

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Empowering Minds, Body and Soul: An Evaluative Case-Study of the Perceptions of the extent of Women Empowerment Within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education Course at UCT.

Princess Fundiswa Kibido KBDPRI001

Supervisor: Dr Gideon Nomdo

Co-supervisor: Dr Sean Samson

February 2021

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF A MASTERS DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY OF
EDUCATION: IN ADULT EDUCATION
AT THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

PREAMBLE

THESIS ABSTRACT

The Adult Education sector in South Africa (SA) occupies a crucial space in higher education (HE) in terms of securing access and opportunities for a diverse group of non-traditional students to further their development. Amongst this diversity are highly marginalized subgroupings of adult learners, especially black working-class women. Participation of these women within HE requires serious attention given the low social ranking that this group continues to occupy in all spheres. Evidence drawn from Adult Education research suggests that not enough attention has been given to this group of learners with respect to how they are impacted by issues of geographic, cultural and racial diversity in the Adult Education setting. This study undertaken here reports on transformative dimensions underlining Adult Education pedagogy, with a specific focus on the concept of empowerment and how this is attained by RPL learners. A qualitative case-study methodology using a critical interpretive perspective grounded in phenomenological enquiry, was used to develop contextual understandings of four disadvantaged adult female learners' experiences of their transitions into HE. The focus is on these learners' perceptions of the forms of empowerment they have gained from their participation in a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education (HCEAE) course, and the extent to which such empowerment has impacted positive change in their lives, even beyond the course. The argument made in this qualitative study is that the active participation of marginalized black women in Adult Education, *does* lead to the attainment of multiple levels of self-empowerment. Such empowerment is realized when the objectives of national educational provisions, operationalized through Adult Education legislature, are correctly aligned with the transformative and social justice mission of Adult Education theory and practice. Proper alignment yields desirable outcomes in terms of enabling transformative learning environments that engender experiences of self-empowerment, agency and control. To this effect, an evaluative study was conducted of the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education (HCEAE) course offered by the University of Cape Town. The findings in this study demonstrate that factors such as race, geographic setting and cultural location, impact experiences of empowerment amongst adult learners. Furthermore, it is evident that such experiences of empowerment is a multi-layered and dynamic process which occur at cognitive, personal and social levels that can only be realized through praxis. The bringing together of educational policy, theory, and practice in proactive and productive ways in this study, also offers the potential for designing new hybrid frameworks for assessing the extent to which Adult Education provisions successfully achieve their transformative function, beyond the educational setting.

Key words: Adult Education policy, adult learning practice, transformative learning, marginalization, empowerment, praxis, recognition of prior learning; access.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Dr Gideon Nomdo and Dr Sean Sampson for their wise counsel in getting this project off the ground, and also Dr Nomdo's continued, invaluable and consistent insights and feedback, in seeing this project to its completion. I deeply appreciate their unwavering support that has made my journey towards my dream a reality. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Salma Ismail for the departmental support, her patience and motivation. To Prof Leslie London, I thank him for trusting and believing in me, for making financial support available for my studies through the National Research Foundation Fund No.116270 titled: "Strengthening Community Voice to Address Social Determinants of Health." To those women who participated in this research, I am grateful for your time, your sacrifice, and your great determination. Your achievements are an inspiration to all of us. Finally, to my son, Tinyiko Lloyd Kibido, this is for your motivation!

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Preamble | 2 |
| Declaration..... | 3 |
| Thesis Abstract | 4 |
| Acknowledgements | 5 |
| Table of Contents | 6 |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 9 |
| 1.2 Background and context | 12 |
| 1.2 (a) HCEAE: Historical context, development, and institutional integration..... | 12 |
| 1.2 (b) The HCEAE research site: promoting access and transformation..... | 12 |
| (i)The HCEAE course overview..... | 14 |
| (ii)HCEAE course curriculum (modules) and aims..... | 14 |
| 1.2.(c) The study participants: socio-political and historical locations..... | 15 |
| (i) Geographical setting, culture, and race: Interacting contexts within women empowerment.. | 16 |
| 1.3 Problem Statement..... | 17 |
| 1.4 Rationale..... | 20 |
| 1.5 Aim and Research Question..... | 22 |
| (i) Questions to be answered in this research..... | 22 |
| 1.6 Conclusion..... | 23 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | 25 |
| 2. Overview of Literature..... | 25 |
| 2.1 Introduction..... | 25 |
| 2.1.1 Studies of RPL in the Diploma in Education (now HCEAE) course..... | 25 |
| 2.1.2 RPL For Accreditation: Work based learning – the South African Context..... | 27 |
| 2.1.3 RPL Studies in Higher Education: The South African Context..... | 28 |
| 2.1.4 Studies in Women Empowerment: the South African Context..... | 29 |
| 2.1.5 Studies in Women Empowerment in Economics: The Global Context..... | 30 |
| 2.1.6 Studies in Adult Education and Empowerment: The Global context..... | 31 |
| 2.1.7 Studies in Women Empowerment in Higher Education: The Global Context..... | 32 |
| 2.1.8 Conclusion..... | 34 |
| Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework | 36 |
| 3. Theoretical underpinning..... | 36 |
| 3.1 Introduction..... | 36 |
| 3.1.2 Theoretic Framework..... | 36 |
| 3.1.3 Rowlands (1997) Model of power..... | 37 |
| 3.1.4 Concepts of: ‘being’ and ‘becoming’; ‘confession’ and ‘dialogic’ | 37 |
| 3.2 The conceptual framework..... | 38 |
| 3.2.1 Freire’s concept of Dialogue..... | 39 |
| 3.2.2 Freire’s concept of Praxis..... | 40 |
| 3.2.3 Bourdieu’s concept of Social Capital..... | 41 |
| 3.2.4 Bourdieu’s concept of economic capital..... | 42 |
| 3.2.5 Conclusion..... | 43 |
| Chapter 4: Research Methodology | 45 |
| 4. Research Design..... | 45 |
| 4.1 Introduction..... | 45 |
| 4.2 Methodology..... | 46 |
| 4.3 Data Collection..... | 47 |
| a) Purposeful Sampling..... | 48 |
| b) Inclusion criteria..... | 48 |
| c) Access, rapport and Communication..... | 48 |
| 4.4 Data analysis..... | 50 |

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

| | |
|--|----|
| 4.4.1 Method of qualitative analysis..... | 50 |
| 4.5 Biographical Narratives..... | 51 |
| 4.5.1 Descriptions of concepts in biographies..... | 52 |
| a) The concept of 'being' and 'becoming'..... | 52 |
| b) The concept of confession..... | 52 |
| c) The concept of dialogical..... | 53 |
| 4.6 Limitations and validity of the study..... | 53 |
| a) Credibility..... | 53 |
| b) Positioning..... | 54 |
| c) Maintaining reflexivity..... | 54 |
| d) Member checking..... | 54 |
| e) Expert support..... | 54 |
| f) Transferability..... | 54 |
| g) Dependability..... | 55 |
| h) Confirmability..... | 55 |
| 4.7 Ethics..... | 55 |
| 4.8 Conclusion..... | 55 |
| Chapter 5. Findings | |
| 5.1 Introduction..... | 58 |
| 5.2. Biographies of Core Participants..... | 58 |
| 5.2.1 Biography No.1: Alicia..... | 58 |
| 5.2.2 Biography 2: Maria..... | 61 |
| 5.2.3 Biography 3: Lucinda..... | 65 |
| 5.2.4 Biography 4: Linda..... | 68 |
| 5.2.5 Dropped-out Learner: DOL..... | 71 |
| 5.3. Over-arching Themes in Findings..... | 74 |
| 5.3.1 RPL Access as Fulfilment of Dreams and spirations..... | 75 |
| 5.3.2 Empowered personhood..... | 76 |
| 5.3.3 Establishing community..... | 78 |
| 5.3.4 The Adult Ed Modules: experiences and learning moments..... | 79 |
| 5.3.5 Living the dream? Impact beyond the course..... | 81 |
| 5.3.5 Conclusion..... | 82 |
| Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion | |
| 6.1 introduction..... | 85 |
| 6.1 Questions answered in this study..... | 85 |
| 6.1.1 Forms of empowerment provided within the HCEAE Course..... | 85 |
| 6.1.2 Dialogue as Empowerment..... | 85 |
| 6.1.3 Praxis as Empowerment..... | 86 |
| 6.1.4 Social capital as Empowerment..... | 87 |
| 6.1.5 Economic capital as empowerment..... | 88 |
| 6.2 Strategies of Pedagogical practice that upheld forms of empowerment in the HCEAE course..... | 88 |
| 6.2.1 Engaging mind, body, and soul..... | 89 |
| 6.2.2 Diverse experiences..... | 89 |
| 6.2.3 Engaging with transformation..... | 90 |
| 6.4 How successful was the HCEAE course in terms of empowering vulnerable female learners while adhering to Adult Education policy and theory objectives?..... | 91 |
| 6.5 Summary..... | 95 |
| 6.6 Concluding Comments: Reviewing the study as a whole..... | 95 |
| List of references..... | 97 |
| Appendices | |

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

The issue of empowerment is a global phenomenon that accompanies various shifts in socio-political structures towards the attainment of democratic ideals of social justice and liberty for all citizens. Transitional democracies are often marked by their abilities to secure various types of freedoms previously denied to their citizens. Within these contexts of change, there is a tendency amongst some, to hold onto traditional power under the guise of change. In the case of South Africa's transition to democracy, certain members of the new regime grasped power and control of resources at the expense of its citizens. South Africa's transition to democracy has been marked by many highs in the initial stages of its transition under statesman Nelson Mandela, and also by many lows further down the line epitomised by claims of 'state capture', currently under investigation by the state appointed Zondo Commission. Both before and after the attainment of democracy in South Africa (SA), education has always been on the forefront of the struggle to achieve and maintain freedom. Education remains a tool of liberation (Freire, 1970, 2000), and in our current higher education (HE) context in SA, has taken the form of Fallist Movements represented by the 'Fees Must Fall' and 'Rhodes Must Fall' student campaigns. These campaigns are geared towards the decolonisation of HE, in terms of its ethos, curriculum, pedagogy, student body and institutional culture (UCT News, 2015; The Daily Maverick, 2015). There is a concerted drive in the Fallist Movements to create a space in HE where African knowledge and Africa's contributions to the knowledge production process, can begin to be placed in the centre of that which should epitomise an African university. Amidst these revolutionary changes taking place in HE in SA, is the Adult Education sector, a particular provision in HE that caters for the ongoing education of adults. This sector has also been forced to adapt and change with the shifts occurring in the HE landscape (Cooper, 1995; Cooper and Ralphs, 2016). In doing so, Adult Education in SA has had to be responsive to the calls for change and transformation and has had to align itself with governmental transformation objectives in terms of the service it fulfils towards its learner base (South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), 2020). This provision has increased access to non-traditional learners, amongst them, the most marginalised of society's members who still bear the brunt of apartheid policies long after it was abolished, more than thirty years ago (Statistics South Africa, 2021) Accordingly, South African women, Black working-class, rural women in particular, are amongst the most vulnerable members in society and their presence in Adult Education courses in HE, signals that transformation is being taken seriously, with respect to creating access and providing the necessary structures in which these women can attain success.

The focus in this thesis is on a particular Adult Education course, namely, the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education (HCEAE) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), a historically White University (Mackenzie and Compare, 1994; Perez and London, 2004; Boonzaier and Mhize, 2018). The study follows some of the disadvantaged women learners that have studied in the HCEAE course between 2017 and 2019 (see full background under 1.2). These women epitomise the adverse effects instituted under apartheid planning (Adhikari, 2009). They are, therefore, reminders of how the issues of social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities, persist and continue to be entrenched in our current

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

democratic South African context. Issues of race and race relations, the impact of apartheid spatial planning and its systematic contribution towards the breakdown of family and community structures amongst non-White communities are thus firmly embedded in this study. These are coupled with the notions of historical disadvantage, transformation, and redress. All of the afore mentioned issues are used to illuminate a much more focussed and contextualised discussion around the concept of empowerment, that will be unpacked here.

This current study contextualises and consolidates its investigation of the concept of empowerment, through an application of the combination of the Adult Education theory and SA National Qualifications Framework (NQF) education policy and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy and uses this as a qualitative lens with which to assess the notion of empowerment encountered in the HCEAE course. This combination of education policy and Adult Education theory is used to illuminate the spheres of marginalisation and inequality in the research participants lives, that are *positively impacted* by the empowerment and transformation outcomes of the HCEAE course. Within this context, the research participants were afforded an opportunity to map their learning journeys and to give their perspectives of their lived experiences of empowerment within and beyond the course. These lived experiences would illuminate the shifts in experience, consciousness and agency.

A further focus of this study is on how the combination of educational policy and adult learning theory, translates into meaningful and impactful pedagogical practices in the Adult Education classroom. Such practices become meaningful through the spaces and opportunities that it creates for engaging theory and prior indigenous knowledges and experiences of the learners, thereby promoting relevance in terms of the teaching and learning that takes place. The emphasis placed on relevance with respect to learning, is taken up in this thesis, as an important precursor to the shift from working with, acknowledging and confessing experience, towards extracting from and building on such experiences, to inform how one thinks, conceptualises, rationalises and acts to realise new ways of being in the world. This shift from the world of experience to realising and enacting new possibilities of self, is representative of the acquisition of empowerment in this thesis. This combination of policy, theory, and practice, also provides different but mutually inclusive lenses which are used to reflect on, interrogate, and assess aspects of women empowerment present in the HCEAE course and how by extension, this creates levels of empowerment amongst learners who take what they have learnt, into the real world. In doing so, this study addresses a gap in Adult Education research in HE as most studies tend to focus on these issues individually or as isolated events instead of viewing it as part of broader, integrated social systems. This gap in the literature extends to studies that focus on women empowerment amongst RPL learners in particular, and the focus on RPL learners in the HCEAE course in this thesis, is an attempt to add meaningfully to research in this area.

Taking the above into consideration, I argue that there exists a limited understanding of access and success issues related to Black disadvantaged adult learners, particularly women, when only viewed through the lens of education provisions. Such viewing, I argue, needs to be coupled with a particular type of educational strategy and curriculum design plan that

seeks to empower vulnerable learners in particular ways. SA Education Reforms policy of RPL provides access to education for these women. Adult Education courses catering for these learners, therefore need to be properly aligned with transformative learning objectives of education reform policy, to provide learners with the opportunity to turn their disadvantages into gain. Emphasised in this thesis, is the need for an inclusive adult learning practice aimed to move the learners beyond the experience, to heightened levels of consciousness and agency, thus effecting personal and social empowerment that can be assessed beyond the academic setting.

The thesis is structured in the following manner: In the rest of this Introduction Chapter, I offer some points on why this study is important. Background information is offered on the research participants, the HCEAE site and its historical development, and an overview of course aims and modules. The rest of the Introduction is dedicated to some discussion on the problem statement, rationale for the research, and the research question. Chapter 2 is dedicated to a review of the literature on RPL in HE, including RPL for accreditation. A review of literature on women empowerment in SA and globally in HE, is also provided. Chapter 3 provides the conceptual framework for the study, and offers insights into the core concepts of Freire's (1970-1; 2000) dialogue, praxis, the main theory, and Bourdieu's (1986) social and economic capital concepts, used to unpack empowerment. Rowlands (1997) Model of Power is also drawn on here to complement both theories and situate competencies within the dimension of power in the analysis of women empowerment. The concepts of being, becoming, dialogue and confession reveal the nexus between education policy, education theory, and pedagogical practice at play, and it is this nexus that is responsible for the shift from relayed experience, to embodied consciousness and agency. Chapter 4 provides insights into the research design strategy employed in this thesis. It encompasses the methodology, data collection and analysis methods. This chapter also provides specific theoretical concepts which are used in the narratives, thereby providing readers with a specific set of lenses for interpreting the narratives. Chapter 5 deals with the findings. This chapter begins with a presentation of biographical narratives of the research participants and identifies the core over-arching themes that have emerged out of the thematic analysis process. Chapter 6 deals with the analysis and discussion of the findings. It provides insight into the forms of empowerment experienced in the HCEAE course and identifies the practices that uphold these forms of empowerment. This chapter also provides an assessment of the success of the HCEAE course in terms of meeting its transformational goals with respect to the issue of empowerment. Chapter 6 ends with concluding remarks about the study as a whole.

1.1 The importance of this study

The current study is important because it:

- a) Fills the gap in knowledge on the forms of empowerment provided within the HCEAE course;
- b) Enhances the body of knowledge on RPL and women empowerment in HE;
- c) Fills the gap in the body of knowledge through using both theory and policy to assess empowerment, and

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

- d) Fills the gap in research tools by using dimensions of gender, race, culture and geographic setting in understanding and assessing empowerment.

In this light, this study seeks to examine learner's perspectives regarding the forms of empowerment they think they gained within the HCEAE course through asking the following questions: (1) What forms of empowerment are provided in this course? (2) How successful was the course in empowering women learners from disadvantaged backgrounds? (3) What worked and what did not work to empower the women learners in this course?

Thus, the focus on empowerment in this study is an important one in terms of assessing the competencies of the Adult Education course under scrutiny here, and the extent to which the redress function alluded to above, has actually been achieved.

1.2 Background and context

1.2 (a) HCEAE: Historical context, development, and institutional integration

Before the education reforms of 1994, UCT, in addition to its formal academic courses, also conducted a variety of non-credit bearing workshops and certificate courses. Amongst these, was an initial leadership series of short courses during the 1980's, which was offered as a response to the request from civic society organisations Cooper, 1995; Saldanha & Thomas, 2009). The 1980's course curriculum was grounded on social justice ethos thus contributing to addressing the vulnerabilities of Black people directly, and allowed oppressed Black community members a platform for conducting dialogical exchanges, during a time when political expressions were deemed illegal in SA (Cooper, 1995; Saldanha & Thomas, 2009). This was an indication of UCT's willingness at this stage, to contribute to education inclusion, albeit in the form of non-credit bearing courses.

Cooper (1998, n.p.) wrote that "although UCT valued and appreciated the successes of the course, the university's budget allocation was only reserved for learners that met the formal entry requirements". According to the afore mentioned proposal, this HCEAE course, under the UCT Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies, had to source donor funding from private sector to support both its basic running costs. This funding was also used as bursary support for black disadvantaged female students who made up most students in this course. The HCEAE course has been fully integrated in 2013 within the School of Education, and this integration provides the HCEAE course full institutional support (Cooper, via email, 11/10/21).

1.2 (b) The HCEAE research site: promoting access and transformation.

The HCEAE course gained its official status in 1995 as an initial professional qualification in Adult Education and training (Cooper, 1995; Saldanha & Thomas, 2009). Its official recognition was facilitated and influenced by the changing context of education post

1994 by way of policies that encouraged widening of participation and elimination of educational exclusion (Cooper, 1995). As a result of the education reforms in SA, universities like UCT that were previously reserved for 'Whites' under apartheid (Mackenzie and Compare, 1994; Perez and London, 2004; Boonzaier and Mkhize, 2018) were now open to all racial groups. The NQF Act 67 of 2008 and RPL policy have four broad transformational objectives, three of these transformational objectives relevant here are: (1) to "facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths; (2) accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities and (3) to enhance the quality of education and training.

The widening of access embedded in these education reforms led to adoption of an UCT RPL policy of 2004, amended in August 2016. This policy created an opportunity and education provisions for non- traditional students who are:

"defined by life circumstances rather than age, persons who have responsibility for themselves or may have a family / extended family, have a job and life experience. Be people who have been denied access to education because of race- during apartheid/ class or material circumstances" (UCT RPL Policy, 2004 in Salma, 2014).

The SA RPL process, on the other hand is defined as:

"a process through which non-formal learning and informal learning are measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts, and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system, or workplace" (SAQA, 2020).

Grounded in these education policy provisions is the link created between learning, work, and knowledge within HE, in those areas where these links were previously not in place.

The principles underpinning adult-focused learning and the valorising of experiential learning within these education reforms, had been advocated for by renown Adult Education theorists such as Knowles (1970), Freire (1970) and Lindeman (1921). These principles are grounded on the perception that people, adults in particular, are constantly learning outside the formal education and training system such as the home and workplace, and that a great deal of this learning also leads to additional skills, knowledge and competences that are significant for them (Knowles, 1970; 1984; Freire, 1970; Lindeman, 1921).

The RPL policy is informed by the notion of relevance which links to empowerment (SAQA NQF Implementation Framework 2015-2020). But relevance through the lens of empowerment is more than a provision, it is dialogical, and targets people's oppressive conditions to conscientize them and raise levels of consciousness that has the power to

change their realities (Taylor, 1993:52). Although issues of access and success in the HCEAE course is an important step in empowering adult women learners with regards to gaining valuable competencies, gaining access and success in the classroom is not enough. Access and success only benefit adult learners if the competencies gained also effect changes in these learners' vulnerabilities.

UCT's (2018) current transformational agenda is committed to supporting both students and staff to ensure their individual growth. These provisions include providing access to resources, ongoing support and rewarding success. In relation to students' transformation, the provisions are expressed as follows.

1. Aims for a more diverse student and graduate profile that is representative of the population with higher proportions of black, socio-economically disadvantaged and disabled students.
2. Works to continue to improve educational and psychosocial support for students and to address the unequal schooling of students in a manner that avoids stigmatisation and labelling.

Even though UCT's (2018) transformation policy reflects value driven provisions for accessing and promoting the success of learners, actual success is to be assessed by UCT's ability to move the learners beyond the classroom experience, to developing and enacting new levels of applied learning, especially in terms of higher consciousness and agency levels, beyond class, thus achieving the objectives of both Adult Education theory and education reform policies. The SA education reform policy and RPL policy insists that education provisions are to transform peoples' lives and that this knowledge must be reflected in curriculum and practice. If this is not considered, UCT's claim about redress of past discriminatory practices in education, cannot be taken seriously.

(i) The HCEAE course overview.

The HCEAE course under scrutiny here positioned itself as an opportunity for adult learners to gain an initial professional qualification as educators and training practitioners in different contexts (UCT, 2017: 41-42). In terms of the aims of the course, the HCEAE course relies heavily on affirmation of learning derived from non-traditional learning contexts, specifically experience in the field of education and training to access the learners, thus presenting an opportunity for developing a relationship between academia and the world of experience. The HCEAE course is a part time course, presented in the late afternoon and expands over the period of two years.

(ii) HCEAE course curriculum (modules) and aims.

According to UCT (2017: 41-42), the course curriculum comprises of the following modules:

First year:

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

- a. Introduction to Adult learning
- b. Organisation Development
- c. Designing and Facilitating Learning Events

Second year:

- a. Foundations of Adult Learning Theory
- b. Field Study
- c. Fields and Sites of ETD Practice

Four developmental criteria arise from the aims of the course.

The course seeks to develop:

1. Contextual understanding of the Adult Education field
2. Basic theoretical foundations for professional practice
3. Critical skills for practice
4. Communicative competence for further academic development.

The HCEAE course has a highly adaptive course curriculum, that is designed to be responsive to different groups of students. The adult women under this investigation were a group of learners that represented the 'Health' cohort, and the curriculum was tailored to meet the educational needs of these learners (UCT RPL Policy, 2016: 9). For example, according to UCT CSS (2018), the lecturer reported that:

"We chose Health Promotion as the Field of practise. Students were exposed to Participatory Action Research, transect walks and other participatory methods to engage with health promotion in their communities. They were required to produce maps of their communities and a community health profile, identifying a specific health or social issue, which they interrogated. The health or social issue identified in the Field Study module was then carried over into the Design and Facilitation module and they are now working in groups to prepare workshops around health/social issue".

The HCEAE course offers the possibility to change these female adult learners' lives, but this was only going to be possible if the pedagogical practice and course curriculum was aligned to the transformative objectives of the NQF education policy and RPL policy. This alignment ensures that learners are moved beyond the experience, towards higher states of consciousness and agency, thus leading to empowerment beyond the course.

1.2.(c) The study participants: socio-political and historical locations

The women under investigation in this study were brought together in the HCEAE course through their roles as health activists and health committee members in their respective communities in Belhar and Gugulethu on the Cape Flats, and Klapmuts in the Western Cape. Through this role, the women were provided with an opportunity to be part of the

UCT Community System Strengthening (CSS) training programme, of Learning Network (LN) located within the Health and Human Rights Division of the University, that aimed to mitigate the social determinants of poor health in their areas. The participation of these learners in this course was a special provision negotiated between UCT CSS training programme and UCT Adult Education department exclusively for this group of learners termed the “Health Cohort” (UCT CSS, 2017). According to the afore mentioned reports, 23 females, and one male who dropped out within the first year of study, were awarded with bursaries to study for the HCEAE course. Seven of the learners from this ‘health cohort’, all women, sought access through the RPL process, four of them constituted the unit of analysis for this study (see 4.3 inclusion criteria).

(i) Geographical setting, culture, and race: Interacting contexts within women empowerment

The women from this study came from Belhar and Gugulethu in the Cape flats, the products of forced removals of non-whites from the city centre and from those locations designated as ‘Whites only’ spaces in SA under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (South African History online, 2019) (see Clark and Worger, 2004, for an overview of apartheid history). Under apartheid, race, class, gender and geographic setting served as determinants of power and access to educational, social and economic opportunities among South Africans. For example, the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, stipulated the carrying of passes for black Africans and restricting the time they could spend in urban areas (South African History online, 2019). The Job Reservation Act of 1911, which was amended in 1926, on the other hand, was to reinforce the policy of land dispossession, segregation, as well as job reservation which prioritised White people (South African History online, 2019). Moore (2015) cites the then Minister of Native Affairs of 1953, stating that there will be “no place for Africans above the level of certain forms of labour” (Moore, 2015: 2). The Black working-class sector of the farming communities, such as Klapmuts, like the Cape Flats above, were not spared of these class and racial injustices under apartheid. The life on the farms was, and still is, to a certain extent, characterised by geographical isolation, which implies little access to social infrastructure and other social and educational opportunities (Hall, 2003: 2). Unfair labour practices on the farms were legitimised through apartheid policy, which espoused a form of bounded and power imbued relationship, “built on privileges and not rights” (Roberts, 1959: 3). In this sense, the “farmer determines what the labourers wants and needs”, thereby regulating the worker’s private lives and compromising their choices (Ayca, 2006: 451-452). Currently, land redistribution policies in SA takes orientation of “willing- buyer/willing-seller approach, which effectively allow for owners to volunteer to sell the land at market value (Aliber and Mokoena, 2002; Hall, 2003; SA History online, 2019).

Race and culture was at the centre of controversy under apartheid mainly because these were used to divide South Africans. Groupings of people were classified according to

“rigid definitions of race between 1948-1991” (South African History Online, 2019: n.p.). The Population Registration Act of 1950 legitimised these “rigid definitions” and used these to classify people into four racial groupings: Black, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. This classification, taking into account the motives alluded to above, is contentious and carry a risk of unpleasant association to apartheid racist categorisation of people (South African History online, 2019). For the sake of this study, I borrow from Perez & London (2004) who used the concept of “race” as a social construct, to characterise identities imposed and replicated under apartheid” (Perez and London 2004: n. p.). The concepts such as 'white', 'African', 'Indian' and 'coloured' are used in this study to denote groups of people defined by “race classification legislation formerly utilised in South Africa” (Perez & London, 2004: n. p.). In this sense, it is not the intention of this study to endorse and perpetuate the ethos of apartheid, by using this term beyond the groupings of people disadvantaged by apartheid laws. The concepts of 'Black' and 'White' used in this study takes a specific but generic orientation (Perez & London, 2004), such that “blacks include all racial groups disenfranchised during apartheid, while whites refer to those enfranchised during apartheid” (Salma, 2014: 3).

Like race, cultures is defined as: “ways of life of a specific group of people, including various ways of behaving, belief systems, values, customs, dress, personal decoration, social relationships, religion, symbols and codes” which were used to justify and perpetuate policies of segregation under apartheid (SA History online, 2019: n.p.). Post-apartheid discourse in SA under President Nelson Mandela embraced the notion of “Rainbow Nation’ to encapsulate the unity of multi-culturalism and the coming-together of people of many different races” (SA History online, 2019: n.p.). Belhar and Klapmuts are majority Afrikaans speaking areas, while the majority of the population in Gugulethu speaks IsiXhosa (Statistics South Africa, 2020). This census report also shows that women make up the majority population in both Gugulethu and Belhar, while Klapmuts has slightly more men than women. In the new political dispensation, areas such as Belhar, Gugulethu and Klapmuts are now called ‘previously or historically disadvantaged’ areas. In this study, however, I argue that disadvantages in these areas are still very prominent, and that women of colour are the worst affected groups (see Kehler, 2001 for an insightful overview of the Black South African women’s experiences with poverty; Statistics South Africa, 2021). The participants in this study are representative of the continued struggles faced by women of colour in SA. As such, an understanding of their contexts within Adult Education programmes will assist proper curriculum planning and improve the delivery of effective and transformative pedagogies.

1.3 Problem Statement

It is well established that education and training systems are key variables in providing power to address individual, educational, social, and economic challenges in societies (Cooper, 2011; Murtaza, 2012; wa Bofelo, Shah, Moodley, Cooper & Jones, 2013;

Stromquist, 2015; Bhat, 2015; The Daily Maverick, 2015; Riaz and Pervaiz, 2018). The current education discourse in SA, and globally, is indicative of these education reform policies aimed at encouraging the widening of participation opportunities for the previously socially and educationally disenfranchised excluded.

The evolution of the HCEAE course under scrutiny in this thesis, has been facilitated through education reform policy inputs from SAQA, NQF Act 67 of 2008, and SA RPL policy provisions. The afore mentioned education reform policies stipulate that education should provide learners with the power to develop and accumulate social and economic capital that facilitate and contribute towards personal and societal transformation. RPL policy provisions have implications for pedagogical practice and curriculum that are grounded on relevance with respect to drawing on learners' life experiences in class (SAQA NQF Implementation Framework 2015-2020). Freire (1970) asserts that the notion of relevance finds expression in the education provisions that are dialogic, and value driven and aim to move learners beyond an experience, to conscientize and provide them with power within.

There is a growing literature base that shows the complexities associated with the implementation of education reforms and RPL policy (Ralphs, 2009 & 2012; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014; Ismail, 2014; Cooper, Ralphs and Harris, 2017; Snyman & van der Berg, 2018). RPL in practice, has evolved and taken on different conceptualisations (Andersson, Fejes and Sandberg, 2013: 2; Ralphs, 2009; Cooper, Ralphs and Harris, 2016; Cooper et al, 2017). At various stages of its evolution, certain aspects came to be emphasized. These ranged from using RPL for credits, (Alexander, Van Wyk and Bereng, 2010; Sandberg and Andersson, 2011) and for accessing educational opportunities (Snyman and van der Berg, 2018; Singh, 2011; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014; Ralphs, 2016b) and recognition of prior learning *within* the curriculum (Cooper, 2011; Cooper et al., 2017; Ralphs, 2009 & 2012; waBofelo et al., 2013; Moodley, Shah & waBofelo, 2016). These different conceptualizations of RPL have created certain expectations within Adult Education practice. The success of Adult Education programmes and its learners has to a large extent, been assessed in accordance with what these conceptualizations emphasize, and the ability to recognize prior learning within these RPL practices. The challenge with these RPL conceptualizations is that they are emphasized over the transformational and social justice objectives, thereby limiting the implementation of certain aspects of the SA NQF education reforms and RPL policy objectives.

The SA NQF Act and RPL policy insist that education provisions are to align with the NQF policy provisions in terms of practice, so that redress and progression functions for learners can be achieved. The issue of concern here is that this alignment function has been taken for granted, and that simply gaining access and achieving academic success within an Adult Education course, is deemed sufficient to empower and affect the learners' transformation of their sense of self beyond the course. Success in this sense, is assessed primarily in relation to prior learning and education theory, at the expense of

proper implementation and integration of education policy. This would seem to suggest that these education programmes do not necessarily prioritise the success of vulnerable adult learners from working-class backgrounds *beyond* the course. The containment of understanding success within the course, contradicts the very function of education policy, which is to enforce provisions of educational reform and transformation in the practice of teaching adult learners. This has implications for what occurs beyond the course. The SA education policy insists on education provisions that are to *transform the realities of learners* by aligning with NQF Act objectives through the RPL policy in the teaching and curriculum practices (SAQA NQF Implementation Plan 2015-2020). This lack of follow through, does not bode well for vulnerable, Black working-class female learners participating in these courses, since the shift from the experience towards higher levels of consciousness and increased agency seems to be focussed on classroom academic achievement only, which suggests that the learners' social realities beyond the classroom do not receive sufficient attention in terms of assessing the extent of the application of their learning, in lived contexts.

Increasingly, literature also reflects an RPL practice that is concerned with applying education theory to assess learner access and success and relegating the transformative education policy provisions to the background (Osman and Castle, 2006; Buchler, Castle, Osman and Walters, 2007; Cooper, 2011; Singh, 2011; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014; Ralphs, 2016b; Snyman & van der Berg, 2018). This practice implies that the importance of theory is placed above the education reforms and RPL policy. The national education reforms and RPL policy provide the objectives that are to be implemented within the course, and these objectives serve as the framework with which the success of these education programmes are to be assessed. If research and education programmes fail to make use of the combination of education theory and SA education reforms and RPL policy objectives when assessing success, then the best interests of the learners will not be served. This then suggests that Adult Education programmes' claims of success cannot be viewed to be about redress.

RPL learners participating in Adult Education courses require more than gaining academic success. Success must be assessed by the ability of learners to use knowledge and skills gained from the course, to impact real life situations. My research on assessing the success of the HCEAE course will therefore combine both Adult Education theory and education reform policy to see how it informs the assessment of practice and final outcomes with regards to empowerment.

Although the principle of widening participation of the adult learners through the RPL process was an important step in redressing past discrimination in education, RPL implementation had been criticized for its lack of prioritizing the success of adult learners in HE, and the "lack of political will of the universities and the state" (Ismail, 2014; Ismail and Cooper, 2011). RPL is meant to redress past unfair discrimination in education, but there is a contention that the pre-occupation with the notion of a global

economy has eroded the urgency of the redress and equity function of RPL in SA and globally (Ismail & Cooper, 2011; Ismail, 2014; Andersson et al., 2018; Ralphs, 2016a). The research presented here is an attempt to address and surface the importance of issues of redress, equity, and transformation within the HCEAE education provisions and to embed this within the discussion on the need for proper alignment between education theory, policy, and practice.

1.4 Rationale

Despite the widespread rhetoric about the access and success of adult learners in HE, it is also becoming clear that simply creating new institutional arrangements for adult learners will not necessarily result in greater inclusion or pro-adult pedagogical practices. Viewed holistically, access and success depend on the nature of the value-driven dialogical encounters which surround and imbue these new established education spaces. Adult Education programmes are not being challenged enough to do more than simply providing access to learners and engage them in closed exchanges which separate their academic learning from their lived realities. True and meaningful access and success in Adult Education must be able to yield benefits for learners in their everyday lived realities, in terms of self-perception, self-enrichment, skills and competencies.

My motivation for undertaking this research has evolved out of my own involvement in the health sector, which involved working towards the education and development of vulnerable communities. This work was conducted through the LN at UCT. Central to LN's advocacy work is the provision of information and empowerment opportunities for vulnerable communities affected by health and human rights violations. Many of these learners participated in the Adult Education course under review in this thesis.

As a mature, working class Black South African woman from a disadvantaged area in the Cape Flats, and as someone who has had first-hand experience of living under apartheid, I had an acute awareness and understanding of many of these learners' contexts of struggle. My involvement in the LN programme, significantly influenced my thinking around questions on empowerment, learning and education. My research interest was also evoked by my exposure to education reforms in SA, specifically the growing significance of adult focused pedagogical practices and processes, and women empowerment. Below I reflect on and discuss these developments and provide some background to the question that is guiding this research.

Women empowerment through Adult Education is an important area of work, particularly in SA where high levels of inequality and inequity continue to disadvantage the most at-risk sector of the population, namely, Black working-class women (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Accordingly, opportunities for these at-risk women to participate in education provisions continue to be limited by a range of socioeconomic, cultural, political and historical factors. As part of UCT LN objectives of empowering communities

to mitigate the social determinants of poor health, LN, through UCT CSS training programme provided full funding for the female participants in this research, to study in the HCEAE course (UCT CSS, 2017).

Although it may be fair to say, given our increased numbers of gender-based violence against women, that a vast majority of South African women continue to suffer discrimination in various ways, the reality is that women from different racial groups, social classes, cultures and geographic settings, often suffer different forms of oppression or challenges (Statistics South Africa, 2021; Schabort, Sinnes and Kyle Jr, 2018). The women from previously disadvantaged areas that are participating in this study are either directly or indirectly affected by historical injustices and traditional socio-cultural practices. These injustices expose the adversely affected realities of the research participants and the communities they serve through their roles as health committee members and health activists. For education to be about redress of past and present forms of discrimination, the participation of disadvantaged adult learners in education programmes, must then be geared towards effecting changes in their favour (Kabeer, 1999).

Mtintso's (2006) discussion of empowerment amongst poor Black women reflected that their community mobilisation activities are organised around basic needs and rights that are trivialised or taken for granted in many communities. Dewey (1916: 20) proposed a transformative model of education, one that seeks to "promote social equality to enable individuals to escape the limitations of their social group for the benefit of their own growth and development". It is crucial that educational inclusion provisions of vulnerable women learners, not only promote individual transformation, but also engage learners in value-driven dialogical actions and exchanges that empower them to also impact their social realities.

Literature suggests that high levels of female empowerment can be derived from a variety of sources, among these is access to education provisions (Murtaza, 2012; Stromquist, 2015; Bhat, 2015; The Daily Maverick, 2015; Riaz and Pervaiz, 2018). Within the education setting, gaining empowerment contributes to the success of the learner, but for that to happen, HE must provide the necessary opportunities and structures for such empowerment to be realised. For the education setting, therefore, to appropriately respond to the needs of adult learners, it has to first understand the meaning, relevance and significance that learners attach to the different forms of empowerment that they encounter and acquire. The broader approach would be to support and encourage strategies for different ideas on relevance to be made visible at the level of practice, and then create multiplicity at the curriculum level to create different pathways.

1.5 Aim and Research Question

This research is an evaluative study of the HCEAE course and its ability to satisfy its intended outcomes. My interest in this research question stems from my curiosity in the areas of Adult Education and education policy, as I have noticed that these are rarely used in combination within the practice of Adult Education. This study was therefore conducted to explore the possibilities that may exist in combining pedagogical practice and RPL research, since Adult Education discourse was not making enough and effective use of it. I was therefore curious to see how this theory and policy combination of knowledge could be enacted in reality, in terms of equipping learners with increased agency that would enable them to move beyond the experience, towards a heightened level of consciousness and active realisation about their sense of being, beyond the course, and how this combination of education policy and theory could inform the discourse of Adult Education. I was also curious to see how this knowledge could shift Adult Education practice to be more focused and goal-based for the benefit of vulnerable working-class women learners, in ways that could affect individual transformation and enhance their social and economic capital.

My study aims to investigate the extent to which NQF policy guidelines are enacted in the HCEAE course, and how this impacts socially vulnerable learners' sense of empowerment. This is specifically because the transformative objectives of the NQF policy links the education provisions of adult learners to empowerment.

(i) Questions to be answered in this research

The core research question is as follows:

“What are the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course?”

The sub-questions which feed into the core question are as follows:

1. What are the forms of empowerment provided within the HCEAE course?
2. What worked and did not work to empower vulnerable adult women in this course?
3. How successful was the HCEAE course in empowering its vulnerable women adult learners?
4. What was the extent to which the forms of empowerment in this course align with (NQF Act) education policy transformation objectives and Adult Education theory?

Although little has been known about how well this course provides empowerment to its learners, it is well established that Adult Education courses do have the potential to raise levels of consciousness and agency with respect to vulnerable working-class women learners. Despite HE's historical shift towards trying to understand, engage and respond to

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

empowering disadvantaged adult learners, research into investigating the effectivity of these shifts towards empowering learners, is far from exhaustive. This study investigates the empowerment of black disadvantaged working class women within the HCEAE course. It seeks to use the combination of theory and policy as an attempt to unearth how contextual issues, such as geographic setting, race and culture, interact in the attainment of women empowerment in this course.

1.6 Conclusion

In sum, this chapter provided the background, problem statement, rationale and the aims of the study and it generally orientated the reader to the nexus between policy/education theory/pedagogy in the study of empowerment in the HCEAE course under consideration here. The following section traces the origins that led to this investigation. This encompasses mapping out issues that the field of Adult Education seem to be grappling with, and how these, when surfaced, can be approached. This background information is discussed below.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2. Overview of Literature

2.1 Introduction

The literature review provides a snapshot of scholarly research conducted and current debates. Literature reviews assist the researcher to situate the research problem within the context of related studies. The focus of this study is the perceptions of empowerment in HCEAE course. In this section, I have provided an overview of scholarly research and debates in the HCEAE course, RPL studies in HE, Adult Education and women empowerment studies. The research with the HCEAE course is to justify the validity and necessity of the research outcomes in this current study. The literature in RPL studies consulted in this research, on the other hand, serves as a reflective focus of previous research with RPL learners. This was done to highlight the potential gaps in RPL studies and to justify the value that, the research question and approach applied in this study, will add to the body of RPL and HE research knowledge. This study is significant as it has drawn on both theory and policy in assessing competencies in the HCEAE course, and it has also provided a socially located view of empowerment which encompasses access and success in the HE setting, specifically the Adult Education context. The validity and contributions of research pertinent to the notion of empowerment in diverse fields outside of Adult Education, including economics, psychology, and development is also acknowledged here. The review of the literature below is organised into themes and discussed in detail below.

2.1.1 Studies of RPL in the Diploma in Education (now HCEAE) course

February (2003) looked into the Diploma/HCEAE course with regards to the knowledge that this course provided to learners. February (2003) investigated the question of: "What counts as useful knowledge" in this course using questionnaires and in-depth interviews to collect data. February's (2003) study is similar to the research presented in my study here, with respect to investigating the usefulness of the knowledge gained within the course, but the current research takes this a step further by investigating this knowledge through the lenses of empowerment. The current study being conducted here also goes another step further than February's (2003) study and asks about the usefulness of the competencies gained in the course, in the lives of the learners beyond the course. Haupt (2005) later conducted a study on the same Diploma course. Haupt (2005) focussed her investigation on the nature of dialogical exchanges that were promoted within the course, but unlike February (2003), Haupt used the curriculum as the unit of analysis. Haupt (2005) posed the following questions: How was experience recruited? What kind of experience was recruited and for what purpose, within this diploma course?

In the February (2003) study the research participants revealed that the HCEAE course was beneficial to their transformation of self in the form of enhanced self confidence and self-esteem. There was, however, no evidence of how this enhanced confidence benefitted them in their daily lives, especially beyond the course. There was also insufficient data to

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

demonstrate the actual knowledge gained by the previous learners who took the course. The participants in this study, instead, reported advantages that came about as a result of the symbolic capital gained within the course, in terms of communicative literacies and abilities to progress academically. This, even though none of the research participants could progress academically. The findings in this study were able to demonstrate additional barriers that constrained the participation of women in the course. These barriers were associated with their gender roles that required them to balance work, home, and educational demands. This is in contrast with their male counterparts, who experienced less barriers related to their gender roles.

Haupt (2005) on the other hand, drawing on Bernsteinian curriculum theory, as well as the language she developed to interpret the findings, found that distance, time and space, were more relevant to depict six differentiations of personal or impersonal broad categories of pedagogical exchanges within this course. On the notion of dialogical exchanges promoted in the course, Haupt's (2005) study revealed a discourse that displayed a mixture of responses. These were instances of dialogical exchanges that showed equality and respect for learners' prior experiences within the practice. On the other hand, the methods and strategies applied by the lecturers were not participatory and therefore constrained dialogical exchanges. On the notion of the pedagogical practice, controlled dialogical exchanges were observed. Haupt (2005) viewed these methods and strategies as contrary to the underpinning principles of Adult Education and lifelong learning, which are geared towards promoting reflexive reciprocal dialogical exchanges. The methods and strategies are central in the investigation of women empowerment in my study, this is because they inform the notion of relevance within the dialogical exchanges as stipulated in theory and policy.

Saldanha & Thomas (2009) provides much broader perspectives of both the lecturer and course convenor, as well as the most recent pedagogical practices, methodologies and strategies that are applied within the pedagogical practice of this Diploma /HCEAE course under scrutiny in this current study. In their paper they critically discuss the following questions: What is the value of allowing other voices? What kind of voice makes it possible to give alternative constituencies of adult learners? What mechanisms – in terms of curriculum and programme organization – might allow such voices not to only shape curriculum, but also to contribute to the knowledge pool of educator development? Saldanha & Thomas (2009) reflected on the major shifts within this course from the earlier political activism that occurred, to the emphasis on transformation in self, to competencies in the training field, and further academic progression.

Saldanha & Thomas (2009) elaborated on the complexities of designing an inclusive curriculum that not only responds to the diverse needs of different learners but is grounded on pedagogical practice and process that provided space for reflexive reciprocal exchanges. This practice is viewed as allowing learners to exercise their voices and gain a presence, while providing for an emotionally inviting space where feelings are shared and

'silences [are] understood'. Saldanha & Thomas (2009) discuss the multiple layers of formal, non-formal voices that anchor transformative learning in the diploma course. These are located within a practice that allow for a dynamic relationship between civil society organisations, the learners, and academia. Grounded in this dynamic relationship is its critical reflexive nature and its ability to provide an inclusive approach that has potential to bridge experiential knowledge and theory and assist the learners with their transitioning into HE. According to this paper, a learner's individual transformation and academic progression in this Diploma course, is grounded in the use of a combination of pedagogical approaches that encompass formal, non-formal and informal strategies.

The above studies provided my research with an overview of how the HCEAE course has evolved over time with regards to their methodologies, strategies, exchanges, and values. Saldanha & Thomas (2009) provided the current study undertaken here, with the most recent insights into the Diploma/HCEAE course. While all these aspects are crucial in learning, my study goes a step further, in terms of investigating the effects of these methodologies and strategies on the learners' actions and attitudes in the real world. The current research uses this type of real-world observation of participants, to effectively measure realised forms of empowerment as perceived by the participants in this course.

2.1.2 RPL For Accreditation: Work based learning – the South African Context

Alexander, van Wyk, Bereng & November (2011) study, looks at the use of RPL as credits for work-based learning in the construction sector. They trace the trajectory of Mr Klaas's learning journey within this setting, most importantly, they seek to illuminate the gains and legitimacy of the knowledge accumulated through work experience. The authors contextualised their investigation around Lave and Wenger's (1990) model of Legitimate Peripheral Participation and anchored it on the concept of community of practice which frames the enquiry of this study. In addition to this model, Alexander et al. (2011) uses the education reform transformative framework of redress and progression, stipulated in the NQF Act, to justify legitimacy and parity of this work-based knowledge in relation to the knowledge of academia. In this argument they foreground the pedagogical practices and processes at play in the construction sector and illustrate the trajectory of Mr Klaas' journey that allowed him, as an apprentice, to move from the state of peripheral being, to a state of becoming fully transformed through the mastery of the threshold concepts of this context, a process facilitated by an expert in this field. They argue that the expert in the construction industry and the teacher in academia both occupy similar teacher-student relationship positions in these learning experiences. Accordingly, they view these processes and practice as promoting legitimacy, as these lead to cognitive development and produce different but mutually valuable knowledge which merits accreditation in this construction sector.

Central to Alexander et al.'s (2011) argument is the measurability and quantifiability of Mr Klaas' work-based knowledge in real situations, and the ability thereof, to fulfil personal and social responsibilities in compliance with the redress goals of the transformative education reforms of the RPL policy. The authors are critical of knowledge that is not socially beneficial and deem this knowledge as "inert and useless". Although both Alexander et al.'s (2011) study and the present enquiry undertaken here are similarly premised on the idea of using both the theory and RPL policy in RPL, our contexts are still different in that Alexander et al. focusses on RPL for credits and is located in informal context, while the current study locates RPL within HE.

2.1.3 RPL Studies in Higher Education: The South African Context

Osman and Castle (2006) is a case study of a HE institution in SA. Their study focused on disadvantaged groups of adult learners that had acquired entry into the programme through the process of RPL. They were interested in understanding the factors that promote retention, throughput, success and motivation of adult learners in HE, as the programme they were investigating appeared to have "good retention and success capabilities" and "extend[ed] beyond access" (Osman & Castle, 2006: 51). Buchler, Castle, Osman & Walters, (2007) study is similar in that they also focussed on three aspects: access, retention and success of adult learners in HE institutions. They were specifically interested in investigation the contextual and systemic factors that hinder participation of adult learners in these contexts.

In both Osman & Castle's (2006) and Buchler et al.'s (2007) studies, findings revealed that high rates of access, success, retention, throughput and motivation of adult learners within these programmes were associated with the pedagogical practice and processes that took the notions of relevance of the curriculum, the sentiments of lifelong learning, as well as the use of adult learning principles within these programmes, seriously. In addition to this, a pedagogical practice characteristic of "extending beyond accessing learners" (Osman et al, 2006:51) was noted as an important contributing factor in this study.

Cooper (2011) is a critical, qualitative case study design which sought to investigate the lived experiences of a group of disabled rights activists who sought access to a Master's programme via RPL in a HE institution in SA. Cooper (2011) was vested in illuminating the nature of dialogical exchanges in terms of equality and respect for both academic and prior knowledge of learner, and the pedagogic strategies applied by the lecturers as well as the learners' strategies that allowed for development of academic literacies necessary to succeed in the course. She posed the following question: "Can adult learners' prior experiential knowledge act as a resource for the successful acquisition of postgraduate academic literacy practices?". Cooper (2011) grounded her investigation on the view that a dynamic relationship in exchanges between (a) student habitus and dispositions, (b)

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

pedagogic agency, and (c) the nature of the disciplinary field, underpins acquisition of academic literacies. The orientation taken in this dynamic relationship is that even though knowledge differentiation between experiential everyday knowledge and knowledge from academia is well established in this course according to previous studies, there is space for enactment of agency and application of creativity within the academic discipline that could be explored to shed light on student's acquisition of academic knowledge. My study is also an attempt to illuminate the perceptions of enactment of curriculum in ways that empower the learners within and beyond the course, as well as the practice and process that inform these actions through the application of the policy theory dynamic combination.

In Cooper (2011), evidence of the merging between experiential knowledge and knowledge of academia, and eventually the development of academic literacies, was revealed as a negotiated project that was anchored on dimensions between creativity and determination within dialogical exchanges. This process was enabled by the presence of what Cooper termed as the 'transformative intent' of the course in its pedagogy and curriculum, that allowed for critical reflexive exchanges. Through these exchanges, learners developed new insights and self-awareness, that allowed for re-orientation towards acknowledgement and respect for academic knowledge. As such, learners engaged in strategies such as accommodation, resistance, and challenging of power relations in their acquisition of academic literacies in this study.

Even though the above studies present valuable knowledge that is useful in informing the pedagogical practices and processes in HE curriculum programmes that provide access to RPL learners, it is crucial that research interrogate and hold these education programmes to account in terms of successes that can be measured *beyond* the classroom setting, in real life everyday contexts of these learners. Only in this sense can it be verified whether redress and progression goals of Adult Education legislature, has been achieved by these learners. The current study undertaken here, addresses this gap.

2.1.4 Studies in Women Empowerment: the South African Context

Fohtung (2008) investigated community perceptions of the socioeconomic factors that hindered the empowerment of women in New Belhar (an urban location on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape). Some of the participants in the present study here, are also from Belhar, and thus comparisons could be drawn. Data from Fohtung (2008), based on the perceptions of community members, were collected using interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The study also used expert opinion, such as academic researchers, faith-based organisations and NGOs. Fohtung focused on socioeconomic factors such as poverty, vulnerability, education, unemployment, violence, health, housing, land, and women's rights, to measure women empowerment in Belhar.

Fohtung (2008) elaborated on the impact of these factors on women empowerment, stating that gender stereotypes are still prevalent within the curriculum in SA, even though

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

education reforms are in place. The result of this study revealed that women, unlike their male counterparts, experience challenges in terms of gaining power over social and economic capital and values. These responses showed that women suffered setbacks in relation to achieving their empowerment, and to a greater extent, Fohitung (2008) revealed that powerlessness was both a global experience and situational experience. The sense of powerlessness shown here, relates to these women's lack of power and influence over their lives and others. The current study of women empowerment presented here, crucially considers the number of vulnerabilities and inequalities demonstrated in Fohitung's (2008) study that continue to plague and constrain women empowerment in this geographic setting. Fohitung's study demonstrated lack of education as a cross-cutting factor in the continued struggle to achieve women empowerment in this geographic area. As such, my study is relevant in this regard as it challenges education provisions to do more than simply provide access and success within the classroom. The current study urges that education provisions effect real success that is pro-redress and transformation for the benefit of marginalised, working-class Black women learners, their families and society at large.

2.1.5 Studies in Women Empowerment in Economics: The Global Context

Huis, Hansen, Otten & Lensink's (2017) study is located within the field of Development Economics. This study reviewed different studies undertaken on women empowerment in culturally diverse countries through the lenses of microfinance. The authors asked the following questions: (1) Which specific components of women's empowerment are assessed; and (2) How are those components differentiated into personal, relational, and societal empowerment?

Huis et al.'s (2017) review, focussed on the psychological components of empowerment among poverty-stricken women that participated in economic activities. The results of their research showed changes at a personal level, and at a level of transformation of their sense of self. Another component investigated in the above review, was to look at the power that these women had over the decisions made in their households, as a result of their participations in economic activities. The lack of power over the decisions made at this relational level, was displayed. Further challenges amongst these women that were revealed were in relation to the risk of intimate partner violence and aggression within their households and villages. Huis et al. (2017) contend that these risks and aggressions were because of women's access to the banks that were facilitated through these microfinance programmes. Although there were some positives of women empowerment at the societal level, the lack of appropriate tools to measure societal empowerment proved to be a challenge.

The Three-Dimensional Model of Women's Empowerment developed by Huis et al. (2017) to measure women empowerment was premised on the view that people do not exist in a social vacuum, and that they are affected by their environment. The authors further contend that women empowerment through microfinance is a multifaceted, time

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

dependent, and culture-bound process which occurs at three levels. They hold the view that women empowerment in microfinance contexts start at personal level, and influence change in familial level, with societal empowerment the last to receive influence. The results of this investigation displayed mixed responses bordering on the inability to prove the increase in women's empowerment through the microfinance provisions. A longitudinal study would suffice in this regard.

Kegudu, Malami & Gatawa (2011), like Huis et al. (2017) above, focused on women economic empowerment in the Women Education Center (WEC) in Birnin Kebbi in Nigeria. The WEC is a Nigerian government education and training initiative that provides education and training opportunities for socially excluded women, especially divorced women. Kegudu et al (2011) is a descriptive survey that drew on the lived experiences of the women learners in this education and training initiative over a two-year period. The study asked the following questions: To what extent has WEC in Birnin Kebbi been able to impart skills to women? And, to what extent has WEC developed these women's capacity?

Kegudu et al.'s study, similar to February (2003) above, showed that women displayed enthusiasm for academic progression through the WEC vocational education and training course. With regards to the extent of empowerment, a mixture of responses was recorded, and these were: there was low positive correlation between skills acquisition and women economic empowerment; and a high positive correlation between capacity building and women economic empowerment. on the other hand, the same study recorded significant relationship between skill acquisition and no significant relationship between capacity building and women economic empowerment. having demonstrated the aforementioned results, the study showed convincing positives results in self-employment opportunities. The gains were also recorded in household income among most participants. However, like Huis et al. (2017) above, many women in this study also did not experience economic benefits, due to gendered restrictions placed on them by their spouses. The lack of working capital to start a business, lack of adequate government assistance and lack of will, were revealed as some of the dimension listed as barriers to women economic empowerment in Kegudu et al.'s (2011) study. All the women that participated in this study expressed an enhanced economic status through their participation in this programme, even though some did not accrue any economic benefit.

The economic dimensions of empowerment is complex, and impacts women in many different ways. The above studies provide important insights for the present study here, in terms of which factors to look out for, keeping in mind that it is important to understand the context is SA and the ways in which economic relations are structured, within these contexts.

2.1.6 Studies in Adult Education and Empowerment: The Global context

Papaioannou and Gravani (2018) is a case study of the empowerment of vulnerable adults through Second Chance Education (SCE) in Cyprus. SCE is an opportunity for vulnerable

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

adults with low levels of education to complete their basic and secondary education. The authors ask: (1) To what extent have the adult learners attending SCE been empowered and at which levels? (2) Through which mechanisms have vulnerable adult learners been empowered? (3) Which obstacles hinder the process of their empowerment? This study used reflective diaries, interviews, and written curriculum to collect data. Both this study and the current study presented here, are located within the Adult Education field, but SCE is a school-based setting while the present study is in a HE setting. The question of the extent of empowerment is similar to the one being investigated here, however, the current research includes both theory and education policy, while Papaioannou et al.'s (2018) study, drew only on theory to measure women empowerment.

Papaioannou & Gravani's (2018) findings demonstrated the lack of adult focused education policy and, the negative attitudes of education authorities as, among the barriers to empowerment. Despite acknowledging the above barriers, learners did experience transformation of the self. Regarding mechanisms of empowerment, identity amongst learners seemed to be well-developed, as learners seemed to have been assisted with overcoming feelings of stigma associated with their previous experiences of failures at school. The pedagogical practice that promoted value-driven exchanges seems to have assisted transformation of the self and the acquisition of social capital, as mechanism for empowerment. The present study presented here, also argues that empowerment relates to capital in that there has to be visibility of social disposition and opportunities for learners' acquisition of capital through a dialogic process. Further it is also argued here that there needs to be a recognition of the capital that learners possess, when they enter HE. In Papaioannou & Gravani's (2018) study, learning as a dimension of cognitive development had been viewed as a crosscutting variable of women empowerment at the psychological and socio-political levels, and this is what Fohitung's (2008) study above, also confirmed. The cognitive dimension of empowerment is an important one, and will receive attention in the present study as well.

2.1.7 Studies in Women Empowerment in Higher Education: The Global Context

Malik and Courtney (2009) and Murtaza (2012) both investigated the lived experiences of women empowerment through their access and participation in HE in Pakistan. Both Malik et al. and Murtaza's studies reflect critically on the vast inequalities in education which is coupled by dimensions of gender and urban–rural disparities. Malik & Courtney (2009) is a summary of Malik's (2005) study which investigated the extent to which participation in HE offers empowerment to women in Pakistan. The focus of Malik & Courtney's (2009) study is on the levels and nature of women empowerment. The study drew on the lived experiences of female postgraduate students and female faculty staff members from 10 public universities in Pakistan.

Murtaza (2012) on the other hand, examined the impact of HE programmes through the experiences of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) scheme of HE in Gilgit

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Baltistan. AKDN scheme is a vocational programme that provides an opportunity to disadvantaged women to improve their skills in order to enable them to play an effective role in society. Murtaza (2012) reflected deeply on the status of the women that participated in the vocational and skills program through AKDN, highlighting their lack of economic independence. Murtaza acknowledges the role played by the AKDN scheme in terms of empowering women economically, but argues that, in the context of Pakistan, economic empowerment of women alone is not enough. Women's independence and autonomy is more important, and this can only be achieved through their participation in HE. Murtaza (2009) hold the view that empowerment has four key interlocking dimensions: personal, economic, social and political, and key to these dimensions is personal empowerment. The authors claim that a prerequisite to women empowerment is an approach that embraces emotional liberation, intellectual nurturing, tolerance, justice and humanity.

Both Malik & Courtney (2009) and Murtaza (2012) studies reflect critically on the vast inequalities in education which is coupled by dimensions of gender and urban–rural disparities. They both contend that in the context of Pakistan, these disparities are largely perpetuated by social and traditional conditions that are deeply embedded in many institutions including the education and family, even though there are gender equality inspired laws and policies enforced. This resonates to a large extent with the situation in SA, where we, despite having the best and most inclusive constitution in the world, still see on a regular basis the gaps that exist between policy and practice with respect to women empowerment opportunities.

Using a qualitative and quantitative methodology, Malik & Courtney's (2009) study revealed that women's empowerment in HE is located within an education programme that takes the relevance of information for the learner's lived contexts, seriously. Both Malik & Courtney (2009) and Murtaza's (2012) findings showed that HE provision contributes to economic independence, enhances confidence, confers social status, promotes social inclusion and provides access to information on rights. Murtaza's findings displayed the ability of educated women to claim their legal rights. This is contrary to Malik & Courtney's (2009) study which showed that awareness of legal rights did not yield real benefits, as claiming these legal rights carried the risk of alienation of these women by their families and society, and losing their identity within this social realm was something they were not prepared to do.

The issues of equality and social justice are thus vital components of research into women's' empowerment in Adult Education, as it signals the extent to which empowerment is realised in a holistic manner, at personal, social and official levels of engagement. The present research conducted here, draws on the insights of the above studies, and uses these to create an acute awareness of the social and personal transformation outcomes of the HCEAE course, and how it has impacted the vulnerable women learners in this study in their lived realities in both the personal and public spaces.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

The aim is to show here, how the creation of opportunities for the participation in HE of poor, disenfranchised working-class Black women, can affect change for the better, if the proper policy and educational structures and provisions, are aligned correctly with respect to purpose, form, practice and outcome.

2.1.8 Conclusion

In sum, the literature review above had surfaced a common thread of a myriad of interlocking factors such as race, culture, gender, and social context that interact within the world of adult learners and impact the concept of women empowerment. These factors have a profound impact on how a student will experience a sense of heightened consciousness, agency, and control, not only within the HE setting, but in real life situations which have very real consequences in the lives of marginalised women. Subsequently, the abovementioned factors demand the employment of a multifaceted and coherent analytical approach; one that links adult education theory, education and RPL policy, and pedagogy. My study has therefore, endeavoured to provide a holistic, systemic theoretical framework that draws upon two core conceptual frameworks, supplemented by an empowerment model, which is complementary to the core theory being employed here. This conceptual framework provides an insightful and penetrative lens for analysing and interpreting the data. These are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3. Theoretical underpinning

3.1 Introduction

The notion of empowerment can be quite abstract and difficult to describe (Fohtung, 2008; Papaioannou and Gravani, 2018). The meanings attached to it are often context bound, requiring the application of relevant theoretic tools and concepts to unearth its form and function. In order to conceptualise and provide a way of understanding the experiences of empowerment within the HE context, a single theoretical framework will not suffice. Hoggan (2016: n.p.) posits that “adoption of a single organizing framework to understand all reality is greatly, seemingly purposefully, limiting one’s perspectives and thus also one’s understanding”. In this light, two core theoretical frameworks, that of Paulo Freire’s (1970-1; 2000) Critical Cultural Theory and Bourdieu’s (1986) Social Capital Theory is employed in this study and provides an integrated coherent approach that draws from different but complementary theoretical lenses. These are discussed and presented in this chapter.

3.1.1 Theoretic Framework

Within the framework of my study, I found that the ideological background of Paulo Freire’s (1970-1, 2000) work in Critical Cultural Theory and Bourdieu’s (1986) Social Capital Theory is particularly suited for understanding the perceptions of the forms of empowerment presented in the HCEAE course. Critical Cultural Theory forms the main theoretical backdrop in this research. Bourdieu’s Social Capital Theory will be used to complement the foundational aspect of empowerment developed through the lens of Critical Cultural Theory. Four tailored theoretical concepts have been used to interrogate the concept of empowerment and to connect the research framework. These are: (a) Freire’s (1970-1; 2000) concepts of dialogue and praxis; and (b) Bourdieu’s (1986) concepts of social and economic capital.

These concepts were used to assess the competencies gained within the HCEAE course in relation to:

- Cognitive development (consciousness),
- Literacies (include knowledge and skills),
- Social (agency) and
- Economic change.

Empowerment will therefore be discussed using the abovementioned theoretical and conceptual framework. Freire’s and Bourdieu’s work, while widely used, are able to offer particular and illuminating insights into the phenomenon being investigated in this thesis, particularly in relation to the socio-political, economic and cultural contexts underpinning the research site and that of its participants.

3.1.2 Rowlands (1997) Model of power

In keeping with the importance placed on the contextual issues of this current research, Rowland's (1997) empowerment framework has also been found to be context specific, particularly because it brings to the fore, a feminist inspired dimension of empowerment, thus adding a complimentary lens to Freire's and Bourdieu's theorising of empowerment. Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) argue that women-centred research must take cognisance of universal standards but should also allow for the use of context sensitive indicators in assessing women empowerment, thus emphasising the importance of Rowland's (1977) approach here. Rowlands (1997) constructs the concept of 'power over' as controlling power over someone and something and contends that the response to it can be compliance, resistance or manipulation. On the other hand, 'power to' is conceptualised as generative or productive power that creates new possibilities and actions without domination. Elaborating further on this model of power, she posits that 'power with' is the power generating feeling that the whole is greater than the sum of individuals, and action as a group is more effective. While 'power within' is constructed as a sense that there is strength in every individual. These four dimensions of power displayed in Rowlands' (1997) Model, provide for further categorisation of competencies gained, and this can further inform and speak to the actual experiences of research participants, as Rowlands offers a framework for categorising the questions about empowerment in this study, in specific ways.

3.1.3 Concepts of: 'being' and 'becoming'; 'confession' and 'dialogic'.

Sharing of broad spectrum lived experiences from childhood, illuminated the shift from experience, towards increased consciousness and agency that became visible beyond the classroom. So doing, the pedagogical practice and process that espoused the concepts of being, becoming, confession and dialogue, was revealed. Natanasabapathy and Maathuis-Smith (2019: 371) state, "being itself signifies a particular ontological presence at a particular point in time, whereas becoming is a continuous moving presence of the ontological ... self" (Natanasabapathy and Maathuis-Smith 2019: 371). Their study draws on the seminal work of Heidegger's existentialist philosophy, which unpacks the meaning and purpose behind individuals' sense of being in the world. In this way the notions of 'being' and 'becoming' speak quite profoundly to the adult learner participants in this study, in terms of grappling with what their purpose is in life, and how they can create such possibilities, psychologically and cognitively within social contexts, for realising such purpose. In a similar way, Bayat and Mitchell's (2020) work on agency and affect, also speak of "becoming-with others" (Bayat and Mitchell 2020: 72), to realise other possible ways of being in the social contexts in which individuals live and relate to. The affective dimensions in their study are important for realising the impact of the emotional and even psychological aspects of active learning. Their study highlights the importance of relational learning, and how personal agency can only be enacted and realised in relation to others, as in the confessional space which the participants in this study, operate in. Here one can see the ways in which the adult learners participating in this study, are actively involved and engaged through dialogical interactions with others to achieve a personal state of psycho-social development at specific times of their learning journeys, and the ways in which they

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

then enact and use that development as a launching pad towards approaching their next critical phase of development. In this way the relationship between the dialogical, confessional, being, and becoming are all inter-related, and provide a lens to the nexus between experience, consciousness, agency, and empowerment.

This approach is in line with underpinnings of phenomenology, that seek to explore how participants “perceive, describe, feel about, remember, and make sense of the experience shared” (Butina, Campbell and Miler, 2015: 187). The presentation of biographies in this thesis is informed by this understanding. The factors underpinning phenomenology alluded to above, thus add a lens for understanding the human aspect incorporated into adult education and the nature of learning embodied therein, a learning process which I will argue, is geared towards empowerment of mind, body and soul.

Below is a diagrammatical representation of the theoretical framework employed in this thesis.

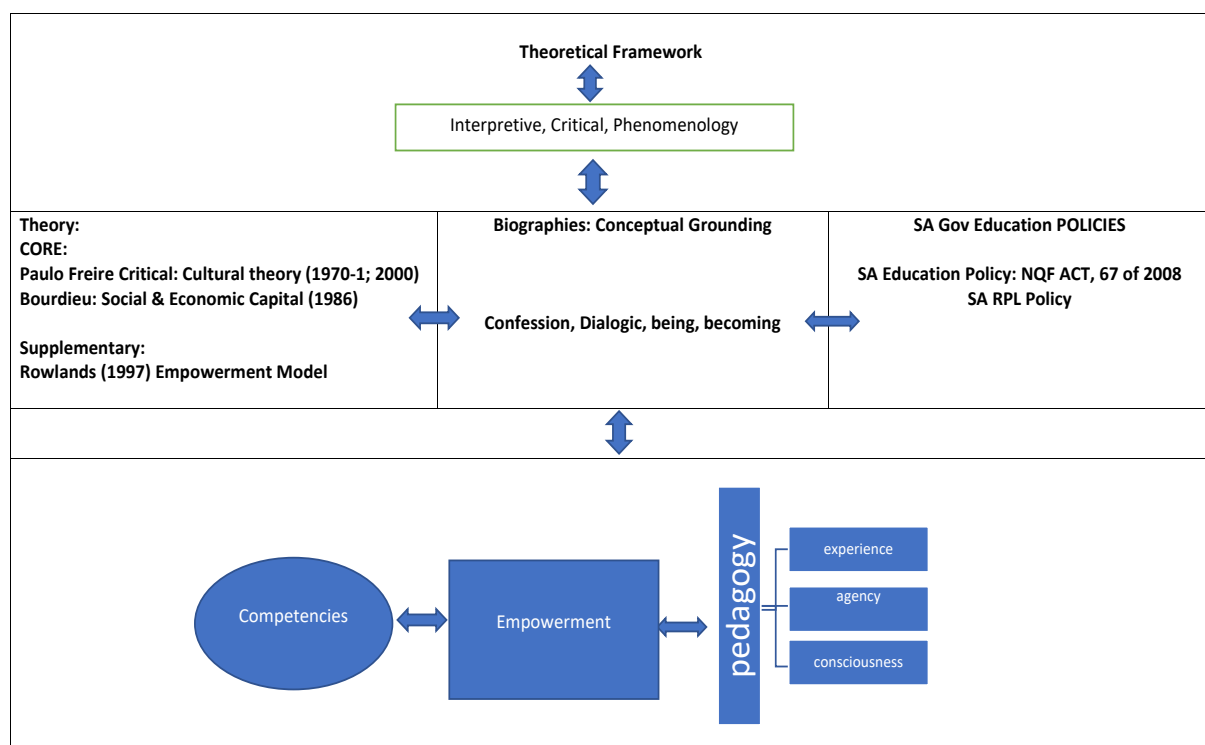


Figure: 1. Conceptual integration

3.2 The conceptual framework

For the purposes of this study, the exploration of the concepts of dialogue and praxis, was concerned with notions of empowerment. The concepts of dialogue and praxis routinely appear in critical cultural theory as a dialogue-praxis dynamic hybrid relationship which is participatory and action/application process that is self-determined. In addition to the concepts of praxis and dialogue, social and economic capital on the other hand, also reflect

a relational and dynamic relationship that is mutually inclusive, and goal driven. Both these dynamics are essential for unpacking the notion of empowerment in this study.

3.2.1 Freire's concept of Dialogue

Freire (2000: 88) construct dialogue as “the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world”. Central to the conception of dialogue according to Freire (2000: 17) is the “epistemological relationship” and its characteristic of being “the way of knowing and learning”. Accordingly, this aforementioned characteristic gives dialogue a unique identity, the one that separates it from the everyday use of this concept, as an ordinary conversation between people. Freire uses this characteristic to challenge the “banking method” (Freire, 2000: 72) of teaching that valorises the educators’ knowledge over the students’ knowledge. This is particularly because the banking method of education creates a condition in which the “scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits” according to Freire (2000:72). Freire (1971) conceptualises dialogue as a reflexive, reciprocal exchange, where both the learners and educator assume equal power during the process of education and learning.

In his efforts to promote transformation, Freire places the analysis of oppression through mediation between, experiential knowledge and a “convergent theoretical framework where the object of oppression is cut across by such factors as race, class, gender, culture, language, and ethnicity” (Freire, 2000: 15) at the centre of the pedagogical practice and process. He posits that this convergence promotes “acts of cognition, not transferrals of information” (Freire, 2000: 79) and enable dialogue to thrive. He found value in the process where learning involves respect for both theory and learners’ prior knowledges, within a process where “people teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects” (Freire, 2000: 80).

Accordingly, dialogue encompass a problem-posing process where learners are assisted to critically reflect on their oppression and identify the social connections that shape and hinder their empowerment. Freire (2000: 172) contends that “human activity consists of action and reflection...it requires theory to illuminate it”. Notably, this process allows the merging of theory and prior knowledge, thus enabling learners access to solutions to some of their immediate problems. Through this process, the “students - no longer docile listeners, - are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (Freire, 2000: 81). Given this transformative learning and education experience, “they can create a new situation” (Freire, 2000: 47). This then becomes dialogue, and the presence of dialogue in dialogical encounters signifies empowerment.

Viewed in terms of the above, dialogue will become an essential factor in determining the perceptions of empowerment in the HCEAE course. Through exchanges with previous leaners on the HCEAE course, this study aims to identify and observe the perceptions of dialogical encounters in relation to the following four factors:

1. Participatory nature of strategies and methods used within the exchanges.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

2. Reciprocity of exchanges between theory and indigenous knowledge
3. Situatedness of the reflections in exchanges
4. New knowledge and skills gained.

These four factors will be applied to the educational policy and theory contexts, within the HCEAE course under review in this study. This combination of policy and theory is applied in this study to illuminate the pedagogical practice, process and the curriculum that informs the perceptions of women empowerment in this course.

3.2.2 Freire's concept of Praxis

Freire conceptualises praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (2000:51). This conceptualisation suggests a dialogical exchange that encompasses a dynamic and mutually inclusive learning and education process, that encourages critical thinking and cognitive engagement in action. Freire (2000) warns against the pedagogical practice that emphasise actions and relegate reflection to the background in exchanges. Accordingly, such dialogical encounters reduce the “word into activism and negates true praxis and make dialogue impossible” (Freire, 2000: 88). Given this aforementioned situation, a pedagogical practice that foster a meaningful balance between action and reflection is the most preferred practice. This is specifically because “critical perception is embodied in action” (Freire, 2000: 99), and critical perception and action dynamism is essential in transformation of the self, and people's reality (Freire, 2000:75). As such, this reflexive action dynamism present as the source of knowledge and creation and praxis.

Freire's (2000) posit that meaningful learning and education should strive to break the cycle of oppression, through presenting people with challenges that are “existential, concrete, present situation, and requires a response, both at intellectual and action level” (Freire,2000: 89-90). Freire insisted that a pedagogical practice that “control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power” (Freire, 2000: 77). As, such, the essence of this praxis is that learners begin to freely engage in critical questioning and interpreting of their oppression, and key to this process is problem-posing education that bases itself on “creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality” (Freire, 2000: 84). It is then through this freedom to critically reflect that the oppressed begin to reject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility (Freire, 2000).

The SA NQF Act 67 of 2008 also puts forward transformative values that education provisions are to adhere to, and these values become important for learners' success beyond the HCEAE course under investigation here. For Freire (2000), learning is thus a continuous process directed at enhancing the learners' capacity to think critically and act. Through praxis, learners collectively act upon their environment to transform it through further cycles of action and critical reflection. Praxis will therefore become an essential

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

dimension in determining the perceptions of empowerment in the HCEAE course. The following three factors represent perceptions of actual indicators of the concept of praxis:

- Autonomy in exchanges
- Action-oriented critical reflection
- Creative thoughtful actions

These three factors will be applied to the educational policy and theory contexts, within the HCEAE course in this study. The application of combination of policy and theory in this study is used to highlight incidents of women empowerment within the pedagogical curriculum, process and the and practice as per the perceptions of the previous learners in this course.

An important concept introduced by Bourdieu is that of 'capital', which he extends beyond the notion of material assets to capital that may be social, cultural or symbolic (Bourdieu 1986: cited in Navarro 2006: 16). These forms of capital may be equally important and can be accumulated and transferred from one arena to another (Navarro 2006: 17). The shift from material to cultural and symbolic forms of capital is to a large extent what hides the causes of inequality.

These ideas are elaborated at length in Bourdieu's classic study of French society, *Distinction* (1986), in which he shows how the 'social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds' through 'cultural products' including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1986: 471).

3.2.3 Bourdieu's concept of Social Capital

Another important concept introduced by Bourdieu's social cultural theory is that of capital. Inherent to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital is the characteristic that extends beyond the confines of materialistic currency to capital that may be social, cultural or symbolic in nature. Bourdieu's discussion of the concepts of economic and social capital suggests a dynamic socioeconomic relationship (Bourdieu, 1986: 79). Bourdieu confirms the collective nature of this concept and contends that social capital is a "quality produced by the totality of the relationships between actors, rather than merely a common quality of the group" (Bourdieu 1986: 2). His conceptualisation of social capital suggests cumulative characteristics, that tends to be in the form of actual or potential resources, an embodied form of power and currency that could be traded with in social relations.

Bourdieu (1986) posit that members of this social network are vested in its sustainability, thereby investing their different and diverse capital, such as time and labour. He highlights the voluntary nature of these collective exchanges and illuminates its social relevance in terms of allowing its members access to accumulate material or symbolic benefits that encompasses "capital and profit in all their forms" (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). Accordingly,

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Bourdieu (1986) contends that participating in these social networks is not only for transformation of self, but gaining access to acquire recognition and distinction, thus manifesting as solid investment. Advocates of this theory confirms this aforementioned dualistic symbolic characteristic, and suggest that it is “governed by the logic of knowledge and acknowledgement” (Bourdieu, 1986: 257).

Accordingly, the gains of accessing this social network are commendable for the members since they grant them “immediate access to collectively owned resources”, while also serving the a “social obligation” (Bourdieu, 1986:79) goal. Some of the gains in this social network are symbolic in nature, and by association to these social networks, members are conferred with these in the form of “credentials of multiple credits and values” (Bourdieu, 1986: 248-249). According to Bourdieu, (1986) these social networks are flexible structures that exist “practical states, material and or symbolic formats”, that are “self-sustaining” (Bourdieu, 1986: 84). The following four factors represent perceptions of actual indicators of the concept of social capital. Accordingly, the conceptualisation that construct social capital as solid investments with monetary and or other forms of profits, thereby constitutes aspects of forms of empowerment.

- Collective exchanges
- Mutually valuable exchanges
- Goal-driven exchanges
- Symbolic exchanges

These above factors will be applied to the educational policy and theory contexts, within the HCEAE course examined in this study. Based on the exchanges I will hold with previous learners on the HCEAE course, this study aims to unpack their perceptions of their lived experiences, so as to locate aspects of empowerment that had been realised in this course. These indicators will be applied to both theory and policy, as my study focusses on both theory and education policy.

3.2.4 Bourdieu’s concept of economic capital

Bourdieu’s (1986: 79) concept of economic capital resonates with the concept of empowerment. In the above exploration of social capital theory, there seems to be a transposition of the notion of capital to many social spaces. This seems to strengthen the pluralistic character of interests, resources, accumulation, and profits.

However, Bourdieu (1986: 79) contends that although social space tends to be pluralistic in nature, economic capital is central to all other capital and tends to dominate. In his social capital theory, Bourdieu (1986) elaborates on the inclusive nature of economic capital and argues that social and other forms of capital are in essence economical, but they disguise this exist in disguised form. He constructs the concept of economic capital as “traditional monetary value which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights” (Bourdieu, 1986: 82). He further elaborates

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

on the symbolic nature of economic capital, which can be in the form of land and property ownership, together with its reciprocities (Bourdieu, 1986:79). These are the other economic possessions that increase an actor's capacities in society. He argued that, although economic capital is in monetary value, the understanding of this concept transcends this conceptualisation to include its symbolic nature. Bourdieu goes on to insist that people with economic capital are in an advantaged position, but also of other economic possessions that increase an actor's capacities in society as this presents as some kind of guarantee to power and status in social exchanges and access in learning environments.

The following three factors represent perceptions of actual indicators of the concept of economic capital.

- Monetary value
- Land and property rights
- Financial reciprocities

These indicators will be applied to both theory and policy, as my study focusses on both. Accordingly, this study is vested in finding out about the value of using the combination of theory and policy in measuring women empowerment in this course, according to the perceptions of the previous learners in this course.

3.2.5 Conclusion

The theoretical framework and concepts discussed above provided a coherent and systemic framework from which to understand empowerment of marginalised women learners, as told by the participants themselves. This chapter had provided an orientation of the theoretic and conceptual framework that will guide the methods, methodology and the research process itself. The research design, methods and methodology are discussed below.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4. Research Design:

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an explanation and justification of how the research was conducted, in terms of the methodology and methods that were used. The research design should be clear, coherent and systematic to ensure that methodology and methods are in line with the aims and underlying assumptions of the study (Universal Teacher, 2021). This chapter discusses the strategies, research design, sampling techniques and philosophical assumptions underpinning the research conducted here. A qualitative case study methodology, guided by the philosophical assumptions of the interpretive and critical epistemologies that draw on the phenomenological approach was used in this research.

The exploratory nature of this study required a methodology that embraced and positioned the perceptions of those whose lived experiences are at the forefront of their engagements with the world. In this light, an interpretive perspective was employed mainly because it recognises and privileges the perceptual understandings of people and maintains that “the core of understanding is learning what people make of the world around them, how people interpret what they encounter, and how they assign meanings and values to events or objects” (Rubin & Rubin, 2011: 19). Underpinning this perspective is the understanding that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation that rely on thinking and reasoning beings (Myers, 2009). This perspective is suited for this study as it links experiences and consciousness through the process of interpreting and meaning-making. The interpretive perspective employed here will provide valuable insights into the notion of empowerment being explored in this study.

The typical nature of the concept of empowerment is that it espouses the notion of power (Fohung, 2008). In this light, the critical epistemology employed in this study is a good fit, mainly because it focusses on power relations, inequity, and transformation, and places emphasis on a type of conscientisation that is geared towards action (agency). The critical perspective employed here is well-suited in guiding learners to think critically about their own empowerment and those interacting and intersecting phenomena that affects such empowerment, since it focusses on “empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (Fay, 1987 in Creswell, 2013: 30). In this sense, it allows the researcher to move beyond simply observing and interpreting the phenomenon being studied. This stance complements the interpretive perspective and allows for a critical stance to be adopted towards assessing the SA education reform policy which is geared towards ensuring education provisions that are grounded on success beyond the course.

Phenomenological research methodology, on the other hand, is premised on the notion that knowledge is as it appears to one’s consciousness, as an unfolding process of knowledge production (Moustakas, 1994). This approach is associated with lived experience and focusses on how a person’s experience becomes embedded in consciousness and the nature of the meaning carried by such experiences. The philosophic underpinning of

phenomenology is the essence of an experience. It relates to unpacking “the inner experience unprobed in everyday life”, through understanding the basic structure of that specific experience and interpreting its meaning (Merriam, 2002:7). This can constitute the life experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of the adult learners in this study. It allows for a phenomenon to be unpacked from the perspective of the individual’s experience, and in this sense, this study benefits from phenomenology’s intersections with interpretive and critical perspectives outline above. These intersections informed and guided the research design process, with respect to the methodological and analytical choices selected and employed here. These aspects are dealt with in-depth in the following section.

4.2 Methodology

This study employs a qualitative case study approach. The HCEAE course presented an ideal research site for this approach, given the diversity of its learners and the location of the course within a university setting (Creswell, 2013). The conceptualisation of a case study approach has often taken on different interpretations in qualitative research. These different interpretations bring the complexity of case study research to the fore, a complexity that constrains the standardization of case studies in practice, making it a more dynamic entity in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). A case study approach places emphasis on capturing an identified phenomenon in a “real-life context” (Yin, 2009: 18; Creswell, 2013: 97). Case studies are, therefore, generally known to exhibit characteristics of describing a single unit “in depth and detail, holistically and in context”, such as the concept of empowerment in HE, in this case (Butina, Campbell and Miler, 2015: 188).

Henning (2004: 42) argues that case studies require the “use of multiple methods to capture the full case”, and often, this enquiry encompasses allowing the phenomenon to reveal itself naturally, unlike in experimental approaches where there is an element of control. As such, the process of unpacking the case in this thesis, allowed for the voice of the research participants (the units of analysis) to feature strongly and naturally (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in their recounting of their experiences.

The qualitative case study approach that underpins this study allows the researcher to interpret the reality that is observed and brings his or her own ideas to influence the interpretation of the data, through entering into dialogical relationships with research participants (Merriam, 2002). This dialogical component of interpretation in qualitative case study research is foregrounded in this study.

Although the case study approach has many benefits, a core disadvantage is that it is not easily generalizable to the population, but to theoretical proposition (Creswell, 2013: 101). The nature of qualitative research also means that meaning is constructed within context, and since contexts of lived reality are dynamic, the same site of investigation may not reveal the same results after a period of time, making generalizability difficult (Creswell, 2013). As such, triangulation of the data obtained about the case under scrutiny, namely the HCEAE course, and the units of analysis within this case, namely the research participants, was employed to increase the validity of this research methodology.

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Methods

The data collection method employed in this study needed to complement the basic assumptions underpinning the perspective, the approach, and research methodology employed here. In this study, I chose questionnaire, interviews, and a written essay as methods of data collection for the core participants. The written essay was the first data collection tool administered to the core participants, followed by questionnaire and lastly the interview. This method was guided by the qualitative underpinnings that, “we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell, 2013: 48). This is in line with the sentiments of a case study approach and phenomenology that seeks to allow the phenomenon to reveal itself naturally.

This sequencing of data collection of the study core participants was influenced by the process of moving from the broader (written essay) to the more focussed process of data collection (Questionnaire) and rounding up with interviews to make sure that no information that could assist in answering the research question, is left outside. The following table illustrates the sequencing and scheduling of data collection from the participants:

The data collection schedule from the participants were as follows:

| Participant | Date administered | Date completed |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Alicia | Essay, 12/8/20 QSTN, 20/8/20 Telephone Interview, 24/8/20 | Essay, 14/8/20 QSTN, 22/8/20 |
| Linda | Essay, 14/8 /20 QSTN, 21/8/20 Telephone Interview, 24/9/20 | Essay, 21/8/20 QSTN, 12/9/20 |
| Lucinda | Essay, 14/8/20 QSTN, 31/8/20 Telephone interview, 21/9/20 | Essay, 31/8/20 QSTN, 12/9/20 |
| Maria | Essay, 12/8/20 QSTN, 14/8/20 Telephone interview, 24/9/20 | Essay, 14/8/20 QSTN, 14/9/20 |
| DOL | Essay, 22/8/20 QSTN, 22/9/20 Telephone interview, 24/9/20 | Essay, 24/8/20 QSTN, 23/9/20 |
| Course lecturer (CL) | Telephone interview, 8/10/20 | |
| External Examiner EE) | Telephone interview, 17/9/10 | |

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

While answering the questions and mapping their learning experiences in writing, participants were constantly reminded to tell their unique stories, and this allowed for and privileged the foregrounding of the life-worlds of the participants. The use of multiple data collection methods was to achieve triangulation, as a means of establishing accuracy and validity of the data.

a) Purposeful Sampling:

Purposeful sampling allows for exploration of information-rich cases from which this study can learn (Patton, 2002: 46). My choice of the HCEAE course as a site of study was informed by dimensions of access, relevance, and availability of participants that were comparable enough to provide useful data for this investigation. The criteria for selection of participants in this study was as follows:

b) Inclusion criteria:

- Participated and received bursaries from UCT LN CSS training programme during 2017 – 2019
- Were Black women from working-class backgrounds
- Were from the locations of Klapmuts, Belhar and Gugulethu in the Western Cape
- Sought access through the RPL process
- Completed the HCEAE course (2019)

Four learners were selected as core participants in this study. There was only one learner who met the above criteria from Gugulethu. These participants would have first-hand knowledge and experience of the types of issues I wished to raise with respect to empowerment and how this was gained, if at all, from the HCEAE course. This would also allow me to comment on the curriculum design and pedagogical practices employed within the course. The research tools further assessed their thoughts, the words they used, and their actions displayed, to establish whether the course was aligned with the NQF transformative objectives and adult learning theory.

c) Access, Rapport and Communication:

I had privileged access to the UCT CSS database for extracting the contact details of the core study participants and DOL's. I initially contacted all six RPL learners who met the above criteria, telephonically and by WhatsApp to introduce myself and the study. Four of the participants were available and agreed to participate in this study. I also contacted the learner that dropped out of the course (DOL), who also agreed to participate.

All participants were asked about their preferred language of communication for the purposes of this research, since I myself, as the researcher, am well versed with the three main languages used in the Western Cape (IsiXhosa, English and Afrikaans). However, all participants mentioned that it was much more convenient and also easier to think and write

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

about their experiences of the HCEAE course in English, since the HCEAE course material and the medium of instruction was in English. They then opted for all research material and communication to be delivered in English.

The COVID 19 pandemic placed severe restrictions on movement and access to my study participants, whom I was unable to meet on a face-to-face basis. The organic and dynamic nature of face-to-face discussions, which I was hoping to have with my participants as a way of establishing rapport and trust, was thus taken off the table.

In this light, the research material was dropped off outside the participants' residential addresses, with very limited contact other than handing over the and collecting them when completed.

These materials included:

- participant information sheet with informed consent form,
- questionnaires and
- written essay guide

Participants were given enough time to read and understand the research material before completing data collection tools. The researcher reiterated the voluntary nature of the study, before, during and after the research process, in line with the ethical considerations of this study. WhatsApp and telephone calls were used to contact participants to clarify any misconceptions that arose out of research materials, to ensure full understanding before during and after participation in this study.

Course lecturer (CL), External examiner (EE), and DOL

Apart from the core study participants, this study also included interviews with the course lecturer (CL) and external examiner (EE). The EE data was used to corroborate student and lecturer findings. Proper official channels for requesting permission to interview the course lecturer was followed and granted by the Faculty of Humanities. The EE is an official outside of the home institution, so it was not a requirement to follow the same channels as with the CL. I contacted both the CL and EE telephonically to introduce myself and the study. Both agreed to participate in this study. The research materials, such as the information sheet with consent forms, were then sent to them via email. The consent form also included consent for the recording of the interview. Enough time was given for reading the materials related to this study. The schedule for interview was then set.

The previous learner who dropped out (DOL) of the HCEAE was also one of the participants in this study. A dropped-out learner can be described as "Any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another... school" (Bonneau, 2015). CL, EE and DOL's data was used to corroborate the core study participants' findings.

4.4 Data analysis

4.4.1 Method of qualitative analysis

The procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analyzing the data (Creswell, 2013: 22). A phenomenological data analysis was chosen as the qualitative method of inquiry for this study as guided by the research question. Phenomenology uses an inductive process of building from the data to develop a model or theory (Creswell, 2003). The underpinning principle of this approach is that no objective reality exists. Phenomenology entails describing a common phenomenon and “seeks to explore how participants perceive, describe, feel about, remember, and make sense of the experience shared” (Butina et al., 2015: 187) The goal in this approach is to understand the phenomena in people’s own terms, as they experienced it themselves and allowing the essence to emerge. The basic assumptions underpinning this approach is that the only way to really know another person’s experience is to experience it for ourselves – either by observation or through personal experience (Patton, 2002).

The phenomenological researcher describes the meaning of lived experiences of individuals through ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) that includes context of the act, its intensions and meaning, and the process of the act. The researcher then describes what the research participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon, in the case of this study, the phenomenon of empowerment. The phenomenological researcher then reduces the experiences of the research participants with a phenomenon “to describe and understand the essence of the phenomenon in order to fully grasp the very nature of the experience” (Butina, 2015: 187). In this approach, the researcher engages in a process in which the descriptions are both explicated and interpreted, as the interpretation is essential to understanding the experience and the experience includes the interpretation (Patton, 2002).

During the initial steps of analysis, the literature informed my reading of the data. A five-step approach was used for analysing data (Creswell, 1998):

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Reading, Memoing | Gathering data and transcribing it verbatim. Read through the text, make margin notes, form initial codes, memoing. |
| 2. Describing | Describe the meaning of the experience for the researcher. |
| 3. Classifying | I have found and listed the statements of meaning for individuals. I then grouped statements in the meaning units. |
| 4. Interpreting | I have developed a textual description of “What happened?”. I then developed a structural description: “How was the phenomenon experienced?” Eventually, an overall description of the experience, the “essence” was developed. To ensure that I represented the views of the participants, I then conducted member checking of all the participants. |
| 5. Representing, Visualizing | Present narration of the “essence” of the experience; use tables or figures of statements and meaning units |

The “cut and paste” method was used to categorise the data. The data included the research questionnaire, essays and interviews. The data sets of each participant were read repeatedly to gain a sense of the linear progression of each participant’s narrative from childhood history up until activities after exiting the course. The data was then plotted for each participant against this linear timeframe of before, during and after UCT. This information was then shared with participants before representation, to ensure that there was no ambiguities, unintended errors and misconceptions. From the plotting of the data in this format, general terms, expressions, opinions and so forth, were highlighted for each participant. The highlighted sections were then arranged under themes and sub-themes, until a point of saturation was reached where no new themes emerged. Once this process had been repeated for all the participants individually, the themes and sub-themes were compared across the data sets of the participants. The individual themes and sub-themes for each participant were reworked into broad overarching categories that accommodated the core experiences of the participants, even if those experiences differed. Special attention was paid to terms, phrases and concepts in the data that indicated shifts in perception and realisation, since these shifts could potentially represent moments of growth and therefore also empowerment. Outlying data segments, which were assessed and deemed not be fit for purpose, were excluded. This process was repeated until saturation point was reached once again.

4.5 Biographical Narratives

During the collection, sorting and analysis of the various data, the richness of the narratives of the participants’ lived experiences surfaced. The sincerity, vigour and inspiration in their narratives inspired me to capture a deeper sense of who these remarkable women are, hence the decision to use biographies to capture their unique lived experiences and the sense of empowerment they obtained within the HCEAE course. These biographical details, while unique to individual participants, share some commonalities with respect to the nature and location of the struggles they endured. A multiple coding process of the data was performed until saturation was reached, resulting in the design of common sections or themes across the biographies. Each participant’s experiences in relation to these themes could then be traced, recorded and compared in a linear fashion from their early childhood and schooling experiences until they arrived at UCT and exited from the HCEAE course. This highlighted the diversity and commonality present in a shared experience of marginalisation. Gaps in the data necessitated revisiting the participants to gather more information (thereby strengthening the triangulation process) to provide more insight into their perceptions of taking the HCEAE course. This information provided more valuable insights into the question of empowerment being investigated in this thesis. Participant data in the form of biographies is presented in this chapter. The names used in these biographies have been changed to protect the identities of the participants. The headings in the biographies signal different phases, namely before, during and after the participants’ access to and success within the HCEAE course. So, the dynamic between access and success is being used here as a way of making the transition to empowerment more tangible.

4.5.1 Descriptions of concepts in biographies.

In preparation for the reading of the biographies of the research participants, it is prudent to first signal how some of the core concepts in the construction and analysis of the biographies, are to be understood. This theoretical grounding of the core concepts, allows for it to be properly located and integrated into the broader analytical and theoretical framework of the current research, thereby making clear the basis on which interpretations are grounded.

a) The concept of 'being' and 'becoming'.

In terms of the concepts of 'being' and 'becoming', Natanasabapathy and Maathuis-Smith (2019: 370) posit that learners, in their pursuit for achieving transformation within the process of learning, move from a state of "being" to a state of "becoming" in a continuous cycle. The authors construct the concept of "being" as the "present nature or behaviour of a person", while "becoming" is viewed as a transformative move towards a "shift in subjectivity, cognition, identity and thinking, leading to a new positioning and discourse of the self" (Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2019: 374). Key to achieving transformation of the self is through engaging learners in an educational experience that enables them to acquire academic literacies and disciplinary knowledge through the grasping of threshold concepts within that discipline. In this way it is quite important to gain insight into how research participants in this study interacted and drew on the content of the HCEAE course, to measure the extent to which their use of these ideas caused shifts in themselves and in their perceptions of the world. Threshold concepts are constructed as a "transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress" (Besley, 2007; Meyer and Land, 2003 in Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2019: 373). Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith (2019) contend that the grasping of threshold concepts requires exchanges that are dialogical, in other words a form of communication that underpins openness, through critical and dialogical praxis (Besley, 2007). This underpins the value of dialogical engagement in the HCEAE course. Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith (2019) posit that this process is anchored within the phenomenological tradition, "which allows the phenomena to reveal themselves, rather than a predetermined learning process" (Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2019: 376). It is these threshold concepts that allow for development of new understandings that become assimilated into our biography, becoming part of who we are, how we see and how we feel (Meyer & Land, 2003 in Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2019).

b) The concept of confession

Foucault (in Besley, 2007) places dialogical encounters that encompass confession, at the centre of the process of learning. The confessional act is a core transformative space in the HCEAE course, and thus forms an important part of the process of empowerment being investigated in this research study. Through this process, learners are invited to share, to 'confess' their emotions and opinions, thus allowing them space for: "... acknowledgement or admission of a crime, fault, or weakness... in front of the people who appreciates, judges, consoles, or understands... (Rose, 1989 in Besley, 2007: 85). Furthermore, "... confession

contains elements of identifying the self in a deliberate, self-conscious attempt to explain and express oneself to an audience within which the individual exists and seeks confirmation" (Besley, 2007: 86). Foucault contends that confession allows us to:

"(re) create ourselves by creating our own narrative, reworking the past, in public, or at least in dialogue with another... thus endowing the individual with the preparation and the moral equipment that will permit him to fully confront the world in an ethical and rational manner" (Foucault, 2001 in Besley, 2007: 83).

c) The concept of dialogical

Gillies (2016) constructs dialogical as a collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful pedagogical practice and process whose intent is to catalyse the process of intellectual engagement of the learners. Dialogical exchange allows the learners to critically reflect, explore with ideas and analyse them through critical thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating backward and forward kinds of engagement, where questions are used to mediate the cycle of learning. This process is based on respect for all parties involved, through a set of tacit rules that promotes the display of accountability principles. This is the process through which learners develop an enquiring mind. The act of entering dialogue with others, forms a core aspect of the types of meaningful engagement that adult learners enter into with each other. This dialogical framework creates the space for the confessional practice that underpins these dialogical interactions.

4.6 Limitations and validity of the study

This study is important for informing pedagogical practices and processes within higher education institutions more broadly. The investigation into the perceptions of forms of empowerment that could be accessed in the HCEAE course, was to gain insights that could be used to inform adult teaching and learning practices in higher education institutions. Much more in-depth research into the curriculum and the pedagogical practices within the HCEAE course would have afforded the study a more holistic view, alongside a more thorough engagement with the intricacies of what gets taught and what gets evaluated within this programme. The scope and limited length of this study did not allow for this in any detailed way.

Qualitative study employs strategies and criteria to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. These strategies are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. These strategies are discussed in this section and inform the quality and validity achieved in this study.

a) Credibility: The exploratory descriptive nature of qualitative research, and the interpretive perspective drawing on phenomenological philosophy, advances co-creation of understanding. The philosophical underpinnings of this study allowed the researcher, who is the main instrument of research, to communicate meanings made from the researcher's engagement with the research participants and the data collected. Henning et al. (2004: 6) asserts that "qualitative researchers make meaning from data through converting raw empirical information into what is known

as a thick description". In achieving credibility, described as the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy, I undertook to do the following:

b) Positioning: The interpretive perspective, phenomenology, and qualitative case study approaches, all highlight the inherent humanness of the process involved in this enquiry, in terms of its inability to separate the researcher from the world of the participants, as an objective, impartial observer. This suggests that as a "researcher, I "bring value to the research" (Creswell, 2013: 20). I openly and honestly discussed my past experiences, assumptions, interests and orientation that would potentially affect my interpretation of research findings and my approach to the study.

c) Maintaining reflexivity: I regularly described and recorded my experiences, thoughts and feelings at different stages of the research in a journal. Reflecting on my thoughts and feelings assisted me in becoming more conscious of how my perceptions, biases and interpretations of the data may potentially have shaped the research process and outcomes. Journaling is in line with underpinning assumptions of a qualitative case study approach.

d) Member checking: This involved sharing interview transcripts, questionnaires and written essays with research participants to make sure that I was representing them and their ideas accurately. The member checking process was included in the findings and conclusions.

e) Expert support: I was able to draw on the expert support of both my supervisors for the audit review of the quality of my research. I also used this expert support to discuss and debate my impressions, interpretations, and deductions, as a way of clarifying and validating my viewing of the data, thus trying to reduce researcher bias.

f) Transferability: Due to the nature of the case study approach that seeks to investigate a single case or a small number of people in their context, the number of core study participants in this study were limited to four, and these were all Black working-class women studying within an HCEAE context. Perhaps if there were more than four participants from broader social backgrounds, with the inclusion of males, the study would have yielded different results. Although the qualitative case study approach potentially impacts on the external validity of transferability of the research findings, transferability was enhanced in this study by providing detailed accounts of research methods, contexts, and philosophical assumptions underpinning the study. A detailed, rich description of the settings and interlocking issues that impact on the concept of empowerment studied here, provided the reader with sufficient information to make judgements on the applicability of the findings to other settings that they were familiar (Maxwell, 2008).

g) Dependability: The changing nature of human behaviour and contextual factors makes consistency of observing the same finding under similar circumstances difficult in qualitative research. According to Creswell (2013), dependability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated with similar subjects in a similar context. To enhance dependability, this study provided a detailed description of the assumptions and theoretical base that underpins this investigation. In addition, the research drew on triangulation as a way of ensuring validity of the findings. An in-depth description of how data was collected was also provided.

h) Confirmability: Refers to the extent to which the research findings can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. I have kept individual files of the collected data, verbatim transcripts, and audio tapes of interviews in a password-controlled computer, in order to make auditing possible by other researchers, if the findings are in some way challenged. This enhances the quality of the study and promotes confirmability.

4.7 Ethics

The notion of ethics is very important when conducting research especially when dealing with human participants and their personal academic information. All participants were afforded pseudonyms to protect their privacy and they were given the option of withdrawing from the research process at any time. I obtained full ethics approval from the UCT Ethics Committee to conduct this study. I have taken the notion of access seriously, and I understand that it is a process that can take a long while. It was important to make contact with all the relevant stakeholders selected to be involved in this study and who could possibly be affected by the research findings. I have allowed enough time for this activity and could therefore avoid acts of desperation and other setbacks that could lead to unethical research practices. I have followed the correct communication channels to gain access to participants and other forms of data during this research process, as verified in my ethics application. I have given the participants the opportunity to choose their preferred language for spoken and written communication, to ensure that they were at ease and were comfortable expressing themselves. Because of the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions, direct contact with the participants was very limited and alternative strategies to collect data was used, such as written communication and phone calls, dropping off research tools (such as information sheets and consent forms) and data collecting tools (such as questionnaires), and allowing participants enough time to complete these, before collection. All COVID-19 safety protocols were strictly adhered to during these types of interactions, so as to ensure my safety and that of the research participants. At all times, the ethical code of not doing any harm during the research process, was adhered to.

4.8 Conclusion

The study that focusses on the lived experiences of marginalised individuals demands a methodology that supports and encourage sharing of multi-layered narratives of empowerment to surface interlocking factors that interact with women empowerment. In this light, this chapter have mapped out these methodologies and methods guided by the

Empowering minds, body and soul: *An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.*

underpinning assumptions of this study. All these research tools and processes discussed in this chapter are aimed to elicit rich narratives that will assist to provide an understanding of perceptions of empowerment under scrutiny here. The qualitative case study orientation and phenomenology approach allowed for the use of thematic analysis as the primary tool of data analysis. This chapter also dealt with validity and ethical considerations that guided this enquiry and the researcher behaviour, who takes on the role of a human research tool in this research.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with the biographical narratives of the lived experiences of the female learners of HCEAE course (including the dropped-out learner) who participated in this study. These women were given an opportunity to map their learning journeys through the HCEAE course. The inclusion of the dropped-out learner's (DOL) narrative is provided here to shed light on the unpredictable nature of life, and to illustrate the comparable nature of her experiences within the course, despite not having been able to complete, thereby highlighting that transformative learning occurs at various stages of the course. Grounded on the phenomenological approach, this research makes explicit the extent of empowerment as perceived by the participants. The questions that this research aimed to answer were the following:

1. What are the forms of empowerment provided within the HCEAE course?
2. What worked and did not work to empower vulnerable adult women in this course?
3. How successful was the HCEAE course in empowering its vulnerable adult women learners and what was the extent of the alignment of such empowerment, with Adult Education policy and theory objectives?

The rigorous process of thematic analysis yielded predominant themes and patterns from the data, which are presented in the Findings section. This chapter also provides an analysis and discussion of these themes, using the theoretical framework as analytical lenses to provide insights into the concept of empowerment operating in the HCEAE course. Main ideas arising out of the discussion, are captured in a brief summary, and the chapter ends with general concluding remarks about key aspects which have emerged from this research study as a whole.

5.2. Biographies of Core Participants

5.2.1 Biography No.1: Alicia

Background Before Entering the HCEAE Course

Alicia: "I was always verbally abused by siblings who are all men... Growing up between men I was always seen as a cook and a cleaner" (essay, 14/8/20).

Alicia is a 38-year-old Coloured married woman from a low socio-economic background residing in an area classified as previously disadvantaged in the Cape Town Metropolitan area. Like many households who struggle in the townships, Alicia feels being born of a working-class family like hers is "unfortunate" (essay, 14/8/20), as this places her in a disadvantaged position due to a lack of privileges and having limited opportunities to thrive. Growing up, Alicia has been socialised into the belief that a woman's role in the household is to cook and clean. She was never socialised into believing that women can

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

also be leaders and have careers. The imposition of this gender identity boxed in her experiences and contributed to feelings of hopelessness she felt about furthering her studies. Alicia felt that her low level of education and poor working-class background resulted in her being further marginalised by broader society. This also constrained her relationship with her community. She asserted that the intersecting political, social and personal disadvantages in her life, also exposed her to verbal abuse and rejection growing up, and she constantly had to fend against this abuse. Growing up in this manner silenced Alicia, and to cope she states, “I build a wall when insults come my way” (interview, 24/08/20). Alicia’s silence made her feel like an outcast in her community and family, and therefore her opinion was not valued in these contexts.

Accessing the HCEAE Course

Alicia: “This was a great opportunity for I had no education background. When the opportunity came for a course at UCT who would turn it away” (interview, 24/8/20).

Gaining access to “one of the best universities in the country” with “only grade 11” was like a “dream” (QSTN, 22/8/20). It was an opportunity of a lifetime that she grabbed with both hands. Despite the excitement of being accepted into UCT, taking up space alongside other learners with very different socio-economic backgrounds to hers, meant that Alicia’s feelings of unworthiness, of being an outcast and a victim, began to surface quite vividly, making it quite difficult for her to navigate her way through the HCEAE course. Viewed through the lenses of her community and her family, Alicia’s low sense of self contributed heavily towards her accessing the HCEAE course as an underdog, with feelings of having no currency within the university space. Having internalised her community’s negative perception of her abilities, she became intimidated by her classmates and viewed them as “more equipped within the university space” (QSTN, 22/8/20). This exacerbated how different she thought she appeared to her peers, thus adding to her sense of alienation and marginalisation. She felt ashamed of her unfinished schooling and her lack of higher education experience, adding to her feelings of unpreparedness as a student. She felt that she had nothing worthwhile to share with the class as a disadvantaged “grade 11” learner. This made her overly eager to seek the support of the HCEAE group to compensate for her lack of “university knowledge” (essay, 14/8/20).

Alicia states: “Working individually was a huge challenge for me. I could never understand some tasks given needed more information what it meant. I would always appreciate guidance and feedback that helped” (essay, 14/8/20). Her insecurities made her afraid of being judged by others. Based on her perceived lack of ‘capital’ in the university space, Alicia positioned herself at the bottom of the class’s social ladder.

Her sense of inadequacy coupled with her perceived lack of currency, hindered her and silenced her voice in class. As a result, others could dictate to her what good and bad learning experiences were, exposing her to what she called “dominant decision makers” (interview, 24/8/20). Alicia’s lack of control over decisions about her learning, made it

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

difficult for her to engage with course material, forcing her to rely heavily on “feedback and guidance from the lecturers and tutors”. She became engulfed by feelings of domination, which made it difficult to build and sustain relationships in class, as she felt belittled by those that were “more equipped”. As a result, Alicia developed feelings of anger, hopelessness and despair in class. So, despite the “great opportunity to reverse her misfortunes through studying for a course at UCT” (essay, 14/8/20), there appeared to be very little benefits stemming from this.

Turning Point

Alicia: “Challenges was putting my experiences on paper” (interview, 24/8/20).

As time progressed, Alicia slowly gained confidence in class. She responded well to the teaching methods, the nurturing qualities of the lecturers, the design of the modules, and soon found herself learning in leaps and bounds, acquiring valuable skills. This allowed for introspection: it allowed her to critically reflect on her life, the disadvantages she endured, and how this contributed to her feelings of being ‘less than’. Although reflecting on the past brought up sad memories, the caring environment created through the excellent support of lecturers and peers, enabled Alicia to develop the courage to share and make herself vulnerable. The sharing of learning histories mediated through the History module broadened her understanding of *other* people’s circumstances, thus catalysing a shift in perspective. This process of sharing brought some healing to Alicia and enabled her to develop empathy towards others and to create closer bonding relationships within this group. She felt a renewed sense of self-worth and belonging, confident enough to participate, trusting that what she shared had value and that her voice counted. This signals a reframing of her sense of community and the development of a new world view.

The pedagogical method of employing group activities encouraged her to come out of hiding and forced her to take responsibility for her learning. Group work exposed Alicia to diverse personalities which encouraged her to reflect and develop different perspectives on how to cope with rejection and dominance. Through this exposure, she developed ways in which to adequately defend herself from future victimisation and marginalisation. The focus on conducting workshops and presentations, also allowed her to slowly begin to showcase her creativity, which in turn, helped to boost her confidence to speak in front of people. Through these activities she was able to occupy a legitimate space within the course, thereby drawing other learners’ attention to her new abilities and confidence.

Perception of Empowerment After the HCEAE Course

Alicia: “I am still unemployed; it is tough finding a job suitable for the course I did ZOOM meetings with different organisations encouraging women as how to cope with depression and other health issues. My confidence and opinion count now” (QSTN, 22/8/20).

Attending this course made Alicia realise that she does have the potential to pursue and realise her dreams. Her sense of self improved in such a way that she could see herself as a

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

“community woman leader” (QSTN, 22/8/20), who spoke clearly with no anxiety and who no longer felt constrained by traditional gender roles. She felt “powerful, educated and stronger” (interview, 24/8/20), and sought to take back her power and even occupy leadership positions in society. The latter symbolised a social status that elevated her to being worthy of recognition and respect. Alicia now saw the community she grew up in, in a better light, worthy of investing her expertise – which she now recognised as inclusive of the knowledge gained prior to course participation. The turning point here is one in which learning histories are framed as a repertoire of skills gained; something to draw on in relation to the less familiar ideas and practices encountered in the university space and post course completion.

Alicia is currently sharing her experiences of the course in her community, inspiring women to learn and to educate themselves in any way possible. An achievement that Alicia is proud of, is the lesson she gave on gardening via Skype to the New York University students in America. She also featured in a *YouTube* interview, based on her community work. Alicia has joined several social groups within the community since completing the HCEAE course. These groups are aimed at assisting communities, specifically women, to deal with rejection, domination and abuse. The groups meet regularly through social media platforms to share experiences, provide support, educate on current issues and empower women. Alicia attributes these changes in her life, to her success in the course. Although Alicia had not derived direct economic benefit from the course yet, she is hopeful that this will change.

5.2.2 Biography 2: Maria

Background before entering the HCEAE Course.

Maria: “I left school at a young age and went to work at a factory because no one was working at home” (essay, 14/8/20).

Maria is a 56-year-old married Coloured mother of four children, residing in a rural farming community outside the Cape Town Metropolitan area. Maria comes from a working-class background whose main source of family income comes from working in the clothing factory industry in the Cape Town suburbs and surrounding farms. Her race and class categorisations have meant that Maria has been exposed to a life of marginalisation and discrimination all her life. Her background, like many other Coloured and Black families living in the farming community, meant that she enjoyed little privileges. Her family’s circumstances and limited resources forced Maria to leave school at a young age, an occurrence she asserts, is generational and typical among disadvantaged rural communities. Dropping out of school to find employment to supplement the family income, not only robbed Maria of her childhood and continued schooling, but also made it difficult for her to fulfil her dreams of prospering in life.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Maria's adult life exposed her to learning experiences that motivated her to better herself. These experiences enabled Maria to access the HCEAE course without a matric certificate. Her voluntary employment in a local community organisation afforded her an opportunity to be amongst eight people to compete for a UCT CSS (Community Systems Strengthening) training programme bursary. She remembers vividly her excitement when she passed the admission test, making her eligible to study through the RPL process. Given her dire financial status and disadvantaged upbringing, obtaining the study bursary provided Maria with a lifetime opportunity and a second chance to fulfil her dreams of progressing academically.

Accessing the HCEAE Course

Maria: "I really froze in front of class, my hands and feet was shaking because of my language barrier and I thought here are now a reason for... ladies to judge me" (essay, 14/8/20).

As someone who dropped out of school, passing the test was a huge moment that filled Maria with a sense of pride and achievement, and an opportunity to be "amongst other students and huge buildings" (essay, 14/8/20).

When Maria met up with fellow students from different areas and took her place in the university setting, she was confronted by the reality of the cumulative nature of her oppression. The latter encapsulated the intersection between her disadvantaged background and the stereotypes associated with Coloured females living in farming communities. The discriminatory remark that "o julle is van die plaas" (oh, you are from the farm) (essay, 14/8/20) made by classmates about Maria and other rural students, made Maria feel "belittled". Her excitement of taking up space as equals alongside other students turned into anger and despair. As her feelings of inferiority increased, she developed "hatred" towards those learners who looked down on her. Her anger, however, negatively impacted her participation in collective learning activities, as she refused to cooperate with those who had ridiculed learners from rural farming communities.

The "bossy" attitude of other learners, made her want to quit the course, thereby threatening her dream of changing her life. The perceived lack of worth attributed to her community-based farming experiences, added to her sense of dislocation in class, as she expressed that as a community worker "I had no experience in fieldwork" essay, 14/8/20) required in the course. Maria's insecurities about her undervalued capital, negatively impacted her academic performance, and made her feel that she was "not good enough to be in class" (QSTN, 14/9/20).

Maria's sense of inferiority escalated to a point where she found it difficult to share her experiences in class. This was further exacerbated by her lack of proficiency in English, which is the medium of instruction at UCT. As an Afrikaans speaking person from the rural farming community, Maria reflected on how she "froze in front of the class" (essay,

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

14/8/20) for fear of being judged by others who were more proficient users of English. This fear silenced Maria, as she felt that receiving acknowledgement from her peers was based not only on the content of what she presented, but also on how she “sounds”. Maria’s lack of voice in class meant that she had no say in decision-making, robbing her of the opportunity to participate meaningfully in class activities, including taking control of her learning.

Maria began to adopt a position of victimhood. She admitted that others “have the right to judge” (QSTN, 14/9/20) her based on her language competence. This was an indication of Maria’s vulnerability, and of her giving in to the negative perceptions’ others had of her. This rendered her invisible, to the extent that she handed over her decision-making rights in class.

The fear of being judged by more affluent learners who were performing well academically, weighed heavily on her, since her internalised gender roles of caring for her family, her work responsibilities and her studies were among the competing demands that impacted her sense of self. These experiences were important starting points in her journey of transformation and empowerment.

Turning Point

Maria: “I realised that I cannot give up because of other people’s selfishness” (interview, 24/9/20)

Maria’s journey of becoming began to improve as the course progressed. This was largely associated with the design of the pedagogical framework and content of the modules, delivery of the lessons, and the positive qualities possessed by the lecturers. She stated, “our lecturer was an outstanding, loving, inspirational and supportive woman who always reminded me that there is hope no matter your circumstances” (QSTN, 14/9/20).

Maria gradually realised that she could relate to the pedagogical approach and began to benefit from the transformation ethos embedded within the course design. She admitted that she easily judged others and used the transformation process to view her past through a lens that allowed her to better understand herself. She was able to step outside of her own self-imposed narrow-mindedness and allowed herself to confront and gradually shed her own prejudices and feelings of insecurity and anger. Through this process of self-discovery, Maria began to gain new insights into other learners’ circumstances. In the process, she was able to develop empathy towards others, and “forgave and learnt to accept people for who they are” (essay, 14/8/20). As a result, Maria was able to develop useful psychological coping mechanisms.

As the course progressed Maria developed enough knowledge, skills and positive attitudinal changes, that made her confident to reveal more of herself to others. This renewed sense of self gave her positive insight into her new abilities. Through the process of reflection, which she described as the “best way to learn” (QSTN, 14/9/20), Maria found

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

an opportunity to share herself and her experiences from the outside with the class. This enabled her to represent the farming community in this space, something that meant a great deal to her. The reflective process therefore allowed her to gain back her sense of worth and presence in class, especially from those who had previously discriminated against her.

One of many resources that Maria appreciated was the “practical activities” (QSTN, 14/9/20). These provided opportunities for developing self-confidence to speak in front of others and to demonstrate newly found presentation skills and creativity. The analytical and problem-solving abilities developed through group participation, also enabled her to identify and resist other people’s negativity that had previously silenced her and made her feel like a victim. She had reached a point where she could handle criticism in a constructive way during the presentations. Maria’s exercising of her voice in class filled her with pride and made her realise her dream of taking her rightful position alongside other learners.

She began to take up her agency, made decisions, and initiated actions that allowed her to take control of her own learning. All these course resources were important to Maria’s journey of “becoming” more aware, more resilient, and more part of the community of learning.

Perception of Empowerment After the HCEAE Course

Maria: “The modules I was doing had me realised this is exactly what I need to do in the community” (essay, 14/8/20).

Maria’s success in the HCEAE course benefitted her in many ways. Although Maria’s employer had not changed since completing the course, the transformative process that she underwent resulted in skills acquisition that are quantifiable in the ways they contribute to employability. Maria was promoted to the position of team leader in recognition of her newly gained expertise and competencies, which included her writing and digital literacies skills. In her new leadership position, Maria can exercise influence and impact decisions amongst her team members. This position also elevates Maria into a higher status in her community, so there is also the social recognition of her new status now. Although she expressed that this position might not be financially rewarding, she admits that “for me, it is not only about money, but about the experiences gained and the person I have become” (interview, 24/9/20).

Maria shared that before coming to the course, she lacked understanding of diverse cultures, “habits and ways of people and how they operate” (essay, 14/8/20). This made dealing with diversity in her workplace challenging. Her exposure to diverse language, racial, geographical and cultural groupings within the HCEAE course, therefore proved to be a valuable learning resource. She began to develop analytic abilities and the capacity to “look, judge and understand people much better” (QSTN, 14/9/20). Against this backdrop,

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Maria developed new lenses for looking at people's circumstances, and recognised the importance of this for building relationships in the workplace and for dealing with diversity more productively. She expressed that she can now "communicate with love" as this helped to maintain and build relationships with "parents, children as well as colleagues". Having gone through the HCEAE experience, she felt "empowered to have a better mindset" (QSTN, 14/9/20). She asserts that she has learnt how to apply emotional intelligence and resilience, which enabled her to juggle personal life, work, and her studies in productive ways. Since exiting university, she has also completed and passed a computer literacy course, giving her a more competitive advantage for future work prospects. She proudly acknowledges that the course did fulfil her desire of "living my dream" (QSTN, 14/9/20), something that fills her with a sense of success and empowerment.

5.2.3 Biography 3: Lucinda

Background Before Entering the HCEAE Course.

Lucinda: "take those painful moments and turn it into victory, as nothing in life just happens" (extract of poem written by Lucinda, QSTN, 12/9/20).

Lucinda is a 32-year-old Coloured married mother of three children, and resides in a predominantly Coloured, Afrikaans speaking farming community outside the Cape Town Metropolitan area. She, like most of the people living on farms in that area, was directly affected by the racially motivated disadvantages of farm life, such as child labour, labour exploitation and poor working conditions. Growing up under these challenging circumstances led her to make poor choices, such as dropping out of school during her teenage years. She was then forced to supplement the family income by working under harsh conditions, in a factory. Looking back, dropping out of school is the decision that she regretted the most, as this limited her employment prospects and the opportunity to change her living conditions for the better. Her dream growing up was to be a nurse or a doctor.

Lucinda opted to broaden her skills by volunteering at a local organisation doing work with women on farms. Within this context, she immersed herself in the experiences and opportunities she was exposed to, and this allowed her to re-evaluate her earlier dreams of studying further and finding a good job. Upon reflection, her life and work experiences prepared her for her newly found passion of working with and teaching adults, something she never imagined growing up as a disadvantaged rural Coloured woman. Working as a volunteer with farm women not only raised her consciousness of the plight of their living and working conditions but exposed her to experiences of these women that she found "intriguing" (essay, 31/8/20).

As a married woman, Lucinda spoke passionately about the traditional gender roles that she was socialised into as a mother and a wife. She had internalised these roles, and as such, had orientated her identity in terms of being a carer and provider for her family. This

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

orientation of self made Lucinda feel fully dutybound to take responsibility for her household. Although this role exposed her to the demands of her family to the level where she felt pressurised, it was something that she nevertheless felt good about.

Reflecting on her journey within the HCEAE course, she admitted that she had no regrets taking up this opportunity to study. Her decision to study was to upskill her facilitation skills and to professionalise her career. She expressed that her greatest desire was to plough this knowledge and skills back into her community to empower marginalised women, while also ensuring that her children would have access to opportunities for a better future.

Accessing the HCEAE Course

Lucinda: I always felt that the others in my group were not as committed as me” (interview, 21/9/20).

Lucinda reflected on her initial experiences in gaining access to the HCEAE course and Like Maria, she also had to compete with eight people in her area, for a UCT CSS training programme bursary. She vividly recalled writing a test at UCT as part of meeting the criteria to gain entry through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process. She viewed gaining access to UCT without having completed her schooling, as a stroke of luck, since it was something she would never have been able to imagine as a disadvantaged rural woman.

Taking her place alongside other learners, Lucinda, like Alicia and Maria above, began to feel insecure about the social and academic currency that she brought along into the university space. This made her feel reluctant to share her experiences as she was afraid of being judged by others whom she viewed as having more valuable currency. Lucinda also became intimidated by UCT’s status as “the best in the country” (essay, 31/08/20) and a space previously reserved for White people only. Her low self-esteem led to self-isolation, and this acted as a barrier to learning. She became pre-occupied and anxious about her unfinished schooling career and used this as a reason for feeling that she was “not good enough to be a student at one of the country's top universities” (essay, 31/8/20). The pressure to improve her performance in class began to intensify, especially in groupwork settings. She began to blame other members of her group whom she thought “were not as committed” (interview, 21/9/20) as her in contributing towards group tasks. Lucinda then forced herself to take on a leadership role, by “pushing herself” (essay, 31/8/20) and working harder to compensate for what she perceived as inadequacies in the group. This judgement of her peers caused tensions within her group and made building and sustaining relationships difficult for Lucinda.

Given the above, Lucinda felt that her transition into the course was not always easy. The competing demands of her work, studies, and her family, coupled with the perceived lack of currency she thought she possessed at university, weighed heavily on her. Her commitment towards her studies left her with little time to take care of her household, and as a result, she began to feel guilty that she was not being a “a good wife and a mother”

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

(essay, 31/8/20). Faced with the fear of losing her most cherished identity of being a carer and provider, Lucinda had contemplated quitting the course numerous times, to save this identity. She stated: "I wanted to quit so many times that I can't even keep count. It was not only my duty as a mother and wife that made me feel this way..." (essay, 31/8/20).

Turning Point

Lucinda: "I went to class and it was as if the lesson was meant for me (interview, 21/9/20)

As time progressed, Lucinda became more drawn to the teaching methods and the commitment and devotion of the lecturers. The reflective discourse appealed to her and enabled her to reflect on her life's journey. She considered deeply the ways in which her life experiences had impacted and shaped her sense of self. This type of introspection softened Lucinda's demeanour. She became less guarded and more friendly and developed a need to connect with others and to share her feelings more openly and freely. Through this new and emerging sense of self, Lucinda began to develop emotional maturity and strength; she developed trust, acceptance, sensitivity, and empathy towards other learners' plights and built on this to improve her relationships in class. She began to appreciate the activism values of collective learning that was encouraged within the course and now recognised her classmates as those who possessed different but equal strengths, all of which contributed to the person she had become. Through her exposure to the course activities such as research, workshops and presentations, Lucinda could distinguish between "domesticating and liberating approaches to facilitation" (interview, 21/9/20) and began applying it to her own study and work contexts. Consequently, this heightened her consciousness, sense of agency and activism to a level where she also "spoke up against the classmates who made fun of others because of how they spoke English" (QSTN, 12/09/20). This type of reflective engagement in the course, proved to be a process of self-discovery and healing for Linda.

The teaching model, which invited learners to bring their lived experiences into the classroom, enabled Linda to begin the process of gaining control over her learning. It was the merging of the theoretical content of the course with her own lived experiences, that opened the opportunity to find resolutions to some of the challenges she faced. Lucinda confidently expressed that "I went to class and it was as if that specific lesson was meant for me" (interview, 21/9/20), and that "it was as if the lesson was prepared knowing that I needed answers" (QSTN, 12/9/20). Her newly found meaning in the course motivated her to attend regularly and strengthened her student identity, stating that "I promised myself I would never miss a single class" (QSTN, 12/9/20). This created a platform on which Lucinda developed psychological coping mechanisms that made competing demands of her work, family, and studies more bearable. This new student identity carried personal, economic, social and political currency, and signalled a shift from her exclusive gender identity, that initially defined her sense of self.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Perception of Empowerment After the HCEAE Course

Lucinda: “I teach to a class of 30 trainees all with different functioning levels. My class has the lowest functioning level. Sometimes when I feel lost without direction, I go back to what I have learned in the Adult Education course... it really guides me in my line of work” (QSTN, 12/9/20).

Lucinda’s success in the HCEAE course made her realise that she possessed potential. She states that she has “been shaped by the course in many ways” (QSTN, 12/9/20) and that she found comfort and confidence in her new abilities. Her previously deeply rooted core gender role identity was replaced through her discovery of a more authentic and meaningful sense of self. She felt that the course had given her enough currency to advance her career to the highest levels, including the ability to deal with her everyday challenges: “I can achieve anything if I put my mind to it” (essay, 31/8/20).

She is confidently applying her newly found knowledge to promote and instil values such as caring, nurturing, respect, and lifelong learning principles in her new employment as a facilitating instructor of adults. The liberating praxis of the HCEAE course, encouraged Lucinda to view her learners as equals, encouraging them to exercise their voice and to gain a sense of presence in class. She viewed this as an important approach since active participation fostered transformation. The HCEAE course gave her an opportunity to really improve on her writing skills, to a level where she has authored a children’s story book that has been distributed in in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres in her community. The Design and Facilitation module of the HCEAE course also strengthened her creative abilities to a level where her artwork competed among well- known local artists in a local exhibition, attracting sales.

5.2.4 Biography 4: Linda

Background Before Entering the HCEAE Course

Linda: “Black people had no right to be engineers and study for certain high-profile professions” (QSTN, 12/9/20).

Linda is a 54-year-old Black African female residing in a Black township that is classified as previously disadvantaged in the Cape Town Metropolitan area. Linda remembers a life of hardship devoid of privileges under the apartheid. She felt that these circumstances, coupled with the political climate that prevailed during her early apartheid schooling years, negatively impacted her progress at school. She recalled the many sacrifices that were made to ensure that her family was economically sustained. This was the reason she had to drop out of school before completing her matric.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Linda's experiences of hardship meant that she developed political awareness quite early in life, especially around the economic, social, and political dispossession of Black South Africans. She reflected on how the dispossession of Blacks was exacerbated by the creation of Black stereotypes, to preserve the apartheid racial hierarchy. These stereotypes impacted Linda negatively and made her feel like a social outcast. She retaliated by developing an attitude of anger towards other racial groups.

Since leaving school, Linda gradually completed different short courses, through which she gained experience and exposure to new contexts. However, she always yearned to study further to obtain a qualification that would enable her to use her skills and knowledge to uplift her community, since this was her passion. She left her full-time employment and dedicated her time to voluntary work with a focus on community development, health awareness and nutrition. It was also during this time that Linda established her own community-based organisation. Through her voluntary participation in UCT's CSS training programme in Gugulethu, Linda felt she had accumulated enough currency to study for the HCEAE course and was one of the eight recipients of this bursary. She stated that it was a "dream come true and a second chance to prove to myself" (QSTN, 12/9/20).

Accessing the HCEAE Course.

Linda: "When I started the course, I was hesitant and not want to understand different people and cultures..." (QSTN, 12/9/20).

Getting the bursary signalled the start to achieving her dreams. For Linda, gaining access to the university without grade 12 was not only a dream come true, but an opportunity that she would "not miss for anything" (interview, 14/9/20). She recalls "other requirements" (QSTN, 12/9/20) that she had to meet to gain access through the recognition of prior learning (RPL) process, such as writing the test, which she failed on her first attempt, she stated: "I could not believe that I failed the RPL test, it was so easy, this was embarrassing" (interview, 14/9/20). She felt angry and disappointed and despite her low self-confidence at this point, she vividly remembered the caring, empathetic, supporting nature of the lecturers who were sensitive to her circumstances, thereby making her determined to succeed. On the second attempt, she passed the RPL test thereby boosting her self-confidence and motivation to do more to achieve her dreams.

The legacy of discrimination however, continued to engulf her and placed considerable constraints on the extent to which Linda related to her co-learners, specifically those from other racial groups. She struggled to contain her negative emotions and her insecurities about being a Black female in a diverse learning space. This, coupled with the deficit currency that such a status carried, increased her insecurities to the extent that she was "hesitant to share experiences and listen to other racial groups" (QSTN, 12/9/20). This closing of herself to others created a barrier to accessing a better understanding of her peers. Linda contended that she did "not want to understand different people and cultures" (QSTN, 12/9/20). This sense of self-inflicted alienation silenced her voice,

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

constrained her participation in university life and prevented her from developing an authentic student identity that would enable her to take control of her learning.

Acquiring access to resources such as digital literacies, is one of the constant struggles that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds grapple with when coming to university. Linda was lucky to be amongst the few learners from a working-class background with digital literacies experience, and because of this she reluctantly found herself spending time assisting others in her group with the typing of their assignments. As the course workload and other family demands began to increase, Linda was forced to withdraw from this assistant role and this resulted in a deterioration of relations with the group, which in turn affected the quality of the group's work performance. In response Linda, driven by her "fear of being judged by other racial groups" (essay, 22/8/20), placed pressure on herself and worked even harder at her coursework. The management of her organisation and her family responsibilities added to this pressure.

Turning point

Linda: "We must learn about each other's cultures, that is very important for our organisations and communities to grow" (QSTN, 12/9/20).

As the course progressed, skills gained from taking and conducting workshops and doing class presentations, allowed Linda access to a new knowledge base and gradually enabled her to develop self-confidence and emotional stability. As she internalised the learning experience, she gradually began to shed her victimhood status and softened her approach to learners from other racial groups. She reached a stage where she had developed enough positivity and confidence that allowed her to share and accommodate the views of others without feeling that she was being judged or manipulated. The sharing of "deep" experiences in class, provided Linda and her classmates the opportunity to express their vulnerabilities. Through listening, Linda developed tolerance and began to better understand her classmates' diverse circumstances. This experience of sharing, humbled Linda as she too began to contribute towards creating a safe space for "crying together and comforting each other" (QSTN, 12/9/20).

These critical reflection moments built into the group work components of the course content, enabled Linda to learn about and experience a sense of empowerment. She developed analytic abilities which she applied to her own life, allowing her to scrutinize her own bias towards other racial groups. Her newly found capacity to "think outside the box" (QSTN, 12/9/20; essay, 22/8/20) helped her to confront and resolve the discriminatory practises that she engaged in. Dealing with her deeply rooted internalised anger about being a victim of racial discrimination was a difficult but necessary step towards the healing of her mind, body and soul. She reached a stage where she could identify that the disadvantages brought about by the legacy of apartheid was shared by all people of colour and that she was "not alone in this thing" (essay, 22/8/20). She now recognised that "even if you are not black you still a human being" (QSTN, 12/9/20).

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

As such she was able to develop “friendships” that extended beyond the classroom and university setting. She felt grateful about the way the course had encouraged her to shift her mindset from “anger and attitude” towards other racial groups, to one of empathy. She now understood the importance of allowing other voices into the conversation and being able to listen in a manner that was respectful and less intimidating, she stated, “we need to listen to one another and show respect for other cultures” (essay, 22/8/20). She used this knowledge “to think before acting” (QSTN, 12/9/20). These are the values that she is also currently applying in her work and family life. All these experiences were important for Linda in her journey of becoming more resilient and developing a sense of community and agency.

Perceptions of Empowerment After the HCEAE Course

Linda: “I am now very confident when I am doing my proposal and going to the meetings and stand up for my organisation” (QSTN, 12/9/20).

Although Linda has not found formal employment after completing the course, she is very proud to mention that she has “grown and achieved so much as a person” (interview, 14/9/20) as a result of her success in the HCEAE course. Linda realised the need to bolster her organisational development knowledge and skills through the HCEAE course, to the level where she could formally register her own organisation and confidently set up operational structures. In doing so her organisation obtained full compliance status recognised and endorsed by the department of Agriculture, Food Forward S.A. and Abalimi Bezekhaya. She is also currently applying her newly acquired skills towards writing funding proposals, doing organisational budgets and improving communication within her organisation. This extends to her professional interactions with the markets and other business platforms, where she represents her organisation boldly, taking the lead in meetings and championing activism, without feeling intimidated.

Her self-confidence and trust in her abilities not only elevated her social status within her community, but across diverse communities and racial groups where she has developed strong social and business networks. These networks include “development, farming, food security and street committees (interview, 14/9/20). She finds great satisfaction in sharing her knowledge and skills in ways that will contribute to alleviate poverty, improve health, and eliminate child abuse. It is the social justice value attached to the HCEAE course, which Linda is currently implementing.

5.2.5 Dropped-out Learner: DOL

Background Before Entering the HCEAE Course

DOL: “going or just to think back in your past that was hurtful and maybe painful for some of us and having to reflect on it was hard...I remember I was struggling...” (essay, 22/8/20).

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

DOL is a 39-year-old Coloured woman who is married with five children. She resides in Belhar, in the Cape Town Metropolitan area of the Western Cape, an area classified as previously disadvantaged, and the product of forced removals under apartheid. DOL shares her experiences of growing up in a working-class family and vividly remembers past struggles and hardship that she was trying so hard to escape from, mainly because these have a bearing on the difficult life that she currently endures. Turning her life around without a matric certificate and trying to pursue a career, has been difficult for her. DOL had always wished that she could turn back the clock and manage her life better, but this was not possible considering her family's low socio-economic status and the competing needs that had to be met. It was the struggle to meet these family needs, that forced her to drop out of school before completing her matric, in order to find work. DOL has always been looking out for an opportunity to enhance her capacity while also uplifting her community. She took on many activist roles within her community, which included being involved in the community health sector, and it is the latter that presented her with an opportunity to be part of the CSS training programme. Thinking back she recalls being surprised by the "opportunity awaiting for us" in terms of gaining access to study for the HCEAE course at UCT. DOL thought that this was "a second chance in life and an opportunity to do something that you love, helping and learning to be a teacher and educator" (essay, 22/8/20).

Accessing the HCEAE Course

DOL: "The teachers that worked with us opened our eyes to a new world.... working with people of different backgrounds" (QSTN, 22/9/20).

Gaining access at UCT through RPL was an "unimagined opportunity" (essay, 22/8/20), considering her schooling was incomplete. Having lost out on the opportunity to dream while growing up, DOL felt that gaining access through RPL was an opportunity to realise a dream: "I can start over and make something of myself" (essay, 22/8/20). She expressed her emotions about this opportunity as follows: "this was so mind blowing... so unreal, feelings of joy and happiness, overwhelmed, not knowing if you are dreaming" (essay, 22/8/20). When she joined the other learners in class, DOL soon had a realisation that she was "entering a new world, a world of people from different backgrounds" (essay, 22/8/20). She compared herself to other learners in terms of experiences, socioeconomic backgrounds, language, race, cultures, age, and their locations within the formal setting of the university. Experiencing so much difference and change all at once, was overwhelming, and as such, DOL began to feel insecure about how she would be able to contribute to this learning environment as an adult learner without a matric certificate. Classroom pedagogy that allowed for critical reflection and learning from experience, was difficult for DOL. Such reflective practices surfaced painful and shameful experiences from her past which she was not ready to confront and share with others in class. DOL's fear of being judged by the other learners, whom she saw as different, with more valuable knowledge and experience than her, became real. She refused to participate in class activities, which robbed her of

valuable learning experiences, and in turn, negatively impacted her academic performance. DOL recalls the emotional and psychological challenges she experienced early on during her studies: “I remember with my first assignment I could not focus and just spelling a word became so hard and I could not understand this, why I was struggling to spell even” (interview, 24/9/20). Her academic under-performance increased her anxiety, and she felt as if lecturers were putting even more pressure on her to perform. DOL stated: “I think my teacher was on my case a lot to understand the work” (QSTN, 22/9/20). The pressure to perform academically made it difficult for DOL to cope: “I was confused, full of doubt and hesitation....” (QSTN, 22/9/20). All of these experiences exacerbated her academic under-performance, lack of self-confidence and relationship-building in class, and eventually alienated her.

DOL: Turning point

DOL: “the more I talk I could feel my emotions changing, as I spoke, I became more confident, outspoken and found something that was me and I loved it” (interview, 24/9/20).

DOL’s determination to make something of herself proved to be strong as time progressed. This was enabled through the solid nurturing support-base of her teachers, that she was able to draw on. This support significantly impacted her sense of emotional wellbeing, learning experiences and academic performance. DOL progressively began to appreciate and benefit from the course pedagogy and states: “it opened our eyes to a new world” (QSTN, 22/9/20). This was the new world that she had previously refused to consider and open up to, because of her insecurities and lack of confidence. What stood out for her was the experience evoked by the course modules such as, “introduction to adult learning ... formal, informal, and non-formal ...what it meant, the histories and the process during your childhood” (interview, 24/9/20). Through extensive reflective practice espoused within the course design, mediated through the course modules, DOL not only learnt about the subject matter, but simultaneously learnt more about herself, her disadvantages, other people’s backgrounds and how to deal with them. She experimented with new ways of learning by drawing on the group experiences shared in class, which was an ‘eye opening’ experience for her and her own learning (essay, 22/8/20).

These modules and strategies assisted her to develop analytic and problem-solving tools to engage in reflective learning practices and to confront past experiences that were stifling her holistic growth. Through this process she came to the realisation that: “Going into that deep talks we had to participate in, where we had to open up about our thoughts. It made me realize that I needed more help with what I was going through mentally and physically... this is what happens if you don’t face your past, it stays at the back of your mind” (interviews, 24/9/20).

Not yet fully Empowered?

DOL: “For me, I wish I could go back to UCT. I feel I messed up and now I wish I could get a second chance, but I’m here” (essay, 22/08/20).

DOL was forced to drop out of the course due to circumstances that were beyond her control. She expressed that not completing the course was one of her most painful moments, something that she wished she could have changed if she were able to. Recalling her last experiences on the course she expressed: “After doing my last presentation, ‘in labour’, in class, I had to pick up all my strength to go through that and just to make it, so I can just know I made it and not be a failure and stand tall... I took the year off in 2019 to raise my baby” ... (interview, 24/9/20). The impact of the HCEAE course on DOL’s sense of growing empowerment was visible in her reflections on the impact that the course had on her. Despite not having completed the course because of her pregnancy, DOL felt confident about the knowledge-base she accumulated thus far, and saw herself possessing the capacity of an educator and teacher. DOL states: “teaching is something that I was born to do” (essay, 22/8/20). Armed with such positivity and determination, she now has a much stronger sense of self and awareness of her capabilities. She gained critical skills that enabled her to transcend the negative life-experiences and feelings of victimhood, so that she too could embrace the coming together in harmony of mind, body, and soul. DOL expressed: “My teacher wanted us to challenge ourselves and want us to think outside the box (QSTN, 22/9/20). After leaving the course DOL has been using her abilities at home assisting her children in their schoolwork. Through her time spent in the course, she had adopted an adaptive personality and sense of agency. Her transformation includes the ability to see things in a different light and to confront challenges in her different capacities as a wife, sister, mother, and community leader. DOL expressed that COVID 19 restrictions has put all her plans on hold in 2020. DOL feels emotionally and academically ready to resume her studies and to meet up with and engage her role models – namely, her teachers, but this will only be possible, however, with much-needed financial assistance

5.3. Over-arching Themes in Findings

The end result of selecting, sorting and arranging the data in this way took the form of five final, over-arching data themes. These final themes (present in the biographies above) captured core moments in the research participants life histories that impacted their sense of self and their transition into the university context. This transition phase was where their perceptions of self and others were challenged and transformed through the underlying discourse of empowerment embedded within the social and intellectual fabric of the HCEAE course. The five broad themes identified were:

- (a) RPL Access as Fulfilment of Dreams and Aspirations
- (b) Empowered Personhood
- (c) Establishing Community
- (d) The Adult Education Modules: Experiences and Learning Moments and,
- (e) Living the Dream? Impact Beyond the Course

5.3.1 RPL Access as Fulfilment of Dreams and aspirations

As a reflection on their lived experiences, this theme provided the context and the framework for the rest of the themes because it allowed the participants to conceptualise their experiences of empowerment as a journey towards realising their seemingly unattainable dreams and aspirations. All the participants had developed a critical sense of consciousness that made them aware of being robbed of the opportunity to dream during their childhoods, as a result of varied intersecting socio-economic and historical phenomena associated with their impoverished, rural, working-class status as women of colour. As mature, married women, some vividly recalled the negative effects of racially inspired apartheid laws in their lives, while others reflected on the restrictive impacts of internalised gender roles. For example:

“Our townships in S.A. were divided according to different races through Group Areas Act... in education – Black people had no right to be engineers and study for certain high-profile professions” (Linda, QSTN, 12/9/20).

“The world is so different now, we always believed woman are the household workers at families never thinking that we could lead or have career” (Alicia, interview, 24/8/20).

While all the participants dreamt and aspired to improve their prospects and living conditions, they also had strong aspirations to broaden their skills and knowledge base. Their developed sense of agency was apparent in their desire and in their skill and knowledge to improve the situation in their communities. The attainment of an enhanced personal, social and economic status emerged as strong motivation for accessing and succeeding in the HCEAE course. These were captured in codes such as: “improving my living conditions”, “be more than I currently am”, to “change my life for the better”, “be successful”, an “opportunity I have been longing for”, “to change your future not just for yourself but for your family”, and “having that security of providing a better life”. The concept of family featured strongly in the data:

Lucinda states: “I thought about the future I wanted for myself as well as for my children whenever I wanted to quit, I just reminded myself that this is one opportunity I could not give up on” (essay, 31/8/20).

Alicia: “My greatest motivation was my children. I never gave up and proved to them through any obstacles, you push through...” (interview, 24/8/20).

The feeling of having the symbolic capital to pass the RPL test and meet the requirements to access the HCEAE course without a matric certificate, came out strongly as an expression of their empowerment and movement towards realising their aspirations. Through the RPL process, there was experiences of conscious awareness of recognition of their prior experiences and abilities. Such realisations at the point of entry into university, indicated

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

the strengthening of mind, body and soul. This then served as strong motivation to pursue the course and laid the groundwork for the turning points in their lives which happened later. This finding was supported by the course lecturer (CL) who contended that “the benefits were in terms of knowing ‘I could be accepted’”, in terms of “getting through a course” (CL, interview, 08/10/20). Participant data strongly supports this stance. Maria states: “To think I became enrolled in a university without having matric. For me it was so unreal because I can only dream about it” (essay, 14/8/20).

Other participants viewed their access to the course not only as dream come true, but also as a stroke of luck, a calling, and a reversal of their misfortunes. This follows on from their disadvantaged working-class backgrounds and the previous institutional barriers they faced that made it difficult for Black and Coloured learners to access higher education. Alicia phrases this as follows:

“I reflected on how unfortunate I was growing up, underprivileged, of a working [class] family and how fortunate I was to gain access to one of the universities that was the best in our country...” (essay, 14/8/20).

The learner who dropped out (DOL) supported this notion of the reversal of misfortunes mentioned above, adding that this was an “opportunity to turn back the clock and start over to make something of yourself” (QSTN, 22/8/20).

5.3.2 Empowered personhood.

The participants shared personal and traumatic encounters that encompassed experiences of powerlessness and despair on their journeys towards realising a sense of empowered personhood. The euphoria of entering university did not match up with the initial experience of being a student. In fact, all of them found the transition quite daunting. Upon entry into the HCEAE course, their sense of self was negatively impacted since they regarded their difference in relation to other learners in terms of deficit, and this created barriers to developing a sense of identity to belong as university students. Their status of being a minority ‘other’ within a previously Whites only university, also became a marker of their difference within the HCEAE class. This difference attracted various forms of marginalisation from the larger ingroup in the HCEAE class. For example, participants recalled that:

“On the day of the test some ladies... belittled us, this made me feel I was not good enough to be in class... in class I was very still” (Maria, essay, 14/8/20).

Such feelings also tended to impact and diminish their confidence in their abilities to learn how to cope and persevere:

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

“There were times when I felt that I was not good enough to be a student at one of the country's top universities... I wanted to quit so many times I could not count” (Lucinda, essay, 31/8/20).

“There were things I could not cope with, like individual tasks... Challenges was putting my experiences on paper” (Alicia, interview, 24/8/20).

Their perceived lack of currency to succeed in the course, made the study participants insecure and fearful, and "silenced" and robbed them of the opportunity to enact agency and take control of their learning. The participants feared that the other learners did not value or recognise the experiences of poor, exploited and undermined rural women of colour. This contrasted deeply with how their prior knowledge of living and working in disadvantaged community settings, was valorised at the point of entry into the course.

It was through the content of the modules, the course design, and the teaching methods and activities that participants gradually began to gather the courage and confidence to turn the lenses of enquiry towards themselves and to reflect critically on their own lives. They began to internalise the reflective discourse underlining the course and came to realise benefits of sharing. They came to recognise that possibilities for change and transformation could be achieved, in relation to others. This relational component in the course signified a powerful realisation and turning point for all the participants. The classroom became a confessional space where learners confessed their pains, fears, anger and frustrations without any fear of judgement. They were now part of a group of sympathetic listeners who encouraged, supported and helped each other to rebuild their 'broken' and deficit sense of selves in the world. This was part of the process of becoming "whole" - quite an important and empowering moment in their journeys since it signalled a rebuilding and strengthening of mind (psychological healing), body (physical healing) and soul (spiritual healing).

The intersection of practice and theory in the course, raised an awareness of how intellectual tools can provide lenses for reinterpreting and re-evaluating lived experiences in a new light, as a way of empowering self-realisation and fuelling the process of 'becoming'. Through this process, participants emerged stronger, more assertive, more able and with more trust in their abilities to “achieve more” and to “be successful” in life. This was revealed in the data in comments such as: “I have grown as a person”; “I am now stronger”; “the course has strengthened me in many ways”; “it has changed my mindset”. The participants new sense of emerging self and personhood is echoed in the following extracts:

Lucinda: “in this course we did a lot of reflection which has helped me a lot in understanding myself” (interview, 21/9/20) ... “the course shaped me in many ways... I have become a better person” (essay, 31/8/20).

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Maria: “It felt that I was living a dream, receiving the Higher Certificate. I thought it could be an advantage for me when searching for another work, but what matter the most is the experience I’ve received and what it made of me as a person” (essay, 14/8/20).

DOL: “... has changed me as a person, mother, sister, wife in all aspects of my life. I see my surroundings and everything I do and think differently now through my learning. I am more confident and adaptable to change” (essay, 22/8/20).

Participants also became aware of the power they have through their use of voice in different contexts and exchanges. Some participants used their voices to speak up against discriminatory practices. For example, Alicia stated: I was always verbally abused by siblings who are all men, but now I am grown into a strong woman who defends herself by speaking up” (essay, 14/8/20).

Others asserted themselves by opting to be silent, thus using silence as an exercise of power. Here the concept of voice as an expression of empowerment is clearly visible, also adding to their sense of becoming and self-realisation.

5.3.3 Establishing community.

All the participant highlighted a pervasive impact on their social and political attitudes through their participation in the HCEAE course. Their fears and insecurities about not belonging and not possessing the correct currency, and not being able to meet the requirements to succeed at UCT, threatened the building of relationships with classmates and their meaningful participation in collective learning activities. Elements of shame and resentment about their impoverished working-class, rural Afrikaans-speaking origins, especially in relation to the other urbanised English-speaking learners, increased their anxiety and sense of marginalisation. For example, Alicia states:

“Challenges were being judged by other ladies whom had more experience than you, where I am from, who I am, the colour of my skin, the type or hair made me feel inferior. I just wanted to belong and for people to see I am here to help” (QSTN, 22/8/20).

As rural, working-class women of colour, the participants prior socio-economic, political, cultural, racial and spatial experiences of marginalisation of the world, had conditioned them into thinking that people could not always be trusted. Their initial interactions with others were thus shrouded in suspicion, anger, silence, shame and resentment, which closed off possibilities for creating meaningful interactions with their classmates. The course lecturer (CL) also confirmed some of the conflicts and tensions in class, contending that these were often racial but also between different geographical (rural versus urban) locations (interview, 08/10/20).

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

The participants attributed their overcoming of the above-mentioned barriers, to the structure and nature of the course content and teaching methods, which they asserted allowed them to engage in dialogical encounters that targeted dimensions of race, gender, class, culture and ethnicity. Through this dialogical exchange, there was a merging of theory and practice, with participants being guided to engage in the process of critical reflection and introspection. A key moment for participants was learning how to make themselves "vulnerable" to others, as part of the process of seeking empowerment. Reflection activities within the group was therapeutic and signalled a form of catharsis. This created an affirming bonding space, leaving participants with a real sense of community. They emerged from this process more resilient, confident, motivated and with an inspired sense of activism/agency. All participants reported an increase in racial tolerance, a reduction in political cynicism, a higher tendency toward democratic attitudes, and a higher level of political interest. Participants reported this as follows:

"I have also learnt to accept my co-students although they thought they are the best. [We] learnt to respect, love and trust each other because of our personal experiences we shared amongst us" (Maria, essay, 14/8/20).

"I was hesitant to share when I first came to class... I did not want to understand other people's cultures... this process encouraged me to listen to other people share stories, crying together and comforting each other, this brought us much closer to each other in class.... I learnt that even if you are not Black, you are still a human being" (Linda, essay, 12/9/20).

"We were a very knitted class...we shared many biases and many learnings" (Lucinda, QSTN, 12/9/20).

The CL confirms this but adding that:

"Initially it was difficult for me, from the beginning I made it very clear that we're all in this together and we're all going to support each other and everyone's going to get through this with everyone's support" (CL, Interview, 8/10/20)

The course thus promoted values and principles of collective exchanges, that extended to community involvement beyond the class. One of the participants, Maria, came to the realisation that "this course is not about how good you can run a workshop, but how good are you working with people in your community and the change you bring" (QSTN, 14/9/20).

5.3.4 The Adult Ed Modules: experiences and learning moments.

All the participants found the content of the modules very beneficial, as it allowed for a particular approach to problem-solving that exposed them to skills that targeted how to

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

deal constructively with challenges. There is now a realisation that one must not pre-judge but rather approach challenging situations with an analytical mind, assessing and identifying problems. Participants report that this approach also encompasses allowing other voices and opinions to enter the debate first, and then working through various approaches to the issue at hand and selecting and applying the most effective resolution.

Linda asserts:

“The knowledge gained from the course modules influenced change in my attitude and the way of dealings with challenges in my organisation and in my personal life” (interview, 14/9/20) I learnt that I must listen and think first before [I] act or reply on anything... it really changed my life to the better” (QSTN, 12/9/20).

The analysis also shows that knowledge gained from the modules opened up new possibilities with respect to dealing with issues of stereotyping and diversity, and in the process the participants themselves have gained various insights with respect to being able to view their own lives through these new lenses. Maria’s comment is telling here:

“I was a person judging easily as well, I could not understand ways of people and how they operate and the way they lived. After transformation I was empowered to have a better mental mindset” (QSTN, 14/9/20).

A core feature of the course content was the promotion of dialogue and dealing with real issues in the communities. This allowed participants to also focus on their own personal challenges. It is through these dialogical encounters that participants were able to "bring their own lived experiences" into the classroom, while also being able to access the means to resolve these issues now. These moments of realisation motivated participants to take control and participate actively in their own learning. For example, they state:

“I went to class and it was as if that specific lesson was meant for me (Lucinda, interview, 21/9/20)... “I promise myself I will never miss a single class” (QSTN, 12/9/20).

“The modules I was doing had me realised this is exactly what I need to do in the community” (Maria, essay, 14/8/20).

Participants drew on the History module in particular, to indicate the interactions between theory and practice which created the space to engage in uncomfortable, reflexive and reciprocal exchanges, allowing them to be present in those moments of learning and realisation. This is commented on in some detail by the lecturer:

“the history module enabled the learners to understand inequality and allowed them to take their place without shame of thinking about poverty, who they are and what they and to understand why they are in the state they are. It allowed them to leave behind the shame that they do carry; the issue of understanding

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

their own prejudices that they hold towards those in the class, towards other people; understanding what they are, and how it plays out in their behaviour” (CL, interview, 08/10/20).

A comment by one of the participants, Alicia, provides further insight about this module:

“History was also one of the courses biggest subject (QSTN, 22/8/20)... The way we were brought up is man are the ones who works bring the money home, the woman cooks and raises children... I learnt a lot of how women are disrespected and abused” (Alicia, interview, 24/8/20).

This approach to community engagement was confirmed by the external examiner (EE) who expressed:

“So, what I liked about the course is not something about teaching adult educators to be good teachers, it’s actually locating them within the Adult Education discourse and the Freirean approach and the community-based approach” ...I get the idea of bridging, you know, how it bridges from the experience into the academy. So, you can see that to-ing and fro-ing happening. Sometimes you would find for example an overemphasis on personal experience and location and never actually moving across to the area of theory and academic rigour” (17/9/20).

We see here how the design of the course modules accommodated the participants’ experiences; it allowed *them* and *their homes* and *their origins* to be present in the knowledge-construction process, being active participants co-producing knowledge alongside the lecturers. This was particularly affirming and empowering for the participants.

5.3.5 Living the dream? Impact beyond the course

The participants conceptualised their empowerment within the course as a journey towards realising their dreams and aspirations. Their success within the courses, represented an opportunity to reverse their misfortunes and disadvantages, economically, socially, personally and politically.

The analysis of the data shows the enormous difference that symbolic capital can make in terms of how these women view themselves and how others view them. All participants have confirmed that they have moved from been previously ignored, dominated, undermined and made to feel unworthy, to a space in which their opinions are now actively sought, respected and valued. They are now able to contribute meaningfully to their work, families and their communities at large. This was confirmed by the CL who expressed:

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

“one of the students from Belhar kind of worked on a voluntary basis with her son’s school and she said nobody ever listened to her. Through the course she was able to take her place”.

Maria and Linda confirm the impact the course has had on their lives after leaving university:

“in doing my work ...I can also give advice to those who trust me enough to share their personal baggage... I also can give input regarding my work to the rest of the group as well and most importantly, I can endure with circumstances and people’s opinions” (Maria, essay, 14/08/20).

“I am now very confident when I am doing my proposal and going to the meetings and stand up for my organisation. My project now is successful because I know how to look after the project” (Linda, QSTN, 12/09/20).

The dreams and aspirations of ploughing their skills and knowledge back into enhancing their communities, has been realised. Most importantly, all the participants have been entrusted with leadership powers within their organisations and communities. This is in recognition of their acquired expertise and competencies, as well as their values of social activism and community outreach principles. This has increased their self-worth and status as active members of society.

While very contented with the benefits of HCEAE course, two of the participants yearned for access to more economic empowerment, (one participant, Alicia, remains unemployed), others valued their individual/personal empowerment even more:

“Due to my studies at UCT I have started working as a training Instructor... I may not have a high paying job, but I’m living my dream” (Lucinda, QSTN, 12/09/20).

“It felt that I was living a dream, receiving the Higher Certificate... I thought it could be an advantage for me when searching for another work, but what matter the most is the experience I’ve received... and what it had made me as a person” (Maria, essay, 14/08/20).

5.3.5 Conclusion

This chapter first provided an analysis and discussions of empowerment in the HCEAE course. It presented an analytic lens to the biographical narratives of core participants’ trajectories in the mapping of their empowerment. These narratives showed a process of progression from a state of ‘being’ to ‘becoming’ through entering into dialogic relationships with peers and engaging in confessional practices which ultimately led to empowerment. There was a thread of visible and increasing empowerment that ran through the analysis and discussion of the data. The findings showed that the empowerment provided by the course serves as motivation for Black marginalised women

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

to advance their careers and to instil lifelong learning principles in a holistic fashion in the pursuits of their dreams.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion

6. Analysis and Discussion

6.1 Questions answered in this study

6.1.1 Forms of empowerment provided within the HCEAE Course.

Perceptions of empowerment have been discussed through the following four tailored concepts: Freire's (2000, 1970) concepts of dialogue and praxis, and Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of social and economic capital. These conceptual lenses constitute various forms of empowerment and were used to assess the following competencies gained within this course: cognitive development, literacies (includes knowledge and skills), social and economic change. Rowlands' (1997) empowerment framework was used in this study to add another lens to Freire's (2000: 1970-1) and Bourdieu's (1986) theoretical concepts of empowerment. This allowed for further categorisation of the concept of empowerment into workable parts that further speaks to and informs the actual experiences of my study participants, as Rowlands offers a specific framework for categorising the research questions about empowerment in this study. Rowlands (1997) constructs the concept of 'power over' as gaining control, which is responded to by either compliance, resistance, or manipulation. She conceptualised 'power to' as generative or productive power that creates new possibilities and actions without domination. The 'power with' is constructed as the power generating feeling that the whole is greater than the sum of individuals, and action as a group is more effective, while 'power within' is individual strength.

6.1.2 Dialogue as Empowerment

The analysis of data revealed that the pedagogical practice of the HCEAE course underpinned the values of respect and equality in exchanges. These values found expression through the intersection between the various themes of race, class, gender, culture, language, as well as theory and experiences in various modules, assessment tools and collective exchanges. This intersection allowed participants to reflect on and critique their previous held beliefs, experiences, and ways of being in world and to tap into their indigenous knowledges, allowing them to participate in situated, reflexive, and reciprocal exchanges. Through these exchanges, participants could engage in value-driven dialogical encounters where they could assess and evaluate the connections between their beliefs and experiences, and how these have hindered or benefited their empowerment. Accordingly, these situated, reflexive and reciprocal dialogical exchanges enabled participants to develop generative 'power to' (Rowlands, 1997) solve their immediate problems, and in the process of learning holistically, they also developed problem solving skills, academic literacies and increased their knowledge base.

The situatedness of the reflective reciprocal exchange, created a merging of theory and learners' prior knowledge and practical experiences, allowing participants to gain new understandings about ways of being and becoming in their world. This exchange of experiences was important in the development of dialogue within the course. Inevitably, dialogue created a sustained, supportive platform for stimulating participants' cognitive

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

abilities and initiated possibilities in which perceived transformations of the self could be realised. The sense of developing power within (Rowlands, 1997) themselves shines through strongly here. The development of power within themselves in these exchanges allowed participants to gain power over the co-creation of knowledge process, in line with Freire who contends that new knowledge is produced in the classroom from the interaction between students' and teachers' knowledges (Freire, 2000, 1970). Positive adjustments to attitudes were also prevalent, in terms of fighting prejudices and promoting social justice and community-building initiatives. Below is how Alicia and Linda are embracing the notion of social justice in their communities:

“I did zoom meetings with different organisations encouraging women as how to cope with depression and other health issues. I will be doing a zoom meeting with the minister of housing soon” (Alicia, QSTN, 24/08/20).

“My organisation is sustained; we sell to markets to be safe economically. My organisation has taken in other people to work with, so that they can get knowledge on gardening and get some income for their families. I also educate people with the skills and knowledge I have gained from the course” (Linda, essay, 22/08/20).

In terms of the learning process involved here, Kolb and Kolb (2005: 194) state: “Learning is the process of creating knowledge... a constructivist theory of learning whereby social knowledge is created and re-created in the personal knowledge of the learner” (Kolb, 1984).

The dialogical exchanges were participatory and allowed Lucinda to bring her home and her work into these exchanges.

6.1.3 Praxis as Empowerment

The creation of opportunities to apply theory and ideas within the HCEAE modules was facilitated by the design of the curriculum and the interactive dialogical processes underlying the pedagogy. These structures provide spaces for participants to develop praxis, and by extension, their empowerment. The Design and Facilitation module, community profiling and needs analysis activities, as well as the presentations, allowed the participants to engage in value-driven actions and exchanges, but with some degree of flexibility. Through these exchanges, participants developed autonomy, which they used to engage in, and to develop creative, thoughtful actions and abilities, which included improving on communication and digital literacies skills. Such flexibility increased agency and enhanced self-confidence. The EE spoke supportively of this notion of flexibility built into the course: “What I notice in terms of the lecturers or the examiners' in this case is that they allow that flexibility of experience to come into the discussion” (interview, 17/09/20). Through such flexible practices, participants could transform their existing capital and make it more valuable and transferrable. There was thus an appreciation of the opportunity to “work in groups, the chance to work in the community and to set up workshops and to use this

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

knowledge... we have gained” (DOL, QSTN, 22/09/20). In this way, communities could also be engaged to reflect critically on their state of oppression, thus increasing their critical consciousness (Freire, 1971) and their agency as a community, to impact positive social change.

The study reveals that through the experiences of praxis, the participants developed ‘power with’ and ‘power to’ (Rowlands, 1997) reflect and enact agency, to assess, evaluate, plan, collaborate, co-design and conduct value-driven community integrated actions and exchanges. This power was not present before accessing this HCEAE course.

6.1.4 Social capital as Empowerment

Collectivism with its activist socialist values and principles (waBofelo et al., 2013) is perceived by the participants to have provided them space for collective horizontal learning and the development of a sense of community which they found empowering. Madgwick (2016: n.p.) states bridging the gap between informal and formal learning involves: “Building horizontal connections in our classrooms is when we deliberately activate the prior knowledge and worlds of our learners with the new learning we are introducing. It is also about validating learning contexts that are familiar and valued in the worlds of our... learners”. The pedagogical practice allowed for goal-driven, mutually valuable exchanges through group work and assessment tools. One of the core features of the collective exchanges in this HCEAE course, is that it represented a microsystem of the socio-economic, cultural, and racial diversity present in broader society, which was used as a resource for learning. Accordingly, this microsystem allowed for collective sharing of valuable individual symbolic resources, such as digital literacies for the typing of group assignments, and also linguistic and critical academic literacies, for doing and writing up research projects in the acceptable academic format. Evident here is that individual experiences and resources of learners, become part of the collectively owned and mutually valuable symbolic resources, as captured in Rowlands (1997) notion of ‘power with’ stated above, where the whole is greater than the sum of individuals. Within these collective exchanges, participants could draw on the available and mutually beneficial symbolic capital of the group, through allocating and delegating responsibilities to achieve their common goals.

Part of the ‘power with’ (Rowlands, 1997) others process also meant that participants could develop ‘power within’ themselves by exploring and developing problem solving abilities, psychological coping mechanisms, resilience, and empathy. The power developed within, and with others in these smaller exchanges, was in return, used to inform and sustain the broader collective exchanges, around issues of fostering shared responsibility and racial cohesion, and developing critical insights into what the concepts of service and leadership entail (waBofelo et al., 2013). These traits are then applied in and outside of the classroom setting, in their homes, communities and social networks, where the symbolic display of social capital becomes a signifier of ‘power to’ (Rowlands, 1997) create opportunities to impact change positively. The benefits of such power with collective learning are expressed by Linda as follows:

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Linda: "I am very much involved in social groups such as developmental, farming, food security, street committee in my community (essay, 22/8/20) ... I am also involved in similar groups for business and social outside my community in other areas" (QSTN, 12/9/20).

6.1.5 Economic capital as empowerment

The analysis revealed that the opportunity to attain economic empowerment for the participants was a real possibility, although it was not an assured outcome of the course. One of the participants attained economic empowerment through accessing employment as a "teacher of adults", two participants are still employed in the informal sector as volunteers, and one participant remains unemployed.

Of importance here is the overlap between various types of acquired capital. Attainment of symbolic academic capital has benefited one of the participants. Her academic symbolic capital allowed her access to an advantaged position of a team leader, which came with a monetary value. This symbolic capital, in the form of "credentials" (Bourdieu, 1986: 79) acquired from the HCEAE course from one of the best universities in the country, represented some kind of disguised economic capital. According to Bourdieu, credentials obtained within academia, are "sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications", which "confer on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value" (Bourdieu, 2011: 88). The value of academic credentials inevitably presents as a guarantee of sorts or at least as some type of access to prospective economic power in social exchanges. So while not all participants gained access to immediate economic empowerment, other attributes and competencies such as developing a strong sense of 'self' and 'being' in the world (Natanasabapathy & Maathuis-Smith, 2019), becoming more assertive, confident and vocal, and possessing a range of new organisational, presentation and problem-solving skills as a result of dialogic interactions (Gillies, 2016), grant these participants power within (Rowlands, 1997) themselves and power to increase their employment prospects and access to economic capital.

6.2 Strategies of Pedagogical practice that upheld forms of empowerment in the HCEAE course.

In this study, I argued that increased access and academic success of women adult learners within the educational provisions alone is not enough, it needs to be coupled with a particular type of educational strategy and curriculum design plan that seeks to empower these women in particular ways. The broader approach would be to support and encourage strategies for different ideas on relevance to be made visible at the level of practice and then multiplicity at the curriculum level to create different pathways. These strategies are discussed below.

6.2.1 Engaging mind, body, and soul

Various features of pedagogical practice were found to have worked well to empower participants within the HCEAE course. These features or strategies underpinning pedagogical practice were grounded on exchanges that were friendly and non-threatening and targeted the mind, body, and soul. This is important, since based on the participants lack of confidence, agency and ontological security when they first enter university and the HCEAE class, it meant that they “would be subject to fears, anxiety, and dread” (Croft, 2012: 221). Therefore, the pedagogy of hope and empathy (Freire, 1971; Bozalek & Biersteker, 2009) espoused within the practice of care embedded in the HCEAE course, provided support and a sense of community that extended beyond the parameters of the course. Maria reflects on this:

“Our lecturer was an outstanding ...supportive woman who always reminded me that there is hope no matter your circumstances. At that time, I was through a lot with my daughter’s illness and appointments...” (QSTN, 12/09/20).

Lucinda on the other hand, appreciated the sense of community in the class: “my lecturer was more than a teacher to me... we were a very close knitted class. I would not have been able to get to where I am now on my own” (essay, 31/08/20).

Pedagogical practices in the HCEAE course then, espoused the pedagogy of care as mentioned above, as well as strategic empathy (Zembylas, 2012). They embodied meaningful, heartfelt spaces for women to express their emotions, their differences and their concerns about inequality (Le Roux, 2010). In terms of these reflections, learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world. Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. In the process of learning, one is called upon to move back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking (Kolb & Kolb, 2005: 194). Although participants viewed these exchanges to have been difficult, an important aspect of the pedagogy at hand involves and deals in discomfort, since discomfort in this context, concerns care (Prebel, 2016; Zembylas, 2012 & 2015). The use of this discomfiting pedagogy was seen by participants as necessary to develop their ability to “endure” and “push through these challenges” (Alicia, essay, 14/08/20) on physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual levels. This exchange of discomfort and care allowed them to develop ‘power within’ themselves that translated into the application of a generative ‘power to’ (Rowlands, 1997) engage in different contexts in and beyond the course. This made possible, a transformation of the self.

6.2.2 Diverse experiences

Among the pedagogic strategies that were valued by all the participants were those that encouraged diversity in group work and assignments. This meant including learners from different geographic locations and racial groups in collective exchanges. The learners’

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

firsthand experiences of these different locations and their access and exposure to aspects of diverse culture and traditions, allowed them to learn and experience at the same time. These were areas and experiences that were historically (and also currently), denied through apartheid laws. This process provided relevance in exchanges, and relevance allowed participants to develop power within themselves, and in the process, they developed power with others in these exchanges. In this sense Kolb & Kolb (2005: 194) assert that “learning involves the integrated functioning of the total person— thinking, feeling, perceiving, and behaving... Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment... learning occurs through equilibration of the dialectic processes of assimilating new experiences into existing concepts and accommodating existing concepts to new experience”. Some of the participants viewed this diversity experience as getting them “out of [their] comfort zone” (Alicia, essay, 14/08/20) and as an opportunity to “challenge ourselves” (DOL, Interview, 22/09/20). Using this discomforting pedagogy (Zembylas, 2012) in these collective exchanges was viewed as a mutually valuable and resourceful learning tool, and enabled participants to gain ‘power over’ social capital, within and beyond the course.

6.2.3 Engaging with transformation

Most of the participants expressed appreciation of the value of the transformation process accompanying their empowerment in the course. Most of the participants acknowledged that this was the first time that they could engage honestly and deeply with various and multi-layered issues of transformation in their groups. They appreciated this process of confession since it allowed them to turn their lenses on themselves to gain insight into their own feelings, and to grasp how these emotions influenced their behaviours and their world view. Besley (2005: 86) states:

“Confession then is both a communicative and an expressive act, a narrative in which we (re)create ourselves by creating our own narrative, reworking the past, in public, or at least in dialogue with another”.

Working with the concepts of transformation in this holistic manner, participants were humbled and became empathetic to others. These experiences had an impact on the acquisition of ownership of ‘power over’ social and symbolic capital and academic literacies and abilities. The participants’ state:

“After transformation I was empowered to have a better mental mindset (essay, 14/8/20). I also learnt to monitor things in a positive manner. I developed emotionally as well and could easily adapt to change” (Maria, QSTN, 14/09/20).

“the transformation process changed me because we were allowed to express ourselves” (interview, 14/9/20) and I find out that even if you are not black you still a human being” (Linda, QSTN, 12/09/20).

6.4 How successful was the HCEAE course in terms of empowering vulnerable female learners while adhering to Adult Education policy and theory objectives?

The trajectory of this study sought to assess the extent to which the structure, design and execution of the HCEAE curriculum was able to meet and satisfy those course outcomes associated with issues of empowerment. To this effect, this study drew on the experiences of four women of colour from working-class backgrounds and tracked their journeys through the HCEAE course to assess whether they had in fact experienced a sense of empowerment, and if so, to gain insights into what the nature and impact of such empowerment was. The premise informing this line of enquiry, is that the empowerment of adult learners (especially marginalised women of colour) within elite academic settings, must be geared towards effecting positive, meaningful, and enduring changes at both a personal and social levels. This research on the HCEAE course was also conducted in relation to the goals and requirements of NQF Act 67 of 2008 through the RPL policy. The broad analytical lens employed was framed by Freire's critical cultural pedagogy (1970-1; 2000) which foregrounds that the transformation of self in relation to economic and social transformation, lay at the centre of educational provisions.

Central to Adult Education provisions, are the outcomes that allow its learners to develop competencies (including forms of empowerment) that enable them to attain their Adult Education qualification. The RPL policy requires these outcomes to adhere to the transformative objectives of the NQF Act, while Adult Education theory also holds these outcomes accountable in as far as they can transform the reality of its learners (Freire, 1970). Education policy provisions and Adult Education theory promote the notion of relevance within dialogical encounters. The notion of relevance implicates pedagogical practice, process and curriculum of education provisions, to adjust and foster exchanges and actions that enable its learners to develop power within themselves in ways that enable transformation of the self and grants them power over social and economic capital and values.

This study has demonstrated the dialogical encounters that were relatable to the female participants in the HCEAE course. These encounters were grounded in the design of the HCEAE curriculum, the alignment of pedagogical practices within this curriculum and the enactment of processes that promoted critical (self) reflection amongst learners on issues of inequality, oppression, and marginalization. What was clear in the data, was the depth of the dialogical encounters between theory, experiences, and dimensions of culture. There is strong evidence that the HCEAE curriculum design, the content of the modules and the pedagogical practices allowed for deep learning where participants were able to tap into their indigenous knowledge systems embedded in their cultural contexts and developed 'power within' to impact self transformation. CL had this to say about practices promoting dialogical exchanges:

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

“Initially they were in their area groups and after that we started moving them around so that they could be in a group with someone from each area so they could begin to kind of cross-pollinate and horizontal learning in terms of their community and also who they are, what they do and how they do what they do” (interview, 08/10/20).

DOL commented on the extent of opportunities created within the course to apply their indigenous knowledge:

“I feel we were given the opportunity to learn and make use of it every day whether you were at home, at work in class... so we could grow as educators” (QSTN, 22/9/20).

Both the NQF policy and the Adult Education theory insist that the dialogical encounters that allow for the use of indigenous knowledge must provide relevance in exchanges. This relevance is important as it engages the participants in dialogue through a process that conscientizes them and raises their levels of critical consciousness about their oppressions. Such relevance ensures that education provisions conscientize learners in ways that would allow them to develop power within themselves to benefit them personally. This signifies the power within the participants as a form of cognitive development. Transformation of the self is in line with education reform objectives and Adult Education theory.

However, Freire’s (1970-1, 2000) critical cultural theory and the education reform policy suggest that relevance only becomes empowerment if it leads to dialogical actions that transform reality. The development of praxis embedded within course outcomes enabled the women, through dialogue, the ability to collectively enact their agency upon their environments and to transform it. This study showed that praxis was made possible through pedagogical practices that underpinned critical reflection in the HCEAE curriculum. Maria illustrates here how she applied her symbolic capital:

“I’ve learned how to do research on my community (interview, 24/9/20)... knowing what knowledge lacks and find which age group and gender that needs the knowledge best... I interact with different types of families and people with different habits and cultures. I’m much more confident QSTN, 14/9/20)... I also can give input regarding my work ... I can endure with circumstances and people’s opinions” (Maria, essay, 14/08/20).

However, it must be stated that while education attainment is generally known to be a powerful tool that grants people control over their economic circumstances, especially regarding employability prospects, it would be unreasonable to assume that higher education qualifications automatically have the power to guarantee this, especially in light of SA’s nearly 30% unemployment rate (Statistics South Africa, 2020). In line with this, those completing the HCEAE course are not assured of employment and economic advancement. Even though some of participants from the rural area were almost

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

guaranteed instant power in their contexts, Huis et al. (2017) contend that women empowerment is time and culture bound, and that time lapse between an intervention and the evaluation should be considered. So, while automatic economic empowerment is not possible, the benefits of empowerment in terms of participants' personal, cognitive, and social capital as alluded to above, makes the participants more competitive in the job market and does provide them with more prospects than before.

This study concludes from these findings that the participants, through their successful engagement within the HCEAE course, have acquired a strong sense of empowerment and a status which has afforded them recognition in communities, families (Bhat, 2015; Malik et al., 2009; Murtaza, 2012) and workplace contexts. These were the same contexts in which the participants were previously undermined and held low socio-economic and childlike statuses (Fohtung, 2008). The recognition obtained within these social contexts is an indication of the participants' acceptance as respected and valued members (Malik et al., 2009). The aspirations listed by the participants when they first entered the course, were thus realised.

Accordingly, this study revealed that participants had, to some extent, exited the course with aspects of 'power to, power with and power within' (Rowlands, 1997). Through such acquisition, participants had enough confidence (February, 2003; Malik et al., 2009; Murtaza, 2012, Papaioannou & Gravani, 2018), social networking abilities, resources to alter and even remove the barriers in their existing social contexts and to rewrite the power relations that frame these contexts, in their favour (Bhat, 2015). The following extracts from Alicia attest to this:

"Growing up between men I was always seen as a cook and a cleaner, now I am powerful, educated stronger and confident. I can now stand up for myself" (Alicia, essay, 14/08/20).

"I have joined women circle and a Pep group now. I have joined a group called ALF. I joined because these women are phenomenal, powerful, driven, and motivated and supportive". (interview, 24/8/20). "These groups are on WhatsApp, ZOOM calls once a week. They are active whenever you need them" (QSTN, 22/08/20).

Linda signals similar sentiments:

"I am very much involved in social groups such as developmental, farming, food security, street committee in my community" (essay, 22/8/20). I am also involved in similar groups for business and social outside my community... I am proud of achieving this since I never wanted to understand people from other races, cultures and areas" (QSTN, 12/09/20).

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

The deep social, interactive, dialogic and critically reflective dimensions of the course seem to have given them power to exercise their voice, create a presence, and to grant themselves *permission* to be leaders and decision makers who can effect positive socioeconomic and cultural changes within formal and informal sectors of their communities (Malik et al., 2009; Murtaza, 2012; The Daily Maverick, 2015; Riaz & Pervaiz, 2018). Their symbolic capital has thus inevitably been enhanced in different contexts. The following extracts support this:

Linda: “I am now very confident when I am doing my proposal and going to the meetings and stand up for my organisation (QSTN, 12/9/20). I am very careful about people who undermine my organisation in these meeting, I deal with them and make sure my organisation is represented well” (interview, 21/9/20).

“I... gave a lesson via skype for... New York University in America on gardening. I will be doing a ZOOM meeting with the minister of housing soon. My confidence and opinion count now. I have the motivation of doing the best I can to assist in my community and in my personal life. I am more confident now, stronger as a woman who works in community” (Alicia, interview, 24/8/20).

“I did write an Afrikaans story book for the Inceba Trust about dinosaurs with completed illustrations done by myself. This short story (book) was distributed to all ECD centres in Klapmuts...to be used in their lessons on dinosaurs” (Lucinda, QSTN, 12/9/20).

“I... give advice to those who trust me enough to share their personal baggage” (interview, 24/9/20). “I also give input regarding my work to the rest of the group as well and most importantly, I can endure with circumstances and people’s opinions” (Maria, essay, 14/8/20).

The above is consistent with Malik et al. (2009) and Murtaza (2012) who contend that educated women can have an impact on their communities even when traditional social norms are entrenched. If anything, the transformative and social justice imperatives informing the course design, implementation, and execution, has sharpened and honed the participants’ drive and granted them symbolic capital and power to be agents of change and transformation, on personal and social levels. This is congruent with The Daily Maverick (2015) and Riaz & Pervaiz (2018) who contend that education grants women power to protect their rights (Murtaza, 2012) and encourages them to speak against social injustices. These experiences of the participants fulfil personal empowerment and social responsibility aims and objectives and are in line with RPL policy and Freire’s (1970-1, 2000) critical cultural theory.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

A theoretical and education reform policy intersection offered this study a way to understand the extent of women empowerment within the HCEAE course. This case study gave a deeper social, political, and personal perspective on women empowerment that accounted for the different geographical settings, diverse racial groups and cultures within this study. Accordingly, the data collection tools employed in this study and the sample size thereof do not prove any generalization about this theoretical and education policy intersection, but the internal consistency and conceptual coherence within these cases do lend some confidence to this intersection and the approach towards measuring the perceptions of women empowerment. This study was limited in that it mainly focused on the perceptions of the previous learners; the curriculum, and the field observations where the learners apply their empowerment, was left out. A follow up study that will encompass a bigger sample and allow for the reasonable time lapse after the intervention could add to the generalisability of this research.

6.5 Concluding Comments: Reviewing the study as a whole

This study was an attempt to contextualise the notion of women empowerment within the framework of a HCEAE course, and to anchor this enquiry on a dynamic theory-policy hybrid design. This study has demonstrated that the concept of empowerment is complex and difficult to explain due to its abstract nature, and that it is only through a deep, intense, multi-levelled process of engaging with the experiences of individuals within and beyond the learning environment that meaningful interpretations of this concept can begin to unfold.

The qualitative case study design adopted in this study, allowed the notion of women empowerment to surface in relation to the contexts in which it was used, allowing for the essence of empowerment to filter through in a narrative fashion, grounded within the phenomenological tradition. This approach showed how the lenses of dialogue, praxis, social and economic capital, allowed for the concept of empowerment to be viewed from a number of different perspectives, while maintaining focus on the impact on personhood, being and becoming.

This enquiry, although based on limited number of cases, yielded practical implications for ensuring access and success in the field of Adult Education. Given the extent of marginalisation and vulnerabilities that were revealed at the beginning of the research participants journeys at the point of access, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that access and success in HE of the women research participants in this study, did actually move them from a state of being to a state of becoming, ushering in new possibilities for engaging with themselves and the world in more affirming and meaningful ways. Women empowerment in this sense, also led to the confrontation of structural limitations conditioned by culture and tradition. This successful outcome of the HCEAE course in terms of its transformation agenda, was made possible by the adoption of a holistic approach to Adult Education, through a combination of education policy, theory, and pedagogy, that targeted the mind, body, and soul of learners. Part of this intersection of policy, theory and practice, also involved paying attention to issues of diversity amongst learners, including

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

geographic location, race, economic class, culture and gender. The attainment of empowerment gained through such intersections, leads to an enhanced sense of awareness and agency that allows individuals to assert themselves more. This is apparent in learners' associations within their social networks, where the enactment of their agency and continuity in terms of lifelong learning principles espoused within the HCEAE course, is revealed.

This study has therefore shown that the analysis of the concept of empowerment needs to be approached from multiple, overlapping perspectives, in order to develop an informed knowledge base on what this concept entails, what it is, how and where it functions, and to what effect. In this way this study showed how the approach adopted in the HCEAE course in its empowering of vulnerable women, answers the calls made for knowledge that transcends formal education boundaries and which can operate in the social realm where such knowledge has the potential to benefit people individually and socially. Adopting such a thorough approach to measuring core transformative outcomes of Adult Education provisions, creates more awareness of the structures and ideologies that need to be in place to ensure that adequate accountability by HE institutions is maintained and monitored.

While quantifiability and measurability of women's empowerment satisfies a desirable goal in terms of meeting the redress and progression function of education reform policies, it should be noted that empowerment is not a once off process, as it requires continuity and nurturing of some sort. In most of the cases education provisions anchor this continuity in the social capital outcomes, viewed in terms of the increase in the number of social networks in which the learners participate.

Ensuring that women have access to education opportunities and resources within society is widely recognized as essential to that society's growth and development. Investing in and empowering women, creates possibilities for lifting entire families, communities and countries out of poverty and magnifies economic growth, while also enhancing the wellbeing of citizens. It is therefore of paramount importance, given South Africa's history of marginalised communities, that opportunities are created for supporting and assisting vulnerable female adult candidates in the process of completing their studies.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

List of References

- Adhikari, M. (Ed.). (2009). *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Alexander, G., Van Wyk, M., Bereng, T. (2010). Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) – The case for Recognition of Prior Learning sites and knowledges in South Africa's transforming education system. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(1): 45-52.
- Aliber, M., Mokoena, R. (2002). The interaction between the land redistribution programme and the land market in South Africa: A perspective on the willing-buyer/willing-seller approach. Cape Town: Institute for Poverty Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS).
- Aycan, Z. (2006). Paternalism: Towards conceptual refinement and operationalization. In Uichol Kim, Kuo-Shu Yang & Kwang-Kuo Hwang (Eds.), *Indigenous and cultural psychology understanding people in context* (pp.445-466). New York: Springer.
- Bayat, A., and V. Mitchell. (2020). "Affective Assemblages Matter in Socially Just Pedagogies". *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, 8 (1): 57–80. 667 <https://doi.org/10.14426/cristal.v8i1.219>.
- Besley, T. (2007). Foucault, truth telling and technologies of the self in schools. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 6(1), 76-89. Available online: <file:///C:/Users/User/AppData/Local/Temp/503-Article%20Text-2138-1-10-20090623.pdf>
- Bhat, R. A. (2015). Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in India. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(10): 188-191.
- Bonneau, K. (2015). Brief 3: What is a dropout? *Purdue.edu*, available https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/s_ncfis04c03.pdf (accessed 11/10/2021)
- Boonzaier, F., Mhkize, L. (2018). Bodies out of place: black queer students negotiating identity at the University of Cape Town: <https://doi.org/10.20853/32-3-2514https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-10048c45c8> (Accessed: 09/21).
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, pp. 79–258. New York: Greenwood.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). *Reproduction in education, society, and culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bozalek, V., Biersteker, L. (2009). Exploring Power and Privilege Using Participatory Learning and Action Techniques, *Social Work Education*, 29:(5), 551-572. DOI:10.1080/02615470903193785 (accessed 26/11/2020).
- Buchler, M., Castle, J., Osman, R., Walters, S. (2007). Equity, Access and Success: adult learners in public higher education. *Review of Higher Education in South Africa*, 124-156.
- Butina, M., Campbell, S., Miller, W. (2015). Conducting Qualitative Research Introduction. *Clinical Laboratory Science*, 28(3), 186 – 189.
- Clark, N. L., Worger, W. (2004). *South Africa - The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

- Cooper, L. 2021. Integration of HCEAE course into UCT's School of Education, email correspondence, Sept.
- Cooper, L. (1998). Unpublished Application for Financial Assistance. Certificate In Adult Education, Training and Development. Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies, University of Cape Town.
- Cooper, L. (1995). Formalising the training of adult educators at university-entrance level: new learner groups, curriculum innovation and new learner roles. Conference proceedings: Annual Tertiary-based Southern African Adult Education Conference, University of Transkei, 3-6 April.
- Cooper, L. (2011). 'Activists within the Academy': The role of prior experience in adult learners' acquisition of postgraduate literacies in a post-apartheid South African university. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 61(1), 40 –56.
- Cooper, L., Ralphs, A. (2016). RPL As Specialised Pedagogy. In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as specialised pedagogy: crossing the lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Cooper, L., Ralphs, A., Harris, J. (2017). Recognition of prior learning: the tensions between its inclusive intentions and constraints on its implementation, *Studies in Continuing Education*, 39(2), 197-213, DOI: 10.1080/0158037X.2016.1273893.
- Cooper, L., Harris, J., Jones, B. (2016). RPL into postgraduate study: The tension between knowledge specialisation and social inclusion. In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as Specialised Pedagogy: Crossing the Lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 33-55.
- Cooper, L. Ralphs, A., Harris, J. (2016). 'RPL as specialised pedagogy: towards a conceptual framework'. In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as specialised pedagogy: crossing the lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 124-149.
- Cooper, L. (2016). Conceptual starting points. In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as Specialised Pedagogy: Crossing the Lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 24-32.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. 3rd ed. University of Nebraska, Lincoln. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods approaches*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.
- Cresswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage Publication, Inc.
- Croft, S. (2012). Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 33(2): 219-235.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education. An introduction to the philosophy of education* (1966 edn.) New York: Free Press.
- February, C. (2003). *What Count as useful knowledge? Perceptions of a group of adult learners in higher education*. M.Phil. dissertation, University of Cape Town.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Fohtung, V.N. (2008). An Investigation of Community Perceptions of The Socio-Economic Factors That Hinder Empowerment of Women in Belhar, unpublished Master of Development Studies, University of The Western Cape.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, Continuum.

Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Geertz, C. (1973). *Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

Gillies, R. M. (2016). Dialogic interactions in the cooperative classroom. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 76, 178-189.

Hall, R. (2003). *Farm tenure*. Cape Town: University of the Western Cape.

Haupt, J. M. (2005). *Recruitment of experience in a University Adult Education Diploma*. Thesis, University of Cape Town.

Henning, E., Van Rensburg, W., Smit, B. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Van Schaik.

Hoggan, C. (2019). *Foxes and Hedgehogs: The Value of Transformation* (and Any Other) Theory, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344619870334>.

Huis, M. A., Hansen, N., Otten, S., Lensink, R. (2017). A Three-Dimensional Model of Women's Empowerment: Implications In the Field of Microfinance and Future Directions, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 3389/fpsyg.2017.01678.

Ismail, S. (2014). "Future Directions for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – How to Incorporate Knowledge from Below into the Academy?", Paper presented to SAERA conference. Durban, August 13–15.

Ismail, S., Cooper, L. (2011). 'Resistance from the periphery?' A case study of attempts to widen access to adult learners at a South African university. In *International Perspectives in Higher Education Research*, M. Tight, and L. Thomas, (Eds) Vol 6. Emerald Press: UK.

Kabeer, N. (1999.) Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), Blackwell Publishing. <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bpl/dech/1999/00000030/00000003/art00125> (accessed 10/05/2020).

Kehler, J. (2001). Women and Poverty: The South African Experience. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 3(1), 41-53. Available: <http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol3/iss1/3>.

Kegudu, S., Malami, H.U., Gatawa, N. M. (2011). Skill Acquisition, Capacity Building And Women Economic Empowerment: A Case Study Of Women Education Center, Birnin Kebbi. *Gender & Behaviour*, 9(2), (Dec), 3961-3978.

Knowles, M. S. (1970, 1980). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*. Andragogy versus pedagogy, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall/Cambridge.

Knowles, M.S. (1984). *Andragogy in action: Applying modern principles of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

- Kolb, D. A. (1984) *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212.
- Le Roux, C. (2010). *Lecturers as students: the emotional side of adult learning*. <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC112607>
- Letseka, M., Pitsoe, V. (2014). The challenges and prospects of access to higher education at UNISA. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39, 1942-1954.
- Lindeman, E. (1921). *The Community. An introduction to the study of community leadership and organization*. New York: Association Press.
- MacKenzie, C. G., Compare, C. (1994). Black Students in “White” Universities: The character and provision of liberal higher education institutions in post-apartheid South Africa. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 24(1)
- Madgwick, A. (2016). Building Horizontal Connections. *Core Education*. Online: <http://blog.core-ed.org/blog/2016/11/building-horizontal-connections.html> (accessed 26 February, 2021).
- Malhotra, A., Schuler, S.R., & Boender, C. (2002). Women's empowerment as a variable in international development. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Malik, S., Courtney, K. (2009). Higher education and women's empowerment in Pakistan Education, *Gender and Education*, 23(1): 29–45. DOI: 10.1080/09540251003674071 (accessed 21 July 2020).
- Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study. *SAGE Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, 2, 214–253.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Introduction to qualitative research. Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Modise, K. (2020). SA's second pandemic of 2020: gender-based violence. *EWN*, 29 Dec. Available <https://ewn.co.za/2020/12/29/sa-s-second-pandemic-of-2020-gender-based-violence> (accessed 09/10/2021).
- Moodley, K., Shah, A., waBofelo, M. (2016). “RPL as ‘Radical’ Pedagogy: The Recruitment of Experience in an Alternative Education Programme.” In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as specialised pedagogy: crossing the lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Moore, N., L. (2015). In A Class of Their Own: The Bantu Education Act (1953) Revisited. Thesis submitted in Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/53445/Moore_Class_2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Murtaza, K.F. (2012). Women empowerment through higher education in Gilgit-Baltistan. *Int. J. Acad. Res. Bus. Soc. Sci.* 2(9), 343–367.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mtintso, T. (2006). UMRABULO. 50 Years of Women's Struggles. Number 26.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

- Myers, M. D. (2009). *Qualitative research in business & management*. Thousand Oak, CA: Sage.
- Natanasabapathy, P., Maathuis-Smith, S. (2018). Philosophy of being and becoming: A transformative learning approach using threshold concepts, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 51:4, 369-379, DOI: 10.1080/00131857.2018.1464439.
- Navarro, Z. (2006). In Search of Cultural Interpretation of Power. *IDS Bulletin*, 37(6), 11-22. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/8355>.
- O'Donnell, V. L., Tobbell, J. (2007) The transition of adult students to higher education: Legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice? *Adult Education Quarterly*, 57, 312-328.
- Osman, R., Castle, J. (2006). Making space for adult learners in higher education. *SAJHE*, 20 (4): 515-527.
- Papaioannou, E., Gravani, M.E. (2018) Empowering vulnerable adults through second-chance education: a case study from Cyprus, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 37(4), 435-450, DOI: 10.1080/02601370.2018.1498140.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Perez, G., London, L. (2004). Forty-five years apart - confronting the legacy of racial discrimination at the University of Cape Town. *SAMJ*, 94(9).
- Prebel, J. (2016). Engaging a 'Pedagogy of Discomfort': Emotion as Critical Inquiry in Community-Based Writing Courses. *Composition Forum*, 34, Summer.
- Ralphs, A. (2009). Specialised Pedagogy: A comparative review of RPL practices within the changing landscape of the NQF in South Africa. A Paper Presented for the SAQA Symposium at the RWL6 Conference, Roskilde University, 2009. UWC.
- Ralphs, A. (2012). "Exploring RPL: Assessment Device and/or Specialised Pedagogical Practice?" *Journal of Education*, 53, 75-96.
- Ralphs, A. (2016a). "Overview." In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as specialised pedagogy: crossing the lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Ralphs, A. (2016b). "RPL for Access to Undergraduate Study: Navigation Tools". In Cooper, L. & Ralphs, A. (eds.) *RPL as specialised pedagogy: crossing the lines*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council, 56-80.
- Riaz, S., Pervaiz, Z. (2018). The impact of women's education and employment on their empowerment: Empirical evidence from household level survey. *Qual Quant*, 52, 2855-2870. Available <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-018-0713> (accessed 12/10/20).
- Roberts, M. (1959). *Labour in the farm economy*. Johannesburg: SA Institute of Race Relations.
- Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning Empowerment: Working with women in Honduras*. Oxford: Oxfam, UK and Ireland.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/43179_2.pdf.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Sandberg, F., Andersson, P. (2011). RPL for accreditation in higher education – As a process of mutual understanding or merely lifeworld colonisation? *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36, 767–780.

South African Qualifications Authority, 2020. NQF ACT 67 of 2008. *South African Qualifications Authority*, Available <https://saqa.org.za/nqfhistory-and-objectives-full> (accessed 13/04/20).

South African Qualifications Authority, 2020. SAQA | NQF Implementation Framework 2015-2020. *South African Qualifications Authority*. Available <https://saqa.org.za/documents/guidelines> (accessed 04/04/2020).

Schabort, F., Sinnes, A., Kyle Jr, W. C. (2018) From contextual frustrations to classroom transformations: female empowerment through science education in rural South Africa, *Educational Action Research*, 26(1), 127-143, DOI: 10.1080/09650792.2017.1286996. Available <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2017.1286996>

Singh, A.M. (2011). Let the doors of learning be open to all: A case for recognition of prior learning, *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 25(4), 803–818.

Snyman, M., van den Berg, G. (2018). The Significance of the Learner Profile in Recognition of Prior Learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 68(1):24-40, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uct.ac.za/10.1177/0741713617731809>.

South African History Online. (2019). Defining culture, heritage and identity. *SAHO*, available <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/defining-culture-heritage-and-identity> (accessed 09/10/2021).

South African History Online. (2019). Apartheid Legislation 1850s-1970s. *SAHO*, available: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/apartheid-legislation-1850s-1970s> (accessed 20/12/20).

South African Qualifications Authority. (2020). What is Recognition of Prior learning? *SAQA*, Available: https://www.saqa.org.za/faq/what-recognition-priorlearning?language_content_entity=en (accessed 6/01/2021).

Statistics South Africa. (2020). P0211- Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), 2nd Quarter 2020. *Stats SA*, DOI: <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=13633> (accessed 12/02/ 2021).

Statistics South Africa. (2021). Realizing women's rights for an equal future on Women's Day. *Stats SA*, <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=14559> (accessed 08/10/2021).

Stromquist, N. P. (2015). Women's Empowerment and Education: Linking Knowledge to Transformative Action. *European Journal of Education*, 50(3), 307-324.

Taylor, P. (1993). *The Texts of Paulo Freire*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

The Daily Maverick. (2015). Open Stellenbosch: A university education in exclusion. *eNews Channel Africa*. [Http://www.enca.com/opinion/open-stellenbosch-university-education-exclusion](http://www.enca.com/opinion/open-stellenbosch-university-education-exclusion) (accessed 28/08/20).

Tight, M. (2003). *International Perspective on Higher Education Research. Access And Exclusion*. An Imprint of Elsevier Science, Amsterdam, Boston, London, New York, Paris, San Diego, San Francisco, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

UCT News. (2015). 'Transform UCT'. UCT, available <http://www.uct.ac.za/news/Transform-UCT/> (accessed 2 July 2020).

UCT. (2018). A Framework for Implementing Transformation Developed by DVC Transformation: 2018). UCT, available <https://www.uct.ac.za/main/explore-uct/transformation> (accessed 20/08/20).

UCT. (2017). Faculty of Humanities Undergraduate Handbook. UCT, Rondebosch, Cape Town.

UCT RPL. (2016). Policy on recognition of prior learning. UCT, Available online: https://www.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/328/about/policies/Policy_Recognition_Prior_Learning_2016-08.pdf (accessed 08/10/2021).

UCT CSS. (2017). Unpublished Learner Progress Report. University of Cape Town.

UCT CSS. (2018). Unpublished Learner Progress Report. University of Cape Town.

Universal Teacher. (2021). Importance of Research Design. *Universal teacher.com*, available <https://universalteacher.com/1/importance-of-research-design/> (accessed 1/10/2021).

waBofelo, M., Shah, A., Moodley, K., Cooper, L., Jones, B. (2013). Recognition of Prior Learning as "Radical Pedagogy": A case study of the Workers' College in South Africa. *McGill Journal of Education / Revue des sciences de l'éducation de McGill*, 48(3), 511–530. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1021917ar>.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zembylas, M. (2012). Pedagogies of strategic empathy: navigating through the emotional complexities of anti-racism in higher education, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 17(2), 113-125, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2011.611869.

Zembylas, M. (2015). 'Pedagogy of Discomfort' And Its Ethical Implications: The Tensions of Ethical Violence In Social Justice Education. *Ethics And Education*, 10, 163-174.

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

List of appendices

Appendix 1:

Written Essay:

Please tick your correct box:

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------|---------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Please indicate your area: | | Belhar | | Gugulethu | | Klapmuts | |
| Male: | | | Female: | | | Other | |
| What is your first language | | | | | | | |
| English | Afrikaans | IsiXhosa | Sotho | Zulu | Tswana | Xitonga | Others |
| Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |
| What is your employment status before and after completing course: tick below | | | | | | | |
| Employed | Self employed | Unemployed | Pension | Not looking for employment | Never worked | Volunteer, no stipend | Volunteer with stipend |
| Before: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |
| After: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |

1. Written essay research guiding tool: previous learners

Write down your views, perspectives or feelings of the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course that you have completed. Remember there are no right or wrong perspectives or feelings, these are unique to you. Feel free to write in the language of your choice, and you need not concern yourself with grammar or spelling. This essay will be treated with utmost confidentiality. You can write anything you feel is important to share about your participation in this course. There is no limit to what you can write about, as long as this is in relation to the course and the outcomes of this course. You can add pictures or illustrations to your writing. What is important is, do not limit yourself; share as much as possible. You have 60 days to complete this essay.

Appendix 2: In-depth questionnaire: Previous learners

Learner demographics: Please tick your correct box:

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|------------|---------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Please indicate your area: | | Belhar | | Gugulethu | | Klapmuts | |
| Male: | | | Female: | | | Other | |
| What is your first language | | | | | | | |
| English | Afrikaans | IsiXhosa | Sotho | Zulu | Tswana | Xitsonga | Others |
| Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |
| What is your employment status before and after the completing course: tick below | | | | | | | |
| Employed | Self employed | Unemployed | Pension | Not looking for employment | Never worked | Volunteer, no stipend | Volunteer with stipend |
| Before: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |
| After: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |

You have completed your studies in Higher Certificate in education in Adult Education, please share your experiences within this course

1. Tell me briefly about the way in which the course encouraged you to participate?
2. During your participation in this course, what were you encouraged to reflect on?
3. How did this reflection assist you in learning, individually and in other aspects of your life?
4. What opportunities were created to use your prior knowledge within this course, what kind of knowledge was this?
5. In which part of the course were you allowed to use your indigenous knowledge, and how did this knowledge assist you in your learning?
6. What new knowledge and skills did you gain from your participation in this course?
7. How has this knowledge influenced change in your practice, individually and other aspects of your life?
8. What kind of activities were you encouraged to do within this course? Please explain how these activities engaged you physically and mentally?
9. Tell me briefly about self-initiated/group-initiated activities that you were allowed to do? How did these activities engage your creativity?
10. Please explain how you are currently applying the new knowledge and skills gained from this course, individually, to your practice and in other aspects of your life?
11. Please share your current successes and challenges in applying your new knowledge and skills gained from the course?
12. How confident are you in applying this new knowledge and skills in your practice and other aspects of your life?
13. Please explain forms of interactions that were promoted in this course and their purpose?
14. How often were you encouraged to work as a collective in this course?
15. Since completing this course, what social groups are you participating in? Why did you join this/these group/s? How often do these exchanges occur?
16. What new knowledge are you bringing and gaining from these groups? How is this knowledge of benefit to this groups and to yourself?
17. Since completing this course, what are the financial benefits and proceeds that are directly linked to your participation in this course?
18. What has changed in your employment status since completing this course?
19. What promotions or financial rewards gained that are linked to your qualification in HCEAE?
20. During your studies, what challenges did you encounter, and how did you overcome them?

Appendix 3: In-depth Interview Questions: Previous learners

| You have recently participated and completed the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course.... | |
|---|---|
| Question | Prompts |
| 1) Describe your experience as a learner in this course | Reflection on processes of gaining access to the course Reflection on your expectations of the course Reflection on the potential benefits of the course Tell me how you came to study in this course Who paid for your studies? What values from this are you using in aspects of your life Challenges and benefits |
| 2) Describe how this course encouraged participation | Methods and strategies used Engaging prior knowledge Promoting critical reflection Use of indigenous knowledge Problem solving Challenges and benefits |
| 3) What aspects of the course have been the most important to you and in what way? | In relation to your academic life In relation to your personal life In relation to your practice In relation to your social life Challenges and benefits |
| 4) What kind of interactions were promoted within the course | In relation to individual or/and collective activities In relation to promotion of critical reflection In relation to engaging your creativity and thoughts Self initiation or group Challenges and benefits |
| 5) Describe the knowledge and skills that you gained during your studies? | Related to your practice Related to your personal life Related to your social life Challenges and benefits |
| 6) Please explain how you are using these skills and knowledge gained in? | Relation to you practice Relation to your personal life Relation to social and other aspects of your life Challenges and benefits |
| 7) What has been your highlights and challenges while studying in this course? How did you overcome the challenges? | Related to your personal life Related to your academic life Related to your practice |
| 8) What else do you want us to know about your participation in this course? | |
| 9) What have you been doing since the completion of this course? | |
| 10) Are there any other comments or suggestion about the course? | |

Appendix 4: In-depth questionnaire: Dropped out learner; DOL

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------|---------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Learner demographics: Please tick your correct box: Please indicate your area: | | Belhar | | Gugulethu | | Klapmuts | |
| Male: | | | Female: | | | Other | |
| What is your first language | | | | | | | |
| English | Afrikaans | IsiXhosa | Sotho | Zulu | Tswana | Xitonga | Others |
| Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |
| What is your employment status before and after the completing course: tick below | | | | | | | |
| Employed | Self employed | Unemployed | Pension | Not looking for employment | Never worked | Volunteer, no stipend | Volunteer with stipend |
| Before: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |
| After: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: | Tick: |

You have dropped out of your studies in Higher Certificate in education in Adult Education, please share your experiences within this course

1. Tell me briefly about the way in which the course encouraged you to participate?
2. During your participation in this course, what were you encouraged to reflect on?
3. How did this reflection assist you in learning, individually and in other aspects of your life?
4. What opportunities were created to use your prior knowledge within this course, what kind of knowledge was this?
5. In which part of the course were you allowed to use your indigenous knowledge? How did this knowledge assist you in your learning?
6. What new knowledge and skills did you gain from your participation in this course?
7. How has this knowledge influenced change in your practice, individually and other aspects of your life?
8. What kind of activities were you encouraged to do within this course? Please explain how these activities engaged you physically and your thoughts?
9. Tell me briefly about self-initiated/group-initiated activities that you were allowed to do? How did these activities engage your creativity?
10. Please explain how you are currently applying the new knowledge and skills gained from this course, individually, to your practice and in other aspects of your life?
11. Please share your current successes and challenges in applying your new knowledge and skills gained from the course?
12. How confident are you in applying this new knowledge and skills in your practice and other aspects of your life?
13. Please explain forms of interactions that were promoted in this course and their purpose?
14. How often were you encouraged to work as a collective in this course?
15. Since leaving this course, what social groups are you participating in? Why did you join this/these group/s? How often do these exchanges occur?
16. What new knowledge are you bringing and gaining from these groups? How is this knowledge of benefit to this groups and to yourself?
17. Since dropping out of this course, what are the financial benefits and proceeds that are directly linked to your participation in this course?
18. What has changed in your employment status since completing this course?
19. What promotions or financial rewards gained that are linked to your qualification in HCEAE?
20. During your studies, what challenges did you encounter, how did you overcome them?

Appendix 5:

In-depth Interview Questions: Previous learner (dropped out of the course): DOL

| You have recently participated and dropped out the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course.... | |
|--|--|
| Question | Prompts |
| 1) Describe your experience as a learner in this course | Reflection on processes of gaining access to the course Reflection on your expectations of the course Reflection on the potential benefits of the course Tell me how you came to study in this course Who paid for your studies? What values from this are using in your aspects of your life Challenges and benefits |
| 2) Describe how this course encouraged participation | Methods and strategies used Engaging prior knowledge Promoting critical reflection Use of indigenous knowledge Problem solving Challenges and benefits |
| 3) What aspects of the course have been the most important to you and in what way? | In relation to your academic life. In relation to your personal life. In relation to your practices. In relation to your social life. Challenges and benefits |
| 4) What kind of interactions were promoted within the course | In relation to individual or/and collective activities. In relation to promotion of critical reflection. In relation to engaging your creativity and thoughts. Self initiation or group. Challenges and benefits. |
| 5) Describe the knowledge and skills that you gained during your studies? | Related to your practice. Related to your personal life. Related to your social life. Challenges and benefits. |
| 6) Please explain how you are using these skills and knowledge gained in? | Relation to you practice Relation to your personal life Relation to social and other aspects of your life Challenges and benefits |
| 7) What has been your highlights and challenges while studying in this course? How did you overcome the challenges? | Related to your personal life Related to your academic life Related to your practice |
| 8) What lead you to drop out of this course | Personal, academic, social Support showed during this phase Do you think you made the right decisions dropping out? Are there any chances of continuing your studies in the near future? |
| 9) What else do you want us to know about your participation in this course 10) What have you been doing since dropping out of this course? | |

Appendix: 6
Lecturer Interview Questions

| You are a lecturer of the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course, | |
|--|---|
| Question | Prompt |
| 1. Please tell me about your experience as a lecturer in this course | In relation to aspects of your responsibilities within the course (coursework design, evaluation) In relation to your views, perceptions of this course In relation to accessing learners in this course (race, gender, geographic areas) Experiences brought by these learners within the course Challenges and gains |
| 2. Please tell us about how this course promotes participation? | In relation to methods and strategies used In relation to use of prior indigenous knowledge In relation to support provided in this course In relation to embracing diversity of learners Challenges and gains |
| 3. Please share your views on the opportunities created for critical reflection in the course? | What are the learners encouraged to reflect on (self, social, practice) Purpose of critical reflection Benefits on self, practice, academic, social Situatenedness and relevance to self, social and academic life In relation to extent: (course work, assessment, class) Challenges and gains |
| 4. What opportunities are created for active participation within the course? | Nature of these activities In relation to engaging learners physically and in thoughts In relation to problem solved Flexibility and promoting self initiation/group-initiation In relation to collective or individual Engaging learners' creativity in actions Challenges and gains |
| 5. What values are promoted within the course? | Influence on self, practice, and academic life To what extent do learners show a grasp and embrace these values? What informs the values promoted in this course? How had this course contributed to building self-confidence and confidence in practice? |
| 6. What aspect of the course do different learners struggle with? | Compare your learner's struggles (race, language, coursework) What support is provided for struggling learners? To those that experience less struggles, what in your view enables their learning? |
| 7. What effects do these struggles have on their success and retention? | Do you have people dropping out of the course? What reasons do they cite? What is the pass or failure rate in this course? What in your view are the reason why learners fail their examinations? What support is given to the learners who do not pass their examinations? How likely do failed learners return to complete their studies? |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>8. What in your view are the economic benefits of participating in this course?</p> | <p>How successful are the learners who complete this course in finding employment? In relation to promotion and other financial recognition at work? Is there any support provided for employment opportunities?</p> |
| <p>9. What are some of the challenges you experience in your role as a lecturer in this course? 10. What else can you share about this course? 11. Please share the redress function that this course embrace. 12. How successful is this course in achieving its aims and objectives? 13. What informs the aims and objectives of this course? 14. What gets evaluated in this course and how accessible are the evaluation tools? 15. How likely are the learners who complete this course able to progress academically?</p> | |

Appendix: 7

Questions for interviews: External Examiner

| You are an external examiner of the Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education, | |
|--|---|
| Question | Prompt |
| 1. Please share your experience in this course | In relation to the time in this role within the course In relation to your role as an examiner In relation to your aspects of involvement in this course (interactions) In relation to your views, perceptions of the course Challenges and benefits |
| 2. Please share how accessible are the evaluation tools to the learners | In relation to language used In relation to exercise of choice/ flexibility of tools In relation to engaging prior indigenous knowledge of learners In relation to promoting creativity |
| 3. Please share your views on the opportunities created for critical reflection in the evaluation? | In relation to what the actual reflection (self, social, practice) In relation to relevance of reflections to self, social, practice In relation to kinds of problem solved In relation to benefits self, practice, academic, social |
| 4. Please explain the level of understanding of theory and discourse displayed by the learners in assessment? | In relation to the grasp of concepts In relation to application of theory In relation to values are promoted in this regard In relation to different racial groups, (please compare racial groups) |
| 5. What aspects of the course are emphasized in the evaluation? | In relation to knowledges (academic knowledge and Indigenous /Prior learning) In relation to critical Which aspects of the course do learners struggle with? In relation to what is evaluated in this course Which aspects do they experience less difficulties? Challenges and benefits |
| 6. What values are promoted within the course? | To what extent do learners show a grasp of these values in evaluations? What is this of benefit self, social and other aspects of learners' lives |
| 7. What is the pass or failure rate in this course? | In relation to reason for throughput/ failing their examinations? In relation to support is given to the learners who do not pass their examinations? |
| 8. What in your experience is missing in this course with regards to what is evaluated? 9. What are your other contributions to this course with regards to your input in evaluation tools? 10. What else do you want to share about your involvement in this course | |

Empowering minds, body and soul: An evaluative case-study of the perceptions of the extent of women empowerment within a Higher Certificate in Education in Adult Education course at UCT.

Appendix: 8

Diagramme of Coding Process

