



Inclusion of queer curricula in language education: A transformative teaching and learning framework

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Abstract

Research has shown that South Africa is a queerphobic country where heterosexual citizens either reject or merely tolerate queer individuals whose gender identity or sexual orientation differs from the heteronormative standard. Against this background, the purpose of the present study is to argue that a queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework for the language classroom can be used to address queer social injustices and create awareness of gender identities and sexual orientations. The research design, methodology, and methods employed were a qualitative case study design within a transformative paradigm, purposive sampling and questionnaires for data generation, and content analysis as a data analysis strategy. Responses elucidated the perceptions and preparedness of preservice teachers and language lecturers regarding the teaching of queer texts. Factors hindering teachers' willingness to teach queer texts are unpreparedness and limitations about personal values and beliefs. The framework suggested is based on Mezirow's "perspective transformation" and also provides an outline of a queer curriculum with the incorporation of the Backward design to lesson planning.

Keywords: queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework, queer curricula, language education, gender identities, sexual orientations

1. Introduction

Research shows that South Africans are generally queerphobic (Author X, 2020). Queer¹ South Africans have had negative experiences of abuse, violence, prejudice and discrimination, murder, morality and religion, the fear of coming out, the role of love, attitudes, marriage and children, the role of education, the education system, the school environment, and constitutional protections in heteronormative societies (Abaver & Cishe, 2018; Love Not Hate, 2016; Nell & Shapiro, 2011; Ngidi et al., 2020; The Other Foundation, 2016; Author X, 2020). Accordingly, there is a reason for concern given the scope of these detrimental factors that enable the marginalisation, victimisation, and murder of queer South Africans.

According to a study completed in the United States of America (USA), some homes, workplaces, medical facilities, and places of worship are not welcoming of queer identities and orientations (Moorhead, 2018). However, Moorhead (2018) asks the following question: “What about the classroom?” Denying queer-social concerns in the classroom can have the following results: 1) the curriculum ignores the reality of queer individuals in daily life and, 2) queer people are also deprived of an identity perspective. Another potential outcome is the lack of exposure, engagement, experiences, and understanding of queer individuals and related topics as part of everyday life for non-queer individuals. To mitigate such ignorance, the classroom should be a place where learners² are introduced to the possibilities of different gender identities³ and sexual orientations⁴ rather than a space where queer education and, implicitly, queer individuals are excluded. To ensure inclusive classrooms at secondary school level, the Departments of Language Education at tertiary level should be taken into consideration, first, as future service teachers⁵ are trained and educated in the areas of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, technological and pedagogical content knowledge.

Accordingly, our goal is to design a transformative teaching and learning framework that will assist tertiary educational institutions to adopt queer-inclusive curricula that are centred around queer literature. The primary research question for this paper is: What would a transformative teaching and learning framework entail for the inclusion of queer curricula? The secondary research question is: What opinions do preservice teachers and language lecturers have about queer individuals and how prepared do preservice teachers and language lecturers feel about teaching queer texts? The ultimate goal is to alter the way that language lecturers and in-service teachers think about teaching and learning queer curricula to counteract queerphobia and create a more accepting atmosphere for queer individuals.

¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and additional sexual orientations or gender identities (LGBTI+) that deviate from being “heterosexual” is referred to as “queer”, an umbrella term, in this study (Author X, 2021).

² In this study, when referring to “learners”, the context is secondary education; when referring to “students”, the context is tertiary education.

³ Gender identity is an individual’s firmly held, innate feeling of being either female, male, neither, both, or fluid. Since gender identity is an internal experience, it is not always apparent to others. It can evolve and alter during an individual’s life and does not always match the sex given to them at birth. Examples of gender identities are: cisgender, non-binary/genderqueer, agender, bigender, transgender, etc. (Ervin et al., 2023).

⁴ Sexual orientation is a multi-faceted notion that characterises an individual’s sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction. It is not the same as an individual’s gender identity. Examples of sexual orientations are: heterosexual/straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual/multisexual, pansexual, etc. (Ervin et al., 2023).

⁵ In this study, when referring to “service teachers”, the context is secondary education; when referring to “language lecturers”, the context is tertiary education.

Gauging perceptions of teachers about teaching queer texts can influence how they approach inclusion and if misconceptions or discomfort is felt, these can be addressed. Mezirow's "perspective transformation" is relevant when change is one's goal.

We provide a critical analysis and summary of existing scholarly literature on Mezirow's "perspective transformation" in the next section.

2. Mezirow's "perspective transformation"

According to Fisher-Yoshida et al. (2009), "transformative learning" and "education" are not novel issues. From many indigenous cultures' rites of passage to the freedom schools of the civil rights movement, and feminist consciousness-raising groups, the purposeful use of teaching and learning experiences has existed in many forms throughout history to bring about profound transformation in human behaviour and consciousness. Neal (2018) asserts that actions leading to change in academic settings are commonly referred to as transformative teaching and learning.

"Perspective transformation" is defined as "the process of becoming critically aware of how [individuals] perceive, understand, and feel about [their] world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, permeable, and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (Mezirow, 1990:1; Mezirow, 2009) – individuals modify their assumed frames of reference after having received (inaccurate) information. One example is the way a sizable portion of devout heterosexual individuals negatively see queer individuals and, later, learn that queer individuals are more than just two individuals having intimate relationships with each other. Hoggan et al. (2017:50–51) describe this critical inquiry as "continuity".

"Continuity" refers to experience and the value of drawing lessons from it, since individuals' viewpoints are shaped by their prior interactions in various social contexts. Viewpoints make it clearer how one interprets one's present, past, and future. This "continuity" includes the interaction of events from the present, past, and future and as a result of ongoing interpretations and experiences of life. Nonetheless, the researchers do point out that when someone finds it difficult to frame relevant viewpoints on their current experiences in light of their previous ones, it might lead to a disorienting dilemma or crisis. Personal and professional crises or distorting difficulties might be brought on by circumstances like divorce, a life-threatening illness, a death in the family, losing or quitting one's job, among others (Hoggan et al., 2017:48). Experiences of reassessing the nature of reality and self-identity, as well as making substantial changes to one's way of life, are considered transcendent or mystical crises. In certain situations, the constant flow of past, present, and future experiences causes a brief interruption. The meaningful perspective eventually gives way to a brief disruption in one area of one's life, even though it does not necessarily collapse as a whole. It is, therefore, imperative to address this setback rather than ignore it.

According to Mezirow (2012), "transformation theory" centres on how individuals learn to negotiate and act upon their own sentiments, values, goals, and meanings instead of those they have blindly adopted from parents, guardians, religious institutions, society, and other sources. In this study, this negotiation entails challenging erroneous or inadequate perceptions of gender identities and sexual orientations. Critical questioning aids individuals in making more logical decisions that benefit society. According to Vescio et al. (2009), honest communication in a safe environment fosters a process of critical reflection that leads to change. Mezirow's "perspective transformation", therefore, provides teaching and learning

opportunities that are learner- or student-centred, participatory, interactive, and presented in the context of the learners' or students' lives to address the environment for change. Whitney (2009:146) agrees that "perspective transformation" is a real advancement as opposed to merely adding new skills or knowledge to an already-existing conceptual framework. Transformative teaching and learning not only forges new ways to generate meaning, as with any learning experience, but also uses new experiences to accomplish this.

However, Mezirow (2012) cautions that transformative teaching and learning can lead to risky emotional experiences in which one must become conscious of the presumption that underlies one's ideas as well as the feelings that validate one's emotional response to the need for change. This is particularly valid when subjective reframing – a mental shift – is involved. When teaching and learning involve language and culturally specific social behaviours, the historical knowledge power networks that underpin it may help and impede service teachers, language lecturers, learners, and students in their comprehension. To facilitate more advanced self-directed learning, the learner or student should critically examine the assumptions made by historical networks and embedded in the ideologies that support them. Therefore, care should be taken in how this emotional experience is handled – it should be a process in which introspection is crucial and should not be imposed on anyone hastily.

Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation is still, in the words of Hoggan et al. (2017:49), the "most robust theoretical elucidation of learning in the whole corpus of literature concerned with transformative learning". Gass (2012:13) explains that to alter the sustainability, well-being, and performance of individuals who work toward a more sustainable and equitable environment, 1) rage and fear must be replaced with a positive vision and hope, 2) activity and inefficiency must be replaced with results and controlled performance, 3) sporadic actions with systemic change, and 4) exhaustion with sustained activism. To bring about social, economic, political, and spiritual changes necessary for an equitable society and a healthy environment, collaboration with a wide range of organisations is required. This involves a vision of social change in which differences are respected, individuals are valued, and available resources are used effectively.

In the next section, we identify and discuss the research design, methodology, and methods that were employed in this study.

3. Research design, methodology, and methods

3.1 Qualitative case-study research

According to Yin (2009), qualitative case-study research centres around a "case" that necessitates an empirical investigation into a current real-world context phenomenon, particularly in situations when it is difficult to draw clear distinctions between a context and a phenomenon. Given the title of this study, "Inclusion of queer curricula in language education: A transformative teaching and learning framework", the School for Language Education (SLE) of the North-West University (NWU) in South Africa is the bounded case. Through the inclusion of queer curricula and the framework needed to teach queer texts to language lecturers and preservice teachers (both queer and non-queer), the real-world context phenomenon is transforming the SLE curriculum at NWU.

3.2 Data generation

3.2.1 Purposive sampling

According to Maree and Pietersen (2021), purposive sampling is applied in particular circumstances where the sample is directed toward a particular goal. The following criteria were specified for each of the two samples:

- Sample 1: Fourth-year Senior and FET Phase B.Ed. preservice teachers of the NWU's SLE; and
- Sample 2: Language lecturers of the NWU's SLE who teach either Afrikaans, English, Setswana, or Sesotho for Education⁶.

There are four year groups in the NWU's SLE. The students are introduced to the Backward design only in their second year and still have limited experience in lesson planning. The rationale for Sample 1 was that fourth-year students had gained three years' experience regarding overall lesson planning in language education with a particular focus on the Backward design.

South Africa has twelve official languages, but Afrikaans, English, Setswana, and Sesotho are the only languages available as major subjects for teaching and learning in the B.Ed. Senior and FET Phase at the NWU – these four languages are also relevant to Sample 1. Accordingly, the rationale for Sample 2 was that the language lecturers of the NWU's SLE had experience in teaching the Backward design to their students from their second year onwards.

Preservice teachers responded to an advertisement placed on the university's Learning Management System (LMS). For language lecturers, an independent person distributed the advertisement via email. Fifteen responses were received and the recruitment method did not deliberately seek to determine a balance between queer and non-queer individuals. The sample size for this study was small and there was an absence of participants who identified as transgender, non-binary, gender-fluid, or other gender identities. Still, there was representation from diverse individuals who provided rich data to be analysed. Though the participants were not asked to provide their names (due to anonymity), their age, race, and sexual orientation or gender identity were asked in order to write a case for the NWU.

The SLE participants ranged from twenty to sixty years of age. While a large number of the participants identified as heterosexual (i.e., Charlie, Dakota, Tatum, René, Jordan, Quinn, Jackey, and Evan), some homosexual participants (i.e., Bellamy and Jessie), a bisexual participant (i.e., Kai), and two straight-acting participants (i.e., River and Blake) also answered the questionnaires in question – two participants (i.e., Hunter and Spencer) did not identify their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, there are limited statistics on the number of queer individuals in South Africa – The Other Foundation (2016:3) states that “In South Africa, over half a million [of 56 million – approximately 1%] adult women and men, across all population groups, living in both rural and urban areas, and across all age groups identified themselves as homosexual, bisexual, or gender non-conforming”. Even though South Africa is a predominantly heterosexual country, there was a small discrepancy – queer (47%) and non-queer (33%) – between the two groups, allowing a balance in sexual orientation.

⁶ The NWU offers Afrikaans, English, Setswana, and Sesotho at Home Language level as majors for the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase in the B.Ed. programme.

3.2.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were the second source of data generation for this study, and they were created using Google Forms:

- Questionnaire 1 was used to better understand the participants' backgrounds in terms of spiritual orientation, identities, social, cultural, and historical experiences and expectations, the availability of various resources, daily discourse, knowledge and research, perception, purpose, and an awareness of queer individuals. With the information gathered from Questionnaire 1, we were able to gather information about queer individuals and curricula, present a case for the SLE of the NWU, and ascertain preservice teachers' and language lecturers' opinions regarding the inclusion and teaching of queer texts. Figure 1 illustrates some of the questions posed to the participants in Questionnaire 1:

Figure 1: Example questions from Questionnaire 1

How have you been exposed in some way or another to queer individuals? Please take note that you may select more than one of the given options. Should an option not be listed below, please select "other" and state how you were exposed to the queer individual or character in question. Should you have had no exposure to queer individuals, please select "other" and state, "No".

- ☐ Family member
- ☐ Teacher/Lecturer
- ☐ Colleague
- ☐ Partner
- ☐ Novel
- ☐ Movie
- ☐ Other:

Do you get confused with the terms and definitions that are associated with gender identities? Please defend your answer in "other".

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other:

What prior knowledge do you have of queer individuals? In other words, what do you know of queer individuals with regard to their lifestyles, health and religion.

Your answer

Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

- Questionnaire 2 was used to gather information about the participants' perspectives and to understand the meaning structures and practices within their existing field of knowledge. We provided two electronic copies of lesson plans⁷, based on two texts with queer themes, that address queer-social concerns. The purpose of these lesson plans was to introduce participants to queer-social issues and solicit their feedback on particular aspects of the themes in question. In exchange, the participants received questions to help direct their thinking, discussion, and recollection. Questionnaire 2 clarified how equipped preservice teachers and language lecturers felt to teach queer texts. Figure 2 illustrates some of the questions posed to the participants in Questionnaire 2:

Figure 2: Example questions from Questionnaire 2

Comment on the SMART Tasks of Lesson A and/or Lesson B. For example, could the task(s) meet their outcome(s), are they too difficult or too easy, what would you add, what would you change, what else needs to be taken into consideration?

Your answer

Comment on the Teaching Strategies and Learning Activities of Lesson A and/or Lesson B. For example, is there alignment between the strategies and activities; are there enough scaffolding activities that lead to the SMART Task(s); do the lessons provide enough information [annexure(s)] in order for a teacher or lecturer to present the lesson(s); what should be added to or changed in the activities?

Your answer

Comment on the Assessment of Lesson A and/or Lesson B. For example, are the assessments functional and sensible; do the rubrics have detailed criteria; what can be added to or removed from the rubrics?

Your answer

Comment on the Resources of Lesson A and/or Lesson B. For example, are there enough resources; what can be added or changed; in the scenario that a language teacher does not have the necessary resources to present the lessons, what solutions could be provided to the teacher to still meet the outcomes of the lessons, etc.?

Your answer

Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

⁷ Due to the scope of this study, discussions regarding the lesson plans were not included.

Regarding ethics and ethical considerations⁸, there was no sharing of personal information. Every question was optional and participants were free to withhold information if they so desired. The questionnaires were designed to give participants the privacy and comfort to disclose personal information without the pressure of, for example, being in the physical presence of the researcher or other participants during an interview or focus group.

3.3 Content analysis as a data analysis strategy

The questionnaires were analysed using content analysis. Nieuwenhuis (2021) explains that content analysis is a helpful strategy for describing and locating individuals, activities, locations, circumstances, and events that might be significant about the selected topic. Figure 3 illustrates an example of cross-case comparison that took place through colour-coding:

Figure 3: Example of cross-case comparison

How can one learn from past events of discrimination against gender identities?							
Bellamy	René	Spencer	Blake	River	Tatum	Dakota	Charlie
"To realise why incrimination happened, to acknowledge and create a sensitivity to prevent this from happening again ."	"The only one I would say is the discrimination against women ."	" Don't judge ."	" Learning about gender- neutralized roles within the society might negate discrimination ."	" Reading about the past and how people treated queers ."	"One can consider the devastating effects of such discrimination (such as suicide). One can still be focused on treating all people respectfully . Not agreeing with someone's views or not celebrating something that does not align with one's	"It is not fair to discriminate ."	"By using it as a teaching moment . I always go back to Jane Elliott's experiment about the race of blue and brown eyes. She used people's eye colour to demonstrate how discrimination works. It is the same with the queer community. If

Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

For example, Bellamy was the only participant who mentioned that sensitivity needed to be created to prevent queer discrimination from happening again – thus, the colour red only featured one time here. Blake, River, and Charlie, as another example, mentioned that teaching moments of gender-neutralised norms and the past were important – this connection was highlighted in turquoise.

We provide the results and a discussion thereof in the following section.

⁸ Ethical clearance was granted by NWU-ELMENTEN-REC, with ethics number NWU-01053-21-A2, and gatekeeper permission by NWU-RDGC, with reference number NWU-GK-21-081. Informed consent, as was explained on the Google Form, was given by the participants when they accepted to complete the form.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 What opinions do preservice teachers and language lecturers have about queer individuals and how prepared do preservice teachers and language lecturers feel about teaching queer texts?

4.1.1 Queer terminology

Many of the participants admitted to being puzzled by the terms related to gender identities and sexual orientations. One participant (Kai) said that this was “sometimes” the case. It was to be expected that a portion of the participants who were not perplexed by the terminology belonged to the queer community. However, since Charlie, a heterosexual individual, stated that they were not puzzled, it cannot be assumed that all heterosexual individuals were perplexed and all queer individuals were not. In contrast, Kai – a queer individual – did occasionally experience confusion. Nevertheless, many of the participants who experienced confusion were heterosexual, as queer individuals did not always have a significant or any role in their lives.

4.1.2 Queer knowledge

Only two participants – Kai and Bellamy – indicated that they had very limited knowledge about queer individuals. Charlie’s understanding initially appeared to be “limited”; however, based on their answers to the questionnaires, their knowledge of queer individuals can also be deemed to be good. While several participants have minimal knowledge, Jessie and Blake appear to have less. These responses indicated that many participants lacked sufficient knowledge or awareness of queer individuals. Dakota claimed to be “well-informed” about queer individuals, but this should be taken with some scepticism since they admitted to being misled by queer terminology. It is still noteworthy that the participants who possessed queer knowledge (in whatever form) belonged to the queer community; conversely, the participants with limited knowledge were heterosexual individuals. Thus, many of the participants were not queer literate. Though they might not have included all their knowledge on gender identities or sexual orientation and queer literature in the questionnaires, there was always a chance that the participants were more queer literate than we thought.

4.1.3 Collaboration

Many of the participants expressed their belief that service teachers, language lecturers, learners, and students could collaborate to create curricula that are inclusive of queer individuals and support a framework for transformative teaching and learning.

4.1.4 Perceptions of queer individuals

All the participants have encountered queer individuals, with either favourable, neutral, or unfavourable impressions of them. Most participants expressed acceptance or celebration of queer individuals in their personal opinions:

Table 1: Personal opinions of the participants that reflect acceptance or celebration

Participant	Response
Charlie	"...they are no different than any other person that I meet. It really makes no difference in the world who you love. Who you are as a person is important; not who you love. I have no problem with any queer individuals."
Hunter	"People are the same; I see no difference."
Jordan	"They are honest and fun to be around."
River	"They have a tough time. Some people act intolerably towards people who are queer. And this can come from anywhere in the person's external environment. I accept everyone because even though my religion has standards of what is right and wrong, I cannot go around executing judgement on others."
Quinn	Post my interaction with some of the queer individuals, my stereotypical views are gradually changing, although their socialisation and roles within society still perplex me. I have accepted the fact that they are human beings with different phenotypical orientation and socialisation within the society."
Jackey	"I believe that they are normal people and should be treated as such. I have gay family members and have always had gay friends. I also encourage people to be who they are."
Spencer	"We are the rainbow nation after all."
Kai	"I believe that queer individuals are marginalised within many societies, including South Africa. We do, however, contribute to improving society whether people realise that or not. I am grateful to have friends who support the LGBTQIA+ community and make an effort to learn more about it and the aggressions we face."
Bellamy	"We are all equal humans with different preferences and should be regarded and respected as such."
Jessie	"I [...] feel that all love should be accepted regardless of gender and race. My sexuality is part of who I am as well as my religion."

Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

Considering the responses of the participants, "acceptance" or "celebration" features clearly since there should be common humanity between queer- and non-queer individuals – one's gender identity or sexual orientation should not define who one is. Though religion remains a key element in the participants' lives, perspectives are changing, recognition is given, and support is provided. Thus, the responses reflect a spectrum of perspectives ranging from evolving understandings to unreserved acceptance. Though queer individuals face challenges, there is a notable awareness of willingness to embrace change and a call for respect, equality, and inclusivity in societal and personal contexts.

Due to their neutral or negative points of view, the following participant had a tolerant viewpoint that leaned more toward rejection:

Table 2: Personal opinions of the participants that reflect tolerance but lean towards rejection

Participant	Response
Dakota	"It is their choice, but not something that I personally agree with."
Tatum	"I am not bothered by queerism if I am not directly confronted with it in a particular situation, but I do feel uncomfortable in situations where I am expected to show a specific reaction towards queerism." [...] "[I] should not disagree with queerism, whereas I actually do, from a religious standpoint)."
Evan	"I don't mind their choices. They are just normal people who live differently than I do. Due to my religion, I don't think it is right, but I won't judge these individuals or treat them differently."

Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

Reluctant tolerance and discomfort with expectations do emanate from these participants' responses. There is a conditional tolerance, that is shaped by religious beliefs and values,

towards queer individuals. Even though they do not accept or celebrate queer individuals, there is no active discrimination or prejudice.

René, though, disapproved of queer individuals, pointing to possible queerphobia:

Table 3: *Personal opinions of the participants that reflect rejection*

Participant	Response
René	“I will interact, work with and be friends with 'queer individuals'. However, I do not agree with this lifestyle choice. I feel frustrated with the fact that the rest of the world wants to force me to change my opinion to say that queer individuals' lifestyle is correct. To me, it is not.”

Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

René shows limited tolerance for queer individuals and has definite boundaries, due to their personal disagreement, regarding interacting with queer individuals. They do experience conflict between societal pressure and personal beliefs.

4.1.5 Conflict

Additionally, many of the participants said they could or would have internal conflict over incorporating queer curricula. These conflicts would mostly centre on issues related to fear, religion, personal convictions, conflict teaching, unfriendly surroundings, conservative political parties, and opposition from learners or students. When teaching queer curricula, many participants mentioned potential negotiations they would need to consider. Religion, belief systems and values, indoctrination and dogma, comprehension, discomfort, teaching philosophies, cooperative teaching and learning, discrimination and contempt, conservative parties, and cultural ideologies would be at the centre of these. Additionally, several participants mentioned many factors that impact, hinder, or limit the incorporation of queer curricula. These factors included parental diversity, religion, prejudice, social groupings, personal beliefs, political affiliations, schools, incompetence, and ignorance.

4.1.6 Inclusion of queer topics

Tatum and Kai addressed queer issues in some way, but Charlie, Quinn, and Bellamy were the only ones who actively included queer topics in their teaching and learning. René, Dakota, Spencer, Jackey, and River did not address queer-themed subjects in their teaching and learning. Just a small percentage of respondents said they thought they knew enough to teach a curriculum that is inclusive of queer learners or students.

4.1.7 Prejudice towards queer individuals

Remarkably, every participant – aside from René – had observed prejudice towards individuals who identify as queer. Furthermore, René was clear in stating the following: “The only one I would say is the discrimination against women” (Author X, 2023). Considering René’s response, Violence Against Women, which specifically focuses on violence against girls and women, is the only category within Gender-Based Violence, which also includes violence against queer individuals, that they deem as a valid form of discrimination.

4.1.8 Queer-social challenges

While many participants believed that a queer-inclusive curriculum might address queer-social challenges in today’s culture, René, Dakota, Hunter, Quinn, and Blake disagreed, while Tatum was unsure. Numerous participants suggested that service teachers, language lecturers, learners, and students might all play a part in the creation and execution of queer curricula in educational institutions.

4.1.9 Willingness to teach queer curricula

Charlie, River, Jackey, Spencer, Kai, and Bellamy were among the participants who said they would be open to teaching a queer curriculum in the classroom. Due to fear, internal conflicts, influences, negotiations, limitations, and obstacles, a few participants – Tatum, Dakota, Quinn, and René – were unwilling to commit to teaching queer literature in classrooms.

4.1.10 Past experiences

The participants believed that lessons about discrimination may be drawn from the past. Despite this, many of them said they never studied queer literature or never had conversations about queer individuals or characters; only Charlie and Tatum reported having read literature from a queer perspective.

4.1.11 Queer-themed literature

All the participants expressed the belief that literature may serve as a tool to help service teachers, language lecturers, learners, and students get more familiar with queer individuals. All of them, except René, thought that a framework for transformative teaching and learning might be used to include the development of critical thinking about queer-social concerns.

Some participants felt sufficiently at ease and knowledgeable enough about queer issues to be able to teach and learn about them, based on the information that was given. However, training will be necessary for many of the participants – many of whom are heterosexual – who were willing to teach literature with queer themes. This was the case even though some of the participants managed to avoid being misled by queer jargon or had very few external or moral barriers when it came to teaching and learning. Though, undoubtedly, these barriers hindered the participants' ability to teach and learn about queer individuals.

If these hurdles could be removed without affecting the participants' fundamental beliefs and values, the teaching and learning of queer-themed literature might not be as difficult as they had previously suggested.

4.2 What would a transformative teaching and learning framework entail when considering the inclusion of queer curricula?

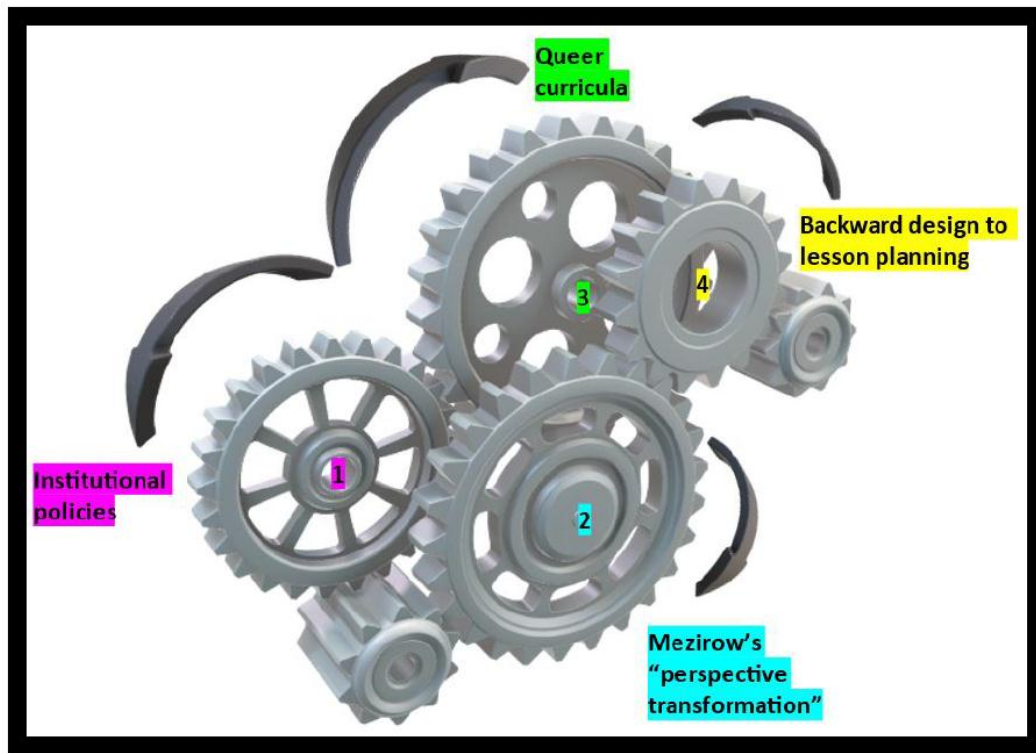
A thorough analysis of the questionnaires – and additional academic sources – yielded valuable insights for the design of a transformative teaching and learning framework that incorporates queer curricula into the language programmes of educational institutions.

A cogwheel is used as an analogy for the framework we created for this study's inclusion of queer curricula in language education. Considering the data presented, examined, and debated together with further research, we suggest four cogs in a cogwheel for a queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework. A cogwheel is constructed from several toothed wheels that mesh while it rotates; if one of the cogs fails to function or mesh properly, the cogwheel is defective. Thus, the cogs must work in tandem for transformative teaching and learning to occur:

- Cog 1: Institutional policies;
- Cog 2: Mezirow's "perspective transformation";
- Cog 3: Queer curricula; and
- Cog 4: Backward design to lesson planning.

4.2.1 Queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework

Figure 4: Queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework



Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

The role of students and teachers⁹, tertiary institutions or secondary schools, modules and the current language curricula are represented by the smaller, unlabelled cog in the bottom-left corner.

Following, the framework cannot be considered for implementation unless potential institutional policies that speak to queer individuals are taken into consideration, as indicated by the first bigger cog in purple, labelled 1. This cog was inspired by the case that was written for the NWU that language lecturers were allowed to teach their students queer curricula.

The second larger cog – blue (2) – refers to Mezirow's "perspective transformation" as an opportunity to persuade people to embrace rather than reject queer curricula. Rejective (i.e., René) or tolerable (i.e., Dakota, Tatum, and Evan) points of view can likewise be changed to acceptance or celebration (i.e., Charlie, Hunter, Jordan, River, Quinn, Jackey, Spencer, Kai, Bellamy, and Jessie). This cog aligns with the participants who expressed that service teachers, language lecturers, learners, and students could collaborate to design and include queer-inclusive curricula.

The third and largest cog in green (3) speaks to the queer curricula that need to be identified, developed, and taught in language classrooms. This cog shows the importance of the content that needs to be developed as many of the participants expressed they had limited knowledge of queer terminology, topics, social challenges, and literature.

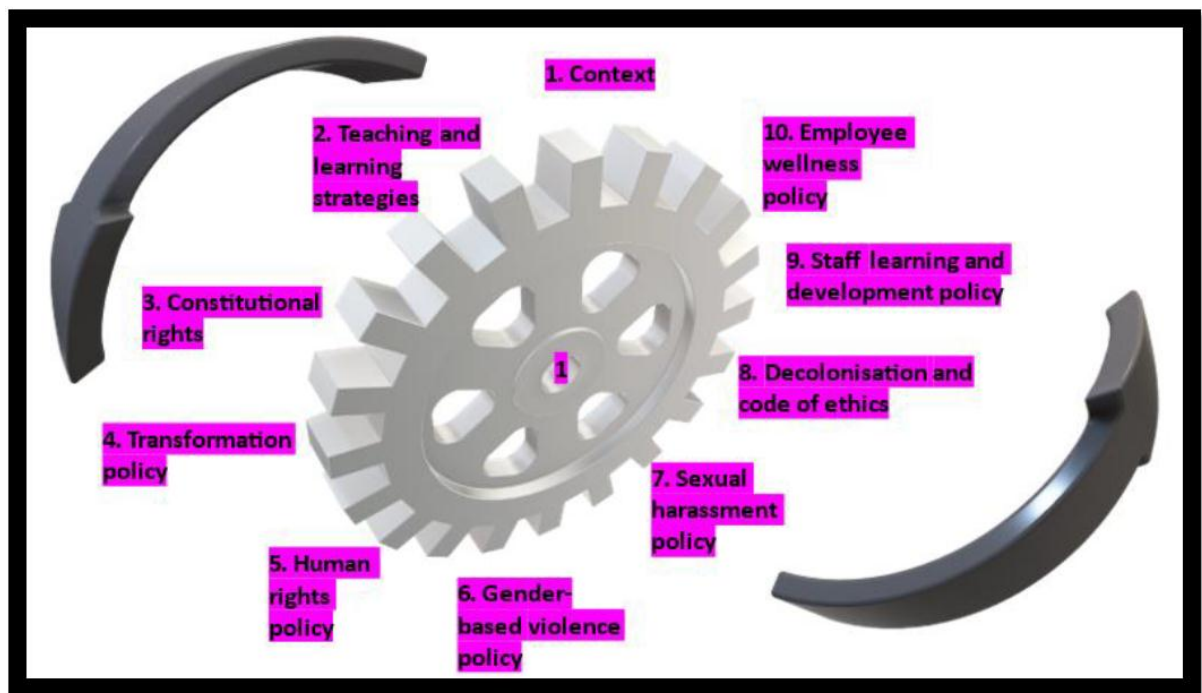
⁹ It should be noted that for the rest of this section, to aid in reading, we only refer to "students" and "lecturers", and not "service teachers", "language lecturers", "learners", and "students".

Lastly, to create successful language sessions with a queer theme, teachers can implement the backward design to lesson planning, which is represented by the second-to-last cog in yellow (4). This cog was based on two example lessons, that were based on the Backward design, the participants had to analyse and comment on. The preservice teachers and language lecturers of the NWU's SLE had experience either teaching and/or learning about the Backward design and improved the lessons accordingly¹.

The cogwheel's smaller, unlabelled cog in the upper-right corner represents the planned lessons with a queer theme, along with any reflection, adjustments, critiques, and other elements that will be implemented after the completion of the lessons.

4.2.2 Institutional policies

Figure 5: Possible official documents of an educational institution



Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

After analysing the official documents listed in Figure 5, it was decided whether it was feasible and appropriate for the NWU to include queer-themed literature or not. It was also possible to decide on policies about transformation and protection for lecturers who were expected to instruct their students in queer curricula.

Therefore, we advise any lecturer who wants to introduce queer-inclusive curricula to, firstly, analyse their context and evaluate whether it is permissible to do so. When a tertiary institution (or secondary school) promotes social justice, the lecturer should consider the teaching and learning methods and strategies used by that educational institution and determine how these strategies may support them. It is imperative to consider the policies that are in place to safeguard all individuals involved in the inclusion process. Lecturers should also identify relevant opportunities to enhance their teaching and learning, as well as programmes and resources that may be available to ensure staff well-being for those teaching queer curricula.

¹ Due to the scope of this⁰paper, the example lessons and the participants' comments were not included.

In a situation where queer curricula are not taken into consideration, the lecturer can either enquire why the marginalised group is excluded or take the initiative to start the conversation about queer curricula.

4.2.3 Mezirow's "perspective transformation"

Figure 6: Mezirow's ten steps to "perspective transformation"



Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

Communities of practice can be formed by putting Mezirow's ten steps to "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 2000) into action. Additionally, it can help to strengthen the bonds between the lecturers working together on queer-inclusive curricula (Author X, 2023):

- 1) Lecturers share in-person or face-to-face their real-world classroom experiences (e.g., fearing negative consequences and conflict from parents and society, backlash over religious beliefs and values that oppose queerism, feeling guilty for having prejudice towards queer individuals or for excluding them, feeling ashamed for rejecting queer individuals, having a lack of knowledge regarding queer individuals and terminology, to name a few) as lecturers in the language classroom.
- 2) From the onset, it must be made clear that (novice) lecturers are given a safe, judgement-free space to talk about the challenges and work collaboratively.
- 3) Following their conversation, the novice lecturers reflect and consider how their own actions, inner conflicts, anxieties, and constraints could make navigating a queer-inclusive curriculum a personal difficulty.
- 4) Once everyone is together again, the experienced lecturers ask each novice lecturer to discuss their struggles, after the individual self-reflections, and learn from one another by exchanging ideas.
- 5) After the lecturers have re-evaluated their prior or current ideas, the group analyses each challenge and makes suggestions for prospective problem-solving strategies to uncover new beliefs. This allows them to make decisions about various courses of action. It is,

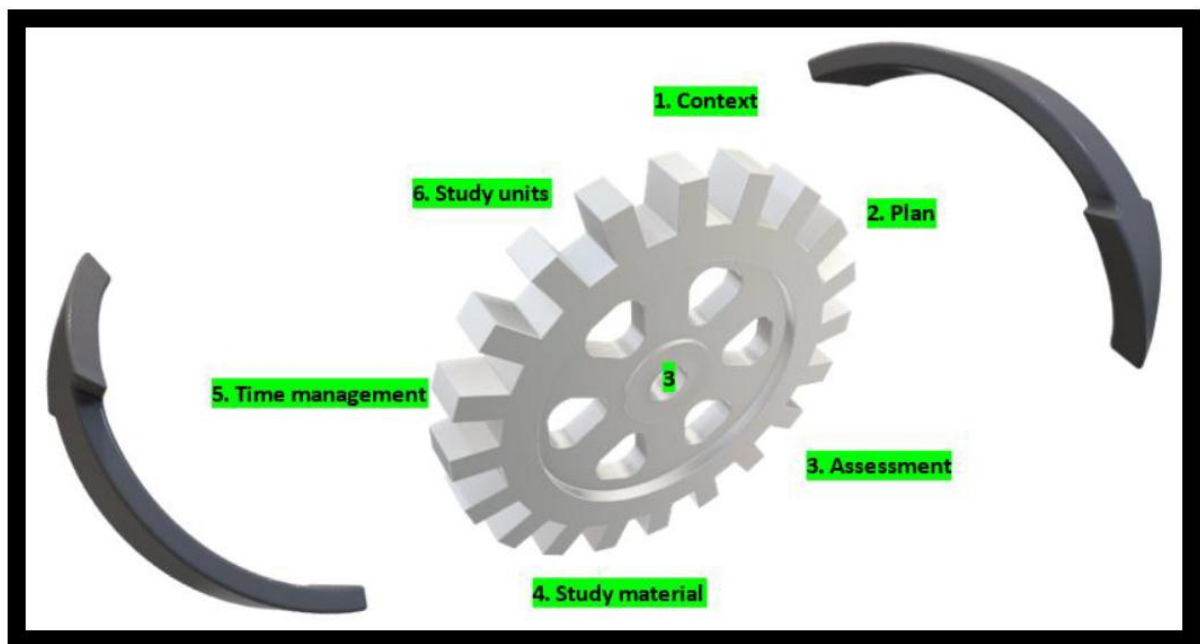
hence, the novice lecturer's responsibility to offer a path beyond their own personal constraints and past experiences.

- 6) After offering a solution that goes beyond their constraints, the novice lecturers develop a plan for implementing the recommendations.
- 7) The lecturers are reminded that they can turn to the more experienced lecturers for support during the larger group's discussion of the practice recommendations that have been presented. As such, while trying to incorporate queer curricula, they will also be guaranteed to practise the suggested solutions to deal with classroom constraints.
- 8) Following the group discussion, the novice lecturers employ the discussed problem-solving strategies. The experienced lecturer often meets with the novice lecturer during this process to offer assistance and critical feedback.
- 9) The lecturers return and impart their newly acquired knowledge after some practice. To enhance the general understanding of grey areas concerning CK, PK, and TPCK (e.g., queer-themed literature and the Backward design to lesson planning), the success and continued improvement of teaching and learning, the difficulties surrounding and implications of teaching and learning, new and additional knowledge, resources, and ideas gathered in terms of reflection on the inclusion of queer curricula are provided and exchanged.
- 10) New experiences, information, concepts, and materials are examined and discussed to be added to the teaching toolkit for queer curricula used by lecturers.

The novice lecturers gain a fresh perspective on queer-inclusive curricula through this ten-step approach (Author X, 2023), and with practice, they emerge into skilled transformative leaders.

4.2.4 Queer curricula

Figure 7: The structure of a (queer) curriculum



Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

Based on the participants' responses on queer terminology, queer knowledge, collaboration, perceptions of queer individuals, conflict, inclusion of queer topics, prejudice

towards queer individuals, queer-social challenges, willingness to teach queer curricula, past experiences, and queer-themed literature, six factors, as indicated in Figure 7, are considered regarding the following queer curriculum¹ (Author X, 2023):¹

- 1) Context: Consider the programme (e.g. B.Ed.) of the tertiary institution. Once the programme is identified, identify the module in which the curriculum is to be included. Generally, the Module Overview Document (MOD) provides the context, rationale, purpose, outcomes, assessment criteria, and requirements of the module.
- 2) Plan: The MOD should also include an outline of CK. For example, Study Unit: “Queer Terminology and Queer History”; Study Unit 2: “Rationale for the Inclusion of Queer Curricula”; Study Unit 3: “Queer Curricula”.
- 3) Assessment: Depending on the university’s yearbook, formative and summative assessments can take place. Formative assessments can contribute 25% towards the participation mark and entail portfolio-of-evidence activities per week per study unit, whereas summative assessments can contribute to the remaining 75% of the participation mark and make up academic essays, PowerPoint Presentations, tests, and examinations.
- 4) Study material: Academic textbooks and articles, and/or literary works should be identified by the lecturer.
- 5) Time management: Depending on the module’s credits, appropriate time should be provided for each study unit. For a 12-credit module, Unit 1 can be 10 hours, Unit 2 10 hours, and Unit 3 100 hours.
- 6) Study Units: For a queer curriculum, queer, heterosexism, heteronormativity, queerphobia, gender identity, gender expression, sexuality, sexual orientation, physical attraction, and emotional attraction as terminology can be defined and explored (Francis, 2019; Francis, 2021; Francis & Kuhl, 2020; Helmer, 2015; Kosciw et al., 2013; Neto, 2018).

As far as queer history, background, and context are concerned, information on LGBTQ history, the AIDS pandemic, the emergence of queer theory, and the significance of queer individuals’ experiences in the 21st century are aspects for consideration (Francis, 2021; Francis & Kuhl, 2020; Helmer, 2015).

It would also be beneficial to introduce a variety of frameworks to master the appreciation of queer curricula: critical theory, critical pedagogy, queer theory, queer pedagogy, transformative teaching and learning, anti-oppressive education, and social justice education (Bertilsson & Stimjanin, 2020; Francis, 2019; Francis, 2021; Francis & Kuhl, 2020; Helmer, 2015; Lin, 2014; Neto, 2018).

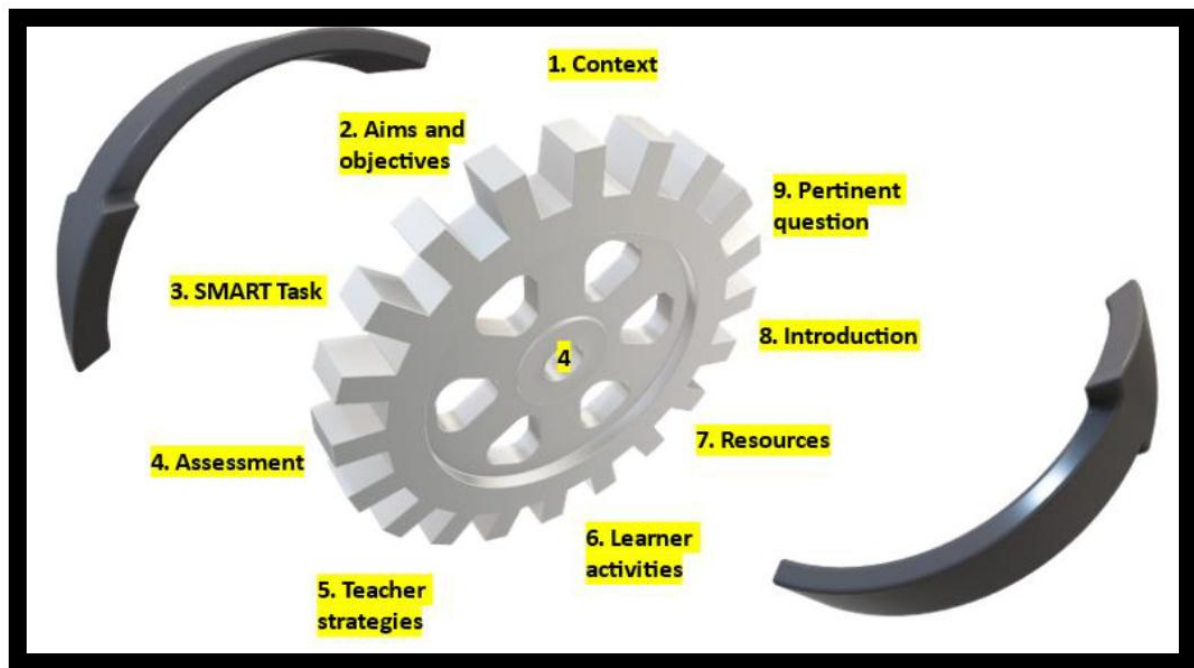
Relevant themes, which can be explored through literary works, are: “how heterosexism and heteronormativity are reproduced in schools and challenged by sex education”, the “invisibilisation of same-sex sexualities”, the “hyper-regulation of queer learners and students”, “fear of contagion”, “stereotypes as discursive weapons of heteronormativity”, “violence and harassment”, “authoritative discourses”, “didactic implications and agents of social change”, the “language literature classroom”, and “school-based resources, materials, technology, and support” (Bertilsson & Stimjanin, 2020; Francis, 2021; Francis & Kuhl, 2020; Helmer, 2015; Kosciw et al., 2013; Lin, 2014).

¹ The following is an example of a queer curriculum applicable to a university. Due to the scope of this study, with the focus being on language lecturers who need to train service teachers first, an example of a queer curriculum applicable to secondary education is not provided.

Strategies to teach queer literature in the language classrooms can include addressing heteronormativity, leaning in to discomfort, including intersectionality and literature with queer characters, reading straight literature through a queer lens, queering queer-inclusive literature, supplementary-, and multiple-, and resistant text reading, and creating safe zones (Batchelor et al., 2018; Berhman, 2006; Blackburn & Miller, 2017; Blackburn & Smith, 2010; Cart & Jenkins, 2006; Clark & Blackburn, 2009; Hermann-Wilmarth & Ryan, 2015; Jackson & Boutte, 2009; Lord, 2014; Sanders & Mathis, 2012; Staley & Leonardi, 2016).

4.2.5 Backward design to lesson planning

Figure 8: Backward design to lesson planning



Source: (Matthys Uys, 2023)

We suggest that teachers make use of the Backward design to lesson planning¹ (i.e., starting with the end in mind and working towards the beginning) of Wiggins and McTighe (2005), which was adapted by Uys et al. (2021), the NWU's School for Language English for Education department (2021), and Author X (2020):

After considering the background of the tertiary institution to determine the attitudes of students as well as the amount of time allotted for discussing queer curricula, the lecturer states the goals and objectives of the lesson.

To guarantee higher cognitive thinking and sustainable teaching and learning, the lecturer turns the aims and objectives into a SMART Task, a task that is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and traceable. Simultaneously, the assessment tool (e.g., a checklist or rubric) that will be utilised to assess the task needs to be created.

¹ Regarding the Backward design to lesson planning, when a new lesson is designed, the entire process of starting with the end in mind and working towards the beginning is repeated. It should be noted that lesson plans are never sacrosanct, and using the Backward design to lesson planning is a suggestion of how teachers or lecturers may go about their lessons.

Additionally, the lecturer designs three or more learning activities that students may complete as scaffolding towards the SMART task. The lecturer, then, chooses the teaching strategies to be used to align with the learning activities to ensure better understanding. Next, they identify the resources that complement or improve the lesson – they must modify their scaffolding activities to make use of the existing resources if more ideal ones are unavailable.

Following this, the lecturer can create an engaging introduction to pique students' interest in the subject matter. Lastly, they formulate one or more pertinent questions to activate students' interest in the subject and encourage critical thinking.

When the lecturer is ready to present their lesson, they either begin with the introduction or pertinent question(s). Afterwards, the students work with the lecturer to complete the scaffolding activities, which get the students ready to complete the SMART Task.

4.3 Limitations and implementation challenges

The following are limitation and implementation challenges for the queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework:

- institutional policies that are not in place for the educational context could delay the implementation of the framework or place individuals at risk for prejudice, abuse, violence, sexual harassment, discomfort, and so forth;
- Mezirow's "perspective transformation" could be considered a time-consuming strategy to effect a possible mind-change within preservice teachers and language lecturers who reject queer individuals;
- only suggestions for queer curricula, and not fully written curricula, were provided; and
- preservice teachers and language lecturers who are unfamiliar with the Backward design to lesson planning could struggle to follow this lesson planning approach.

5. Conclusion

The extent to which queer individuals are killed, victimised, and marginalised is worrisome. Although homes, companies, places of religion, and other settings might not embrace queer individuals, (language) classrooms may be more accommodating spaces. The classroom environment may be used to combat queer-social issues, rather than implement a curriculum that ignores the reality of queer individuals in everyday life, and denies the point of view of queer individuals in the world, as well as avoids the opportunity for heterosexual individuals to gain adequate knowledge and experience of queer individuals. As found in this study, there are preservice teachers and language lecturers who accept or celebrate queer individuals, who are willing to teach and learn queer texts in their language classrooms, but are not yet ready to do so since they lack the necessary knowledge and training about queer curricula. As a result, CK, PCK, and TPCCK must be in place. Keeping this in mind, we set out to create a transformative framework – an analogy of a cogwheel that has four cogs – for teaching and learning that could support the implementation of queer curricula. This transformative teaching and learning framework aims to create awareness and understanding of queer individuals and to address queerphobia in South Africa and other applicable parts of the world. The research goes beyond reporting on the perceptions of the participants on teaching queer literature in classrooms. It addresses a larger social issue, namely exclusion and it offers practical ways to question ingrained perceptions and work towards a more transformative society.

Recommendations for future research are 1) rather to conduct interviews, instead of questionnaires, to generate more in-depth data from the participants (that could also include follow-up questions) and 2) implement the queer-inclusive transformative teaching and learning framework in (South African) language classrooms to determine its overall success regarding strengths and weaknesses to make the necessary improvements for an enhanced framework.

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