuals in the educational situation will offer a multiple of viewpoints and interpretations. I would prefer to refer to the function of someone who comes from outside the group involved in the educational process as an outsider perspective.

This perspective is of central importance in education in general as well as in the process of action research. Members of an action research group can become so involved in one another and in the internal dynamics of the process that they can develop a framework within which they operate and out of which they can hardly move. The outsider can enter such a group from a different framework, initially hopefully from a neutral position, with the aim of discovering exactly what the power relations between as well as the values and assumptions of the participants are. Through this temporary involvement such a person can effect change and be changed by the experience.

It is important for such an outsider to study intensely what is happening and how it is happening and to write a report as well as get involved in discussions about all these experiences and perceptions. These discussions and reports are of cardinal importance to stimulate further understanding from different viewpoints and

perspectives and to compare the understanding of the outsider with those of the insiders.

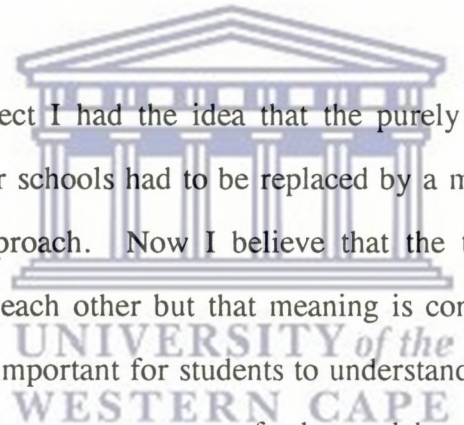
When I saw the students again, I explained to them the concept of "triangulation" and asked them whether they would object to having a "triangulator", a "neutral" person who would come into our class the next week to attempt to describe her understanding of what happened in that session. We discussed the possibility after which it was decided that it would be acceptable.

I gave them information about who the possible "triangulator" could be and what her function would be during the session. I also explained that the perspective of all the people involved could then be used to form a more accurate idea of precisely what had happened and how it had happened. This would include a report by the "triangulator", my report of how I had experienced what happened, and their (the students') individual reports of how they had made sense of the session. I emphasized that the description and analysis of the session would be incomplete without their reports.

During the rest of that art session we worked on a previously uncompleted wire construction project. When I asked the students whether they could remember what we had done during the last art session, most could not remember till one student said we had done nothing. When I questioned the statement he explained that they had only looked at the newspapers. To him that meant doing nothing. While they were working I asked them whether they enjoyed this more critical and involved approach to doing art or whether they would prefer just to do what I asked them to. There were contradicting inputs. Some students felt that the talking and reading were a waste of time, while others felt that it was extending their understanding of what art is. One student said that he only wanted to make things. He did not want to talk so much in the art class. When I asked him why, he said he saw art as

creating objects. I offered my view that art was a form of communication and that we always think when we do things. I said I was just trying to stimulate critical thinking while we were doing.

This difference in opinion is to me very much related to the question of purely aesthetic decorative art and socially involved art. I used to think that only socially involved art had meaning; that decorative art had no meaning. But in the course of this project I came to the conclusion that in both these approaches meaning is constructed, whether it is meaning involved with decorative aspects or with aspects of social concern. All art also has aesthetic qualities whether it deals with beauty or with the lack of it.



When I started this project I had the idea that the purely aesthetic and technicist approach prevalent in our schools had to be replaced by a more meaningful socially involved and critical approach. Now I believe that the two approaches are not logically independent of each other but that meaning is constructed in all forms of making art and that it is important for students to understand why they do what they do and what the social consequences are of what and how they do it. Decisions have to be taken reflexively from a socio-historical perspective and they should be rational and accountable.

8.3 Critical analysis

In this project I needed a lot of courage to risk moving into unknown territory. Although I had attempted previously to deal with social issues in art classes, these attempts were mostly intuitively structured and not critically analyzed and understood. In this project I attempted to develop a clear understanding of critical pedagogy, to have a critical approach to education informed by an emancipatory

interest, to uncover underlying assumptions, to understand the social consequences and implications of our action and to articulate the understandings developed and actions taken.

Critical social scientists, like the interpretive social scientists, reject the positivist notion of rationality, objectivity and truth in educational practice. They also find the interpretive approach insufficient for having the capacity to understand behaviour, from the participants' perspective, but lacking the capacity to expose the distorted knowledge underlying the understanding as well as distorting the understanding itself.

It is believed that self understanding could be distorted by reality and that the emancipation of all participants in the educational process is of primary importance. Whereas positivist instrumental rationality asks the question "how" to do things to predict, control and dominate, the critical theorists ask "why": what are the social consequences and implications of our activities? These are the questions we tried to answer in this stage of the project.

By providing participants with the skills and resources that will enable them to think critically about knowledge and the educational process, it is hoped that they can emancipate themselves from the often autocratic and hierarchically organized system in which they are involved.

In art education the critical approach creates the possibility for self and social critique through the use of art materials and processes. It is not only important for students to learn about a subject but also to learn skills through which they could develop a deeper understanding of the subject in its social and political context. Kelly (1986:123) believes that "what children may learn *through* a subject rather than what they learn *of* it" is crucial.

Habermas' theory of communication, and the validity claims on which it is based, offered a way of criticizing distorted communication and facilitating rational language to contribute to the creation of social freedom and justice. It is possible that when communication is not based on these validity claims (comprehensibility, truth, rightness/correctness and truthfulness/sincerity) communication through art could become distorted and it could be used as another mechanism which we impose on others and ourselves and through which we contribute to our own oppression and that of others.

The students engaged in collaborative decision making in terms of the problem being chosen, the underlying conditions, possible solutions and the meanings being constructed in the preparation of the group drawings. The situation was created for communicative action in which participants could reflectively engage in self and social critique. Passive acceptance of decisions made by others was rejected while participants had to accept responsibility for their decisions and actions. These decisions had to be taken reflexively from within a social and historical context with the specific interest to emancipate individuals and transform society.

Instead of an objective, disinterested perspective on society, a personal vantage point placed a greater responsibility on the individual to develop disciplined and rationally accountable social practice. Ewert argues that educators who have distorted self and social views inhibit their own development and that of others. They also maintain repressive social systems "such as schools, that prevent a person from developing his or her full capacity for freedom and autonomy" (1991:355). In collaboration action can be questioned and critically evaluated in terms of the contribution it makes to the transformation of socio-economic and political conditions.

From the perspective of critical theory communication through art cannot be a value-free process but it is socially constructed and historically embedded. A formal approach to art education limits the possibility of making a profound contribution to the development of human potential through art education, it limits the potential that art has to uncover and expose distortions in society and it limits the possibility of transformative communication through art. It also denies the multiple relations in and between phenomena and the idea that reality can be reproduced and produced through art.

Art was not to be created by following criteria set by "experts" and means were not to be used to achieve predetermined ends. Students were not only to express their own understanding of their lived reality but they had to deal reflexively and critically with the problems. Through this process the participants could attempt to develop an understanding of who they are, how they became who they are, whether they are what they want to be, and what they can do to become who they want to be. The development of an awareness of feelings of deprivation, frustration and constraint was important, so attempts had to be made to uncover material and social conditioning to enable the transformation of these conditions.

In art education a critical approach will also imply questioning the system in which it takes place and the social and political understanding of what art education is and could be. A critique is necessary of the specific discourse which is active around the subject, the processes through which the production of particular meanings and social practices are constructed, and the way in which the dominant ideology is perpetuated or resisted through forms of practice.

Because I understood critical pedagogy to place personal emancipation and social transformation at the center of educational practices I decided to develop this stage of the action research project around the individual identification and exposure of

problems the students experienced in their everyday life. All the problems were listed and they then had to choose one problem to deal with in the project. The students determined the content and context by which their project would be informed. They had to come to a historical, social and political understanding of these problems and possibilities to overcome them. Most of the students somehow did not want to, could not or did not have time to do research on the problem. It could also be that my decision to build the project around social problems was authoritarian and that the lack of collaboration in this area created a lack of commitment and accountability.

The students enjoyed talking and sharing ideas about these problems, but for various reasons most of them did not gather resources from books and newspapers. They preferred creating their own knowledge from their own experience for classroom use. I realized that doing research, finding "objective" statistics and reports of other people's experience (my positivist conditioning) was not how the majority of the students wanted to work. By following their wishes I learnt that they preferred to work with lived experience rather than the reality reproduced in books and newspapers. I was also impressed by the open, honest and healthy way they were prepared to talk about their own physical and emotional experiences of these problems.

One of the groups brought quite a bit of information about teenage pregnancies to class and by integrating this new knowledge into the drawing they produced deeply meaningful work. By collecting the information they gained new knowledge while the other students shared knowledge they already had. I accepted that the one way was not necessarily more valid than the other.

The project involved self- and social critique and the development of an awareness of feelings of deprivation, frustration and constraint. In the creative process the

groups were involved in intense discussion sharing their practices and uncovering ideologies, values and assumptions. In the discussions and the reports it became clear that students were very much aware of these problems, that they were prepared to discuss them openly, and that they questioned the conditions underlying these problems and the beliefs and values implicit in their understanding. Although it was sometimes difficult for the students to articulate their understandings clearly, these were made visible in the meanings constructed in their drawings.

The first session of the third stage of the project can therefore be seen as an attempt to introduce the students to critical and democratic practice, to create an environment in which they can become aware of personal and social distortions, and to discover skills and resources to transform conditions to enable processes of enlightenment and emancipation.

In the following chapter the second session, in which Gill Cowan was asked to give an outsider perspective, will be described and analyzed critically. In this session the students worked in their groups to produce one work per group. In the work they could express their understanding of a social problem, the underlying historical, social and material conditions of this problem and possible ways of dealing with and solving this problem.

CHAPTER NINE

THE PROJECT - THIRD STAGE, SECOND SESSION

9.1 Introduction

In this session we tried to reconstruct the history of the project, we tried to develop a further understanding of "triangulation" and critical democratic practice, and the students experienced working in groups having to negotiate to create one drawing per group. Examples of these drawings are included at the end of this chapter.

For this session I invited Gill Cowan, who had completed the M.Phil. (action research) course the previous year and who is an art teacher, to join our class as "triangulator". In this chapter this session is discussed and the reports by Gill and the students are documented and analyzed.

I asked Gill to make sense of what happened in this session and to write a report giving her perspective. I asked her specifically to attempt to uncover the underlying assumptions embedded in the interaction in the classroom because these assumptions often, without us being aware of it, construct what and how we interact.

9.2 The session

When the students arrived for the session Gill was already there and I introduced her as Gill Cowan, our "triangulator", and I gave some information about her studies and about the school where she is employed. I then asked her to explain to them how she understood the concept and process of "triangulation", and asked

them to organize themselves into their groups and for each group to draw (from a box) and discuss a question which I had written on pieces of paper. The questions were the following:

- Explain how you understand the project we are working on at the moment;
- How did this project start?
- How did this project develop? and
- What would you like to do today?

The groups had to discuss their question and someone had to report back to inform Gill about their discussion. During the report back session I often asked them to give more information about certain aspects to allow Gill to develop a clearer understanding of the process. I hoped that Gill would later be able to give information about the content of the report back session because I was so concerned with getting her to understand what had already happened that I did not document what was being said.

The impression I now have is that it was very difficult for the students to reconstruct what had happened because they did not have a very clear idea of what it was all about. They did not remember that the project had started when I had asked them in the test about the problems they experienced in our society; they could not give a full account of the long preparation for this project; and they also were not very clear about the reasons for and the aims of the project.

It is possible that despite my consistent attempt to develop a clear understanding of what we were involved with, this approach to teaching in general and art teaching specifically is so foreign to them that they are still not making sense of what is happening. It is also possible that I did not make myself clear enough, that I made

too many of the decisions and did not allow them to accept responsibility. Also, perhaps habitual passivity and an attitude of waiting to receive and reproduce knowledge, as is perpetuated in transmission modes of teaching, are still disempowering students. Another possible reason is that the students have not developed the skills to think critically and to be creatively active in the class situation. Their action could also still be dominated by a fear of the teacher as an authority with power over them as they have experienced in previous educational situations.

Even though I found their understanding of the project limited, I still believed that our interaction had an effect on their awareness and thinking. I thought the change from the often unequal power relations in school to a more democratic structure in the art class would probably take some time to develop.

After the report back session we discussed what media and techniques we were going to use during this session. We decided to use charcoal on a very big sheet of white paper to make a drawing in which the problem, the underlying political and social conditions and the possible solutions to the problem would be expressed by using line, tonal values and texture. I asked them to experiment with all the possibilities of the medium and explained to them that not only what they draw but also how they draw creates meaning. I demonstrated different ways of using charcoal and how to use a rubber to create marks in the areas covered with charcoal.

I reminded them that all the members in the group had to negotiate and make collective decisions on what, how and where on the paper they were going to draw. All the members in the group had to collaborate to create one drawing communicating their ideas about the problem and its possible solutions. Discussion and planning continued while they drew. Initially Gill and I left them to get on

with the drawing but later Gill moved around and joined discussions while I offered advice where it was requested. I did not intervene, but acted as a resource. At the end of the session I asked the students to write a report on their experience in the session and to hand it in the next day. I believed that the sooner they did the report, the more they would remember and I also thought that the possibility of receiving reports would be bigger if they felt they had to do it immediately.

The pressure, however, did not help and I received no reports the next day and none when they came to the next art class. I again explained how important it was for them to analyze the session critically, and asked them again to write a report. I received one report the next day. When they came to the next art class I asked the other students to write a short report during that period. Their reasons for not doing the report were once again that their program was too full. Quite a few people said they had forgotten about it. One student asked me please not to think that it was because they are unmotivated or uninterested, they simply just did not have the time.



During the two sessions which followed the triangulation we completed the drawings by discussing especially their fear of using the charcoal to create different tonal values and specifically the lack of very dark areas in the drawings. The eventual products were conceptually meaningful and technically rich and exciting.

9.3 Gill Cowan's report

My aim is enculturation ... not exposing them to a certain culture but getting them to see that everything they do is creating culture ... the act of living is creating culture ... - Sandra Kriel to Gill Cowan

Initial reflection:

I thought that this was a very significant comment, made while we were looking at some drawings on display, prior to the arrival of S.K.'s students. The problem of "culture" and what it represents for different people, and the way in which it is so often presented as reified "official" knowledge - open to some and denied to others - the unfortunate "deification" of it as "high" culture, open to an elite few and denied to the majority, removes it from the lived, everyday experience of our lives. It belongs to parastatal institutions and "them" ... As the session got under way, I began to see that what you meant by "enculturation" was emancipatory - by encouraging your students through the process of a project structured around their personal experience, to make art, you were facilitating the recognition of "culture" as something which is created by people and not collected from "out there" and placed in private collections, museums, galleries, heard in concert halls etc etc ...



In view of the whole debate that has emerged around the recommendations of the government think-tank on education, the ERS - and around the community-based NEPI - it seems to me that the surest thing you were doing with your students is crucial to the concept of democratizing culture. By extension, the idea of cultural studies (NEPI) in the school curriculum, is potentially an emancipatory one if you work along the lines that your students have been encouraged to do. The sort of culture that we think of traditionally as "culture" is reinforced at schools as "high" culture, has a Euro-centric bias, is rarely contemporary and as such, is in danger of becoming marginalized - it has nothing to do with one's own life.

The sort of processes and structures that you are setting in motion are far more relevant, meaningful and ultimately creative. The meanings which

your students construct from their experiences are part of an emancipatory process toward a new understanding of culture.

Comments in terms of the session:

- a) Your colleague's response to being introduced to me suggested a strongly undemocratic set of power relations, gender relations, "That will be in order" (said in Afrikaans)!!
- b) The college ethos seemed to be strongly CNE despite the presence of Moslems.
- c) There was also a sense, within the group, of what I would call born-again or charismatic Christianity - which is a "cultural" response to their lives, maybe?
- d) I was intrigued by the woman who wore a uniform and further intrigued to hear that indeed the college did have an official uniform. Part of the disempowering process - teachers are depersonalized and remain as subordinates or children? I wondered how many women and how many men choose to wear this uniform.
- e) The comparison between your process-oriented style and the rigidity of your colleague's technicist approach visibly exposed the ultimately disempowering aims of technicist education (NB ERS) and the threatening nature of creativity, freedom of expression and ultimate empowerment.
- f) S.K.'s continued reinforcement of student's activities as a way of teaching rather than just an exercise which stopped with them, was very facilitative - students looked as if they responded positively to this idea. ie they were creating their own knowledge for classroom use, based on personal experience. (Theory and practice - PRAXIS)

Further reflections

Your comment on the feeling that you experienced from them about art "that art was not part of their lives" seem to reinforce the whole concept of enculturation that you are trying to provide. By making art part of their lives and contextualizing it as part of their own lived experiences - you are enabling them to feel that art is not restricted to the elite, talented few (or to white schools? or whites in general?) - that wall murals, graffiti, pavement artists, Aunty's painting on the lounge wall or little Fred's drawing of his dog - are all part of art and by extension, culture ... people's culture.

I found it fascinating that while your students could name a European (Renaissance) artist, not one of them could name a South African one! I also found it sinister (unless I misunderstood you) that art was a course that was (a) optional and (b) one of the one's that you were 'allowed to fail' without jeopardizing your diploma course in general??

I noted with interest that although the group showed interest and attended to what you were saying - they were riveted by the personal accounts of alcoholism and drink ... from the students themselves - this could only happen if they felt sufficiently free, liberated enough to talk so openly and draw so graphically about how they felt.

As I walked around and spoke to them or listened I didn't sense any form of uneasiness or deference - there was no suggestion that they regarded me as anyway different from you and I found this to be exciting because you seem to have provided them with the "space" to be people, with their own dynamics and rights - not passive subservients, servants of the state!

Regards - yours in a new sort of struggle

Gill

9.4 A few reports by students

These are four of the six reports I received.

DAWIE SEPTEMBER

Baie het verskillende sienings van kuns. Net so het ek ook my eie siening van wat kuns regtig is.

Volgens my is al die kunswerke vermors. Op laerskool vlak het ons baie kunswerke gedoen na 'n tyd word dit weggegooi. Later het ek gesien dat kuns nie meer 'n baie belangrike iets is nie, maar net nog 'n vak is wat gebruik word om weg te kom van die akademiese sy van skoolgaan.

Op tersiêre vlak het daar weer 'n klein liggie opgegaan. Ons dosent het ons laat verstaan dat kuns wel belangrik is. Maar nogtans bly kuns vir my 'n ontspanningsvak. Omdat dit nie op hoërskool-vlak aangebied word nie sal ek nie kuns baie ernstig opvat nie. Met kuns kan jy baie regkry. Jy kan bv. dinge uitbeeld wat jy nie oor kan praat nie.

Ons het later in die kunsklas 'n projek aangegaan. Vir my was dit baie interessant. Net die feit dat mense belangstel in alle dinge wat ek en die ander ouens dink. Iets wat ek opgelet het in die kunsklas is dat die meeste van die leerlinge die toestande uitbeeld in Suid-Afrika. Mense voel nie om daarvoor te gesels nie, maar eerder om dit te teken op papier.

Die vrou wat daar was van U.W.C. was baie lekker om mee te gesels. Ek het nie een oomblik sleg gevoel oor haar teenwoordigheid nie. Mense word opgevoed nie net deur akademiese vakke nie maar ook deur kuns. In hierdie kort tydjie wat ek in die kunsklas was het ek regtig baie geleer.

MARK SAUNDERS

We experienced 'what' - The discovery of the meaning of the word triangulation. As I experienced it was the enaction between Gill, Miss Kriel and us the students. We experienced the didactic situation in a different light and the teacher has always got a positive different approach to art (teaching) "resistance art".

I am sorry miss for not complying with your request about the triangulation, but the fault does not lie with you and its not a lack of motivation or laziness on our part but it is a fact that most of us, I personally could not grasp the concept of triangulation.

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BERNADETTE MORKEL

Ons het 'n bespreking in die groep gehou in verband met die tekening. Elkeen in die groep het bygedra tot die tema, 'Besoedeling'. Ons almal het begin teken aan die werkstuk. Daarna het Juffrou Kriel omgekom. Sy het ons gewys waar ons byvoorbeeld donkerder kan maak. Die ander juffrou het ook raad en advies gegee in verband met die tekening. Die onderwysers het nie net gesit nie, maar ook vir ons gehelp. Almal het dus saamgewerk tot 'n voltooide werkstuk.

Die onderwyser laat alles oor aan die leerlinge. Sy sê net wat sy verwag en ons moet dan self inisiatiewe neem. Elkeen kry sy eie gedagte in die

werkstuk uit. Alhoewel juffrou nie help nie is sy altyd daar om ons reg te help, advies te gee.

MERVIN CHRISTIANS

Daar was 'n besoeker in die klas wat slegs waarneming gedoen het. Ons was gevra of die besoeker ons dalk steur en of sy mag foto's neem. Sy was nie 'n steurnis nie en het toe foto's geneem.

Die klas was baie informeel. Ons was in ons groepe verdeel. Elke groep het 'n vraag gekry in verband met die projek waarmee ons besig was. Die vraag moes ons bespreek en een uit die groep het dit vir die res van die klas geantwoord. Daarna het ons dit wat ons bespreek het geteken met houtskool. Die besoeker en dosent het informeel tussen groepe beweeg en vroe gevra en soms advies gegee.

Die atmosfeer in die klas was baie ontspanne, met ander woorde elkeen was op sy gemak. Die resultate hiervan was volgens my baie goed. Almal het uit vrye wil gewerk aan iets waar hy sy eie kennis en agtergrond gebruik het. Jy is toegelaat om jou eie weergawe te gee oor 'n onderwerp. Daar was wel leiding gegee. Dit was slegs nodig waar ons onkundig was oor 'n aspek. Ons onkunde kan daaraan toegeskryf word dat in ons verlede was ons gespoon feed. Dit het veroorsaak dat ons vermoë om self te dink of te ontwikkel 'n agterstand het. Die klas het by tye miskien aandag verloor. Ek skryf dit toe aan die feit dat die situasie ongewoon was. Daardie vryheid is miskien te veel en ons is geneig om dit soms te misbruik. Dankie vir die aangename klas. Ek het dit geniet.

9.5 Critical analysis

Although Gill Cowan and I had tried to explain what "triangulation" was, some of the students did not understand the concept. I did not think that this detracted from the meaningfulness of the session but it probably did influence their lack of commitment to writing a report. In this sense the "triangulation" session did not work as well as it could have because eventually we had only Gill's, six students' and my perspectives of what happened. I considered it so important to have more extensive reports of the meanings constructed of the session by the students. Knowing how much resistance they have against writing reports, I probably should have had interviews with students who did not write reports about the session. But this session was again the last before practice teaching and I was not to see them for quite a few weeks after this.

From Gill's and the students' reports on the session I gathered that they experienced the session as a democratic situation in which students felt empowered to be and express themselves openly and honestly. That it was in a sense emancipatory because it was structured around the students' personal and lived experiences and because it contributed to freeing us from the idea that "culture" belongs to the ruling class; to developing an understanding of "culture" as being constructed by us through our agency in everyday life. This process of emancipation was, however, at a very early stage and we did not have enough time to establish equal relations free from constraints and dependency. We needed far more time than the 15 one hour sessions we had during the year for individuals to develop into committed, responsible and accountable social beings involved in their own transformation and that of their society. It was, however, a beginning.

Once they started working with other students to produce one drawing they had to engage in communicative and collaborative action. It was very difficult for the

students to keep the interaction free from domination and the success or failure in this area was very visible in the final drawings. Where members could interact in an equal and collaborative manner they had more success in creating a rational unified drawing.

In an ideal situation the students had to develop resources; negotiate what information to use and where on the page; to share understandings and reflections; question values and assumptions; problematize validity claims of propositions; and make compromises and reach consensus to be able to create one rational drawing which integrates and communicates their different ideas. In the process the students could develop these skills, and I felt that their success or failure was visible in both the process and the final drawing. Robinson (1989:19) refers to such skills as "life" skills which can be engaged in and developed during interactive educational practice.

I noticed that some of the students who were able to express their understanding of their personal experiences in the second stage of the action research project comprehensively had problems working in groups. Perhaps they had such clear ideas of what and how they wanted to deal with the problem that they were unable to adapt their ideas to the input from other members in the group. It is also possible that their attitudes were authoritarian and uncompromising, or that they thought they knew better because they were more skilled in the translation of ideas into visible images. One of the students who made very expressive and technically skilled drawings in the first and second stages of the action research project was unable to adapt himself to collaborative action and made his own little drawing on one part of the paper. His individuality was so strong that he could not function in such a group. I would dare to suggest that he was also the person in the whole class who probably had most of the qualities necessary for someone to become an "artist"!

It became very clear that the preparation for this project was not sufficient and that we were not ready to fully benefit from the process. But becoming aware of our confusion, distorted thinking and false consciousness during the process was probably already an insecure but important step towards critical educational practice.

Rudduck believes that people usually need time and an enabling context to understand and get used to innovatory practice and in this case the groundwork was not done sufficiently. Having to compromise and integrate new ideas in collaborative action could have been a threatening experience which created feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Rudduck (1984:62) argues that any innovation in educational practice is a very slow process and that it is crucial that students are helped to understand the meaning of the innovation.

It is not only important for teachers to be prepared for innovative classroom behaviour. If students are not well prepared they may seek to reinstate the familiar, the comfortably predictable, and through the power of group pressure lure the teacher back into recognizable routines.

She also believes that pupils should understand what innovation implies for interpersonal relationships in the classroom and they should understand the view of knowledge that the innovation endorses. She believes that the

negotiation of new meanings, or shared meanings, is at the heart of the process of innovation and that the models of diffusion that we use must be appropriate both to the conditions of school and to the cultural import of innovation (Rudduck 1984:65).

A lack of these aspects in this project contributed to my eventual feelings that this was only the beginning of the long and painfully slow road to collaborative educational practice.

Apart from developing skills to work in groups they also developed some technical skills. I did not offer "expert" universally true knowledge which had to be applied,

but introduced some possibilities concerning medium. They experimented with the medium and techniques of charcoal and had to develop an understanding of the dialectical relationship between the medium, the image created and the meanings constructed. In this area I offered information about the medium when asked and also when I saw students were not using the possibilities of the medium to its fullest. By making suggestions I believe I offered the students the opportunity to move themselves just that little bit further than they would have gone on their own at that stage. I told the students that they had to decide whether they were ready for and agreed with my suggestions, and that they were free to follow or ignore my input.

For the students to develop a feeling of responsibility it was important for them to be active in the decision-making process. My initial decision, that we would work around social problems experienced by the students, was autocratic and the problems it created gave me an opportunity to become aware of and question my own distorted thinking. Perhaps I should have started this project with the discussion on socially involved and decorative art to stimulate thinking about the subject and perhaps we should collaboratively have made the decision about the area to be dealt with in this project.

I think some students reacted against my authoritarian initial decision making, and did not feel themselves in control and responsible. Some of the students felt strongly that art should have a decorative function and did not believe in social involvement through art. This is a very complicated debate and one I suppose we did not really have time to explore fully, but I could have placed more emphasis on the debate itself instead of personally making the decision for socially involved production.

But my decision was informed by my belief that reality is not only reproduced but also produced through the art making process and that we either maintain or resist power relations through what we create. Held (1980:81) argues that

The work of art has a structure with a signifying function. It presents, or rather represents, the particular in such a way as to illuminate its meaning. Through its *form* or *style* (Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse), or *aura* and *new* technique (Benjamin), art can create images of beauty and order or contradiction and dissonance - an aesthetic realm which at once leaves and highlights reality.

The members of the Frankfurt school also agreed that art has multiple layers of meaning and the ability to embody and promote truth.

The question of accountability is another aspect of the above debate. Students had to ask themselves who they were accountable to; they had to account for their action. They had to question their individual subjectivities and consensual decisions in terms of the contribution they made to the meanings they constructed in the work. They had to develop an understanding that individuals were not isolated but that they were part of and accountable to a community and a society. They had to ask themselves what the underlying interest was in their actions and in whose interest the constructed meanings were. Did they, through their work, perpetuate or resist the conditions underlying the problem they were dealing with and the power relations they were involved in? I hoped that they would realize that their world picture was often acquired under conditions of coercion and that their maintenance of these conditions made them instrumental in their own oppression.

By choosing a socially involved problem-solving approach I hoped that decisions in the process would be responsible and reflexive from within a social and historical context; that through reflective appropriation of human life a socio-historical understanding of human interaction can be developed. My specific interest was to contribute to processes of self-reflection and enlightenment in which agents could

become aware of their deprivation and frustrated desires and develop the wish to emancipate themselves to engage issues of justice and struggle.

I would like to believe that the situation was informed by the notion that education can enable the conditions in which participants can become aware of and uncover false consciousness to gain self-understanding; to become aware of how ideology reflects and distorts moral, social and political reality and of the factors which influence and sustain the distorted consciousness. My wish is for everyone in the educational situation to be empowered by the process, to understand how social relationships are distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege. To establish an educational situation with equal power relations in which the participants engage in communicative action, have control from within, are responsible and accountable while questioning the status quo and the dominant ideology and critically analyzing the situation in terms of gender, race, class and power. As McLaren (1989:171) puts it: "To create the conditions under which irrationality, domination and oppression can be overcome and transformed through deliberative, collective action."

It is often very difficult to develop an understanding of democratic practice with first year students who are so used to the autocratic and hierarchical schooling system from which they come. They find it difficult to use my first name although that is the way I introduce myself at the beginning of the year. They are often afraid of questioning or criticizing me. They often do not value their own knowledge and experience and see my knowledge as superior to theirs. They also often have a passive attitude awaiting instruction from others. Some of these aspects are visible in the reports they wrote about the triangulation session.

I have realized in this project that democratizing educational practice is a very difficult and slow process. I believe for students to understand democratic practice

is just as important as to gain subject knowledge. Subject knowledge should be gained through democratic practice. In this project I did not have enough time to develop such an understanding fully but I hope every little bit helps. I would like to believe Robinson (1989b:197) when she argues that

in the very authoritarian education system we are accustomed to, critical reflection by teachers and students, and small attempts to build democratic interaction are, even in the absence of long-term political action, liberatory practices.

I tend to think that despite the failure in many areas of this project our interaction was empowering and the students became aware of an alternative to an authoritarian hierarchical educational approach. On the micro level we risked the unknown, we were prepared to fail while hoping to enlighten and transform ourselves and the context in which we are involved. With Giroux (1992:22) I believe

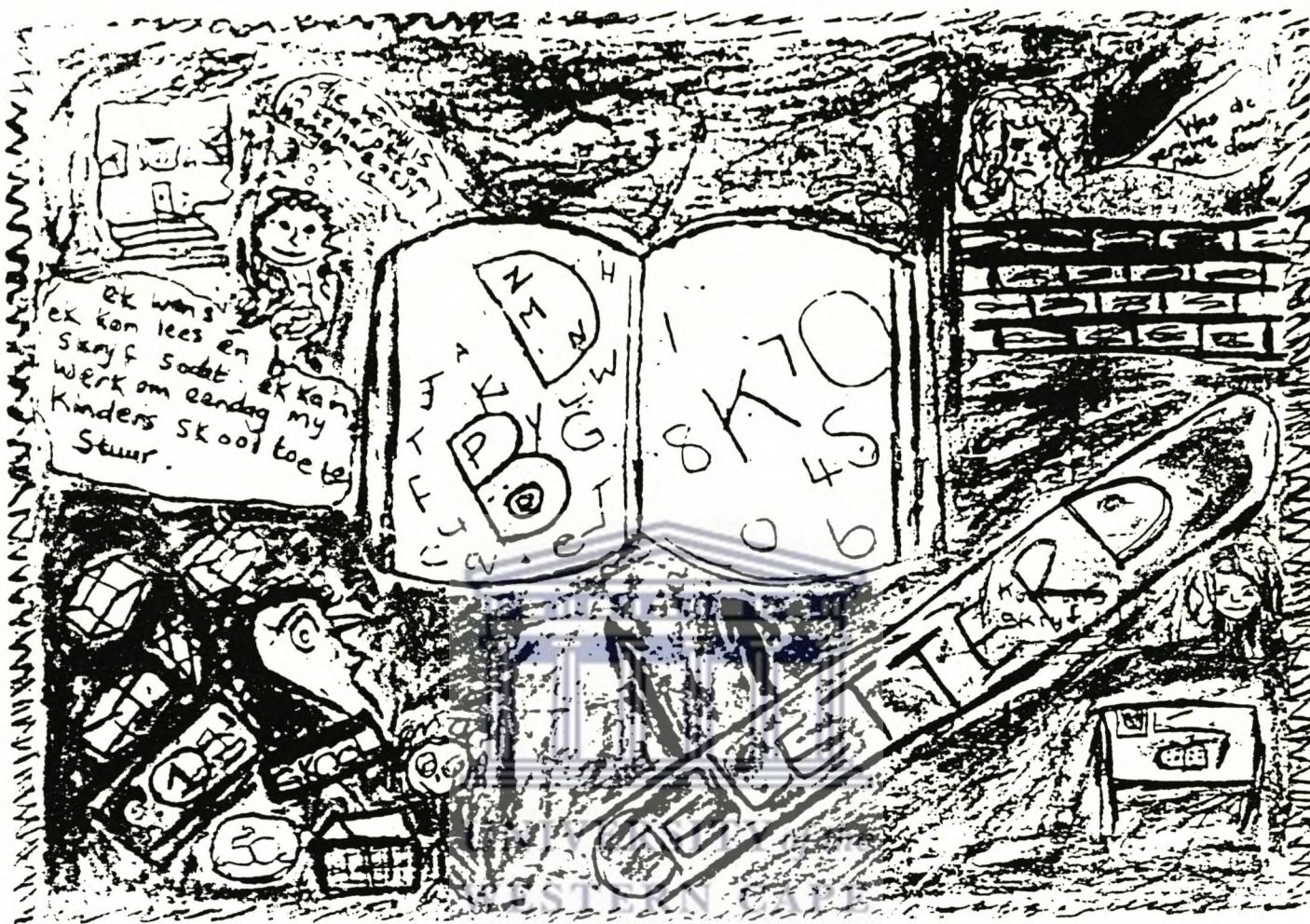
It is through the development of such public spheres that the discourses of democracy and freedom can address what it means to educate students for forms of citizenship forged in a politics of difference that educate in history, while simultaneously shaping the present as part of a discourse and practice that allows people to imagine and desire beyond society's existing limitations and practices.

In this action research project we hoped to develop self-understanding, a desire to act rationally with greater consciousness and autonomy, to be self-determining and reflectively involved in constructing history willfully, consciously and responsibly. We tried to develop a historical understanding of lived experiences and to empower the participants by exposing tensions, conflicts and contradictions in ourselves and our society. Through our attempts to develop critical capacities (enlightenment - looking at those aspects in our society which frustrate and constrain us) and our commitment to action (transformation - trying to find solutions to such problems) we were empowered to start knocking at the wall of self and social confinement.



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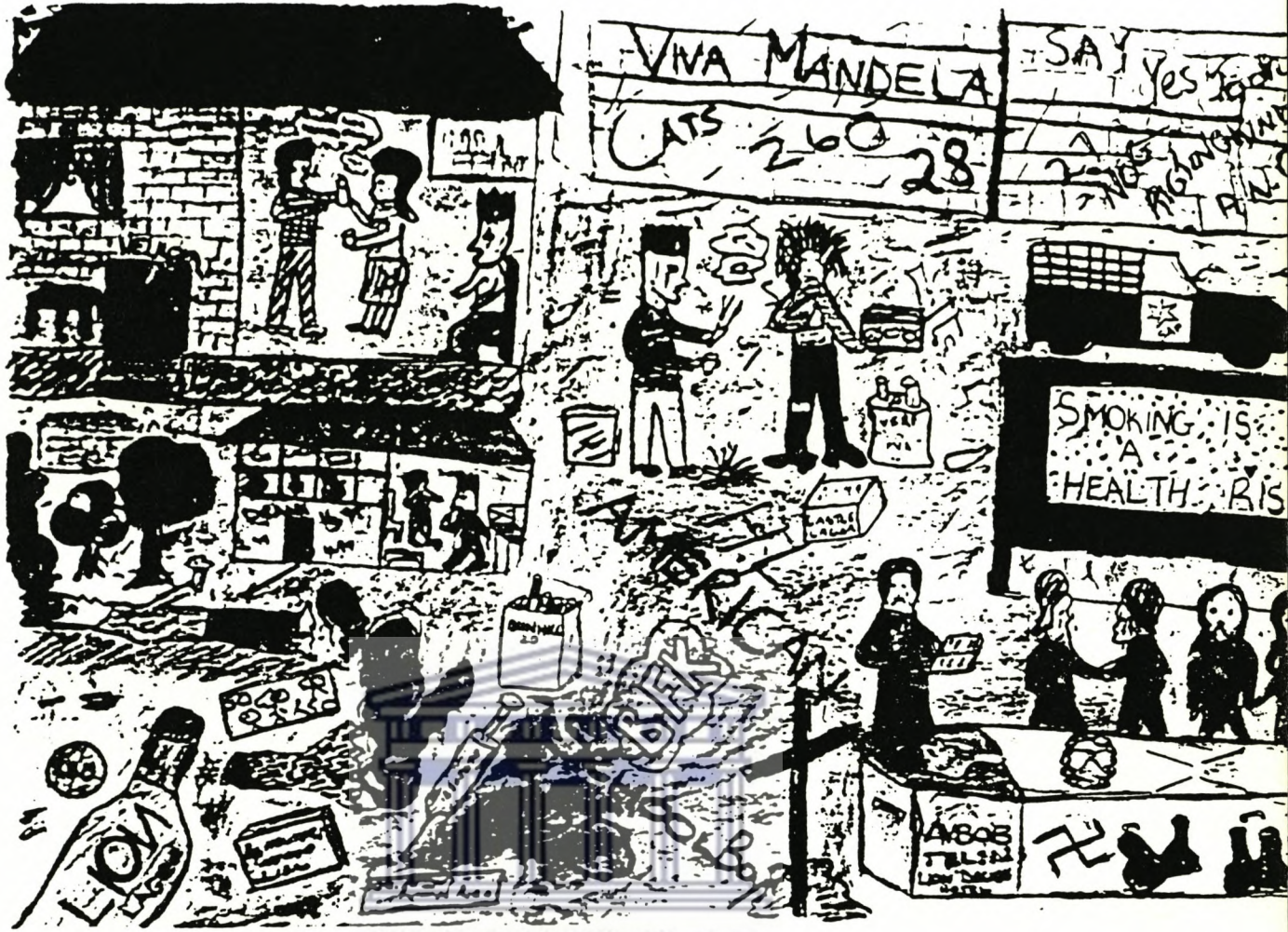
SATANISM



ILLITERACY



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CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the end of this project I have many questions and few answers. I ask myself whether what I have written is *the* truth, *my* truth, *somebody else's* or *our* truth. I wonder whether the utterances are as Habermas (1990:137) puts it "in accordance with either *the* world of existing states of affairs, *our* world of legitimately ordered interpersonal relations, or *each participant's own* world of subjective lived experience." I am unsure whether the understanding I have developed was really clarified through thoughtful interaction, whether the meanings I constructed were grounded in interpersonal communicative action.

At the beginning of the project I set out to develop an understanding of my practice and to improve it. I also wanted to contribute to the enculturation of the students by developing an idea that culture is constructed by all members of society rather than something created and owned by the dominant group. I hoped to create an environment in which the participants could become aware of cultural resources and ways of making and communicating meaning through these resources.

I now believe my understanding of my practice is both more and less than it was in the beginning. More, in terms of the realization of how complicated educational practice is; less, in terms of all the contradictory ideas I have developed. In the process of self and social analysis I have become aware of my own complexities, the complex nature of the students and the complexities of our interrelatedness - our interrelatedness with the institution, the community and the society. In the process of penetrating these surfaces a multiplicity of relationships of meanings was discovered and only dimly understood. I felt like a non-medical person exposing a

square inch of the human nervous system and trying to make sense of it. Teaching used to be so easy when it was "objective", "value-free" and a "means" to an "end", i.e. the transmission of knowledge valued by the dominant group to a passive class to maintain existing power relations.

In all this confusion I held on to what Giroux (1991:49) calls "a language of possibility". It helped me not to despair as I slowly let go of the mechanisms of control and created a possibility for a "politics and pedagogy of difference". As part of a language of possibility Giroux states that

teachers can explore the opportunity to construct knowledge/power relations in which multiple narratives and social practices are constructed around a politics and pedagogy of difference that offers students the opportunity to read the world differently, resist the abuse of power and privilege, and construct alternative democratic communities.

The most threatening step for me was to risk confronting, questioning and problematizing existing values and assumptions, rendering oneself vulnerable by breaking down the pillars on which one's practice was built. This process involves loss, anxiety and struggle. In the slow act of demolition a space was gained where we could start making both affective and semantic investments as part of an attempt to construct truly democratic and just educational and social relations.

I would like to believe that, by creating the desire for an environment in which equal power relations can be exercised, individuals can be empowered while the undemocratic system and those who believe in it are disempowered. By questioning patterns of social relationships, and the practices which sustain them, the possibility can be created of transforming them. Such experience on a protected and less threatening micro level could facilitate risking at the macro level. This is a process started in this project and it is hoped that it will still be continuing in our daily construction and reconstruction of our lives.

I do hope that my desire to contribute to our enculturation included becoming aware of the form and structure of the mechanisms that communicate the messages which lay the psychological and moral foundations for economic and political systems, so that we became more aware of our responsibility and accountability in terms of these messages to ensure that these foundations create the possibility for people to exercise power over their own lives and reject discourses of privilege and oppression.



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