

**EXPLORING STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE DEMOCRATIC  
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN TEACHER EDUCATION  
CLASSROOMS IN A SELECTED SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITY**

**By**

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## DECLARATION

I, Taiwo Christianah Omodan, hereby declare that this dissertation, **Exploring Strategies to Enhance Democratic Management Practices in Teacher Education Classrooms in A Selected South African University**, submitted in fulfilment of my Doctoral Degree qualification at the University of the Free State, is my independent work. All the references I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work to another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

B. Taiwo

16/10/2024

.....Date.....

Taiwo Christianah Omodan

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, and to my immediate and extended family.

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## ABSTRACT

Democratic classroom management practices play a vital role in fostering student participation and exposing learners to diverse perspectives and engagement opportunities in educational settings. However, there exists a significant disparity between the ideals of democratic education and the prevailing traditional classroom management approaches observed in university classrooms. In South Africa, the translation of democratic principles into actionable classroom management strategies remains a challenge, particularly within university classrooms. To address these challenges, this study examined the perceptions of student-teachers and lecturers regarding democratic classroom management practices in university-based teacher training. The study adopts critical theory as its guiding framework and employs a transformative research paradigm within a qualitative research approach. A participatory research design is utilised, with data being collected through observation and semi-structured interviews involving 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers from a selected university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Thematic analysis is employed to analyse the data. The study is divided into three publishable articles, with the main findings emphasising the necessity for comprehensive reforms in teacher education to establish inclusive and democratic learning environments that strike a balance between student autonomy and classroom discipline. Additionally, the study reveals resistance to participatory learning due to traditional teaching methods and institutional constraints, highlighting the need for systemic changes to promote equitable and inclusive democratic management practices in university classrooms. Finally, by emphasising student engagement, collaborative teaching, and critical reflection, the study underscores the importance of inclusive and democratic classroom environments in preparing students for real-world challenges. The study formulates and recommends a Democratic Classroom Management Model to facilitate effective democratic classroom management practices.

**Keywords:** Democratic practices, classroom management, democratic management practices, teacher education.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### 1. Introduction

The landscape of education in South Africa is closely connected to the professionalism and effectiveness of its teachers. The inclusion of democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms is considered crucial for cultivating informed knowledge and active citizenship among students. However, recent research has highlighted persistent gaps in promoting democratic education, particularly within teacher training institutions. These challenges are not limited to South Africa but are also observed in educational institutions worldwide. The absence of democratic management practices not only hampers the preparation of future teachers but also undermines the fundamental principles of democracy itself. Therefore, it is essential to address these gaps through comprehensive strategies tailored to the specific context of teacher education.

In response to these imperatives, this study aims to enhance democratic management practices within teacher education classrooms at a selected South African University. This research employs critical theory and participative management perspectives to comprehend the complexities, challenges, and opportunities associated with fostering democratic classroom management. Central to this investigation is an exploration of stakeholders' perceptions, including student teachers and lecturers, regarding the current state of democratic management practices within university classrooms. By identifying barriers, facilitators, and potential strategies for improvement, this study seeks to guide the development of a more inclusive, participatory, and equitable classroom environment that instils democratic skills in student teachers for their future careers.

## 1.1 Background to the study

The aesthetic nature of education systems worldwide, including South Africa, relies significantly on the professionalism and effectiveness of teachers, who serve as the central component of the education system. Therefore, creating knowledgeable individuals is best achieved in a democratic environment that encourages open interaction among students. Democratic practices promote student involvement, equity, inclusivity, collaboration, and critical thinking by exposing students to diverse perspectives and involving them in classroom activities. These characteristics are closely linked to the policies and procedures governing teacher education initiatives in the country and at universities. Consequently, it would be an oversight to underestimate the importance of the rules, culture, and practices employed in teacher education at the university level (Mcube, 2018). This perspective aligns with the belief that the teacher education process should produce highly motivated, conscientious, and proficient student teachers equipped with the necessary intellectual and democratic foundations to effectively manage their classrooms and adapt to changing circumstances (Department of Education, 2002; Senturk & Oyman, 2014; Caliskana et al., 2020). Despite these ambitious goals, recent research conducted in South Africa by Omodan and Ige (2021) reveals that many teacher education institutions, particularly those located in rural areas, have not sufficiently promoted the democratisation of teaching and learning through inclusive classroom participation.

Similar challenges have been identified in international research. In the United States, teacher education programs have long been subject to criticism for their insufficient preparation of students to meet the diverse needs of their future students. According to Morrison (2008), one of the most common critiques of these programs is their lack of focus on democratic practices, including the

establishment of equitable and inclusive classrooms that actively engage all students in the learning process. As a result, this deficiency has negative consequences for student learning and engagement, as well as their morale (Edwards, 2010). In China, issues related to identity pose obstacles to the democratisation of learning environments. Sung (2020) asserts that the Republic of China continues to struggle to establish a distinct Taiwanese identity that asserts its autonomy apart from the historical narrative of China. Sung argues that this struggle is evident in the ongoing debates concerning the lack of democratic awareness among teachers. In Turkey, the incorporation of democratic practices within university classrooms presents a challenge. Research indicates that the decline in critical engagement can be attributed to the increasing authoritarianism in society and the government's suppression of dissent (Esen & Gumuscu, 2021). This suppression becomes apparent in the intimidation faced by instructors and students who express dissenting perspectives criticising the government (Taştan et al., 2020; Hünler, 2022). Consequently, students are not exposed to diverse viewpoints on democratic governance and are not encouraged to critically analyse the issues affecting their nation.

Regarding the African continent, Agyemang (2012) emphasises the impact of military dictatorships in West African nations such as Ghana, Gambia, and Nigeria on students' freedom of speech. Furthermore, Enu and Eba (2014) assert the need for re-evaluation of teaching practices in Nigeria, as student-teachers lack sufficient democratic acumen for effective teaching and learning, which is crucial for promoting democratic practices within teaching practice classrooms. In South Africa, Omodan and Ige (2021) document student-teachers' reflections, revealing shortcomings in terms of democratic participation in classroom activities. Their findings highlight the limited knowledge of democratic education among student-teachers, with teachers assuming the role of sole knowledge producers. Correspondingly, de Jager (2019a) previously expressed concern

about the lack of necessary skills (such as critical thinking, collaboration, and cooperation) among South African higher education students to engage in reflective, student-centred teaching and learning activities. Lawrence and Maphalala (2021) concur, asserting that the issue of democracy and social justice should be treated seriously within South African university classrooms, as neglecting this aspect may impede the implementation of democratic education in both educational settings and governance.

Various solutions have been proposed to address the deficiency in democratic practices, including the development of a practical guide for teachers (Davids & Waghid, 2012), recommendations for teacher training and professional development (Mashau et al., 2016), and the enhancement of experiential learning among student-teachers (de Jager, 2019b). However, despite these suggestions, the issue persists as many teachers continue to employ authoritarian and traditional classroom management styles. This can be attributed to previous researchers neglecting to consider the importance of incorporating democratic management practices into the training of student-teachers at the university level. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the ways in which democratic classroom management practices can be strengthened within university classrooms.

## 1.2 Research interest and problem

Democratic classroom management practices play a vital role in fostering student participation and exposing learners to diverse perspectives and engagement opportunities in educational settings. However, a significant gap exists between the ideals of democratic education and the prevailing traditional classroom management approaches observed in universities. This discrepancy has been underscored by scholars such as Chauke (2021), Chitsamatanga and Rembe

(2020), and Mafhala (2015), who argue that many lecturers lack the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively implement democratic management practices. As noted by Omodan (2019a), this deficiency may produce graduates who are ill-equipped to cultivate democratic classrooms when they enter the teaching profession. These inadequacies in teacher training programs contribute to the perpetuation of non-democratic practices and impede efforts to foster inclusivity and diversity management within educational institutions (Uleanya, 2020, 2022; Makhanya & Zibane, 2020). Consequently, it is crucial to address these shortcomings to ensure that future teachers possess the necessary competencies to create conducive and participatory learning environments.

Moreover, the failure to integrate democratic classroom management practices into teacher education curricula not only impacts the immediate experiences of learners within university classrooms but also has broader implications for the education system as a whole. This gap not only affects student-lecturer relationships but also undermines students' voices in curriculum planning and implementation processes. Consequently, schools may encounter challenges in effectively addressing issues related to inclusivity and diversity within their systems. Despite the popularity of democratic education ideals, the practical implementation of such principles remains challenging in university classrooms, resulting in a disconnect between theory and practice. This disparity risks eroding learners' confidence in democratic processes and may ultimately undermine their trust in engaging with educational institutions through democratic means. Therefore, it is essential to address these challenges to uphold the integrity and effectiveness of democratic education practices within South African universities and beyond.

Given these concerns, this study aims to comprehensively examine strategies for enhancing democratic management practices within teacher education classrooms at a selected South African university. Drawing insights from existing

literature and empirical evidence, this research seeks to develop actionable recommendations for university lecturers to effectively integrate democratic principles into their teaching practices. Through the implementation of these strategies, it is anticipated that teacher education programs can foster a culture of inclusivity, collaboration, and critical thinking, thereby promoting trust and engagement among students. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the advancement of democratic education principles and the promotion of social justice within educational institutions, ensuring that all learners have equitable access to high-quality education opportunities.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework: Critical Theory and Participatory Management Theory

Critical theory, developed by German Marxist intellectuals in the early 20th century, offers a robust framework for analysing and proposing changes to societal structures. Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School initially formulated this theory to examine how authority and power become established and normalised in society (Bronner, 2013). By combining Marxist socio-economic theories with Freudian psychoanalysis, critical theory investigates the societal mechanisms that perpetuate injustice and inequality. It emphasises the need for conscientious efforts to facilitate social reform (Brand, 2016). Scholars from the Frankfurt School, including Horkheimer, were especially interested in understanding why individuals comply with unjust authority figures and sought avenues to establish a more equitable society (Johnson, 2005). This analytical approach has been applied in various fields, including education, to critique and reform power dynamics.

The significance of critical theory in education lies in its challenge to traditional educational paradigms, often criticised for being oppressive and elitist (Giroux, 2004). Traditional models of education, characterised by hierarchical structures

and competitiveness, are seen as perpetuating societal inequalities. In contrast, critical theory advocates for a transition towards more democratic, inclusive, and participatory educational practices. This perspective prompts a reevaluation of pedagogical approaches to prioritise collaboration, dialogue, and critical thinking over individual competition and rote learning. Hence, applying critical theory to educational settings, educators are encouraged to acknowledge and dismantle biases, fostering a learning environment that values diversity, equity, and democratic engagement among students (Friesen, 2008).

Furthermore, the application of critical theory in education provides a framework for cultivating democratic practices within university classrooms. It proposes an educational model that goes beyond mere knowledge transmission and emphasises active student involvement in their own learning processes. This approach highlights the importance of creating spaces where students can question, debate, and contribute to the construction of knowledge, preparing them for active participation in democratic societies. By advocating for inclusive, participatory, and collaborative educational practices, critical theory offers a compelling blueprint for transforming educational systems to better align with democratic ideals and objectives of social justice.

On the other hand, the study also explores Participative Management Theory. This theory, grounded in the broader context of human relations and organisational behaviour, emphasises the importance of involving employees at all levels in decision-making processes. It gained prominence in the mid-20th century as a response to traditional authoritarian models. The theory argues that involving employees leads to increased motivation, job satisfaction, and overall organisational effectiveness (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). Early proponents such as Rensis Likert and Douglas McGregor highlighted the value of participative techniques in fostering a more engaged workforce (Likert, 1967; McGregor,

1960). Likert's System 4 management model advocates for a participative group system, decentralising decision-making and empowering employees to contribute ideas and feedback, thereby enhancing organisational performance (Likert, 1961). This theory assumes that employees are motivated by intrinsic factors like recognition and achievement (Herzberg, 1968) and that they possess valuable insights that significantly contribute to problem-solving and innovation (Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Cotton, 1993).

Participative Management Theory is highly relevant to this study as it provides a robust framework for integrating democratic principles into classroom management practices. By emphasising the involvement of all members in decision-making processes, this theory aligns with the study's goal of fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment where student voices are valued and heard. It encourages collaborative learning and teamwork, helping to create a democratic classroom atmosphere that empowers students and promotes active engagement. Furthermore, the theory's focus on open communication and transparency supports the development of critical thinking and reflection among students, which is essential for effective democratic education. By adopting participative management strategies, lecturers can create classroom environments that enhance student participation and engagement, preparing future teachers to implement these democratic management practices in their own classrooms. This alignment with the study's objectives highlights the potential of participative management to transform democratic management practices and address gaps in current teacher education programs, contributing to a more equitable and effective educational system.

### 3.4 Preliminary Literature Review

The preliminary literature review was conducted to identify the gap that justifies the need for this study. It addresses the existing literature on democratic

management practices in university classrooms, the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers regarding these classrooms, the challenges associated with implementing democratic management practices in university settings, and strategies to enhance such practices in university classrooms.

#### 3.4.1 Democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms

Democratic management practices in university classrooms involve strategies that actively engage students in learning, fostering a sense of connectedness and reducing anxiety (Obispo et al., 2021). Research indicates that a combination of democratic and authoritative classroom management styles is commonly employed by teachers, leading to positive student outcomes (Obispo et al., 2021). Teachers who are confident in their classroom management abilities are more likely to implement effective practices (Herman e et al., 2012). Furthermore, democratic classroom practices emphasize student participation in creating a supportive learning community (Jagers et al., 2017). In university settings, these practices have been shown to enhance student learning effectiveness (Roohi et al., 2022). Teachers' attitudes towards democratic classroom management significantly predict students' critical thinking dispositions (Turabik & Gün, 2016). Establishing a democratic classroom environment can result in more effective learning outcomes (Roohi et al., 2022). Additionally, classrooms that integrate democratic principles through pedagogy can effectively address various educational challenges (Duncan, 2003; Roohi et al., 2022).

In the context of democratic citizenship, it is crucial to incorporate democratic practices in classroom management to eliminate traditional top-down teaching approaches and promote discussion and debate among students (Olawale, 2022). Furthermore, research suggests that involving teacher candidates in understanding and implementing classroom management practices can enhance their sense of self-efficacy (Jackson & Miller, 2019). Implementing democratic management practices in university classrooms involves engaging students

actively in the learning process, fostering a sense of community, promoting critical thinking, and enhancing overall learning outcomes. This approach not only benefits students by creating a more inclusive and participatory learning environment but also prepares them for real-world democratic engagement and professional success.

### 3.4.2 Perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management classroom

Democratic management in the classroom is a topic of great interest among student teachers and lecturers due to its significant impact on the successful implementation of democratic classroom management practices. Empirical studies have shown that the development of a democratic classroom environment requires collaboration between teachers and active student participation throughout the teaching-learning process (Mardiah, 2022). Teachers who adopt democratic attitudes create a foundation for an inclusive educational environment by treating all students equally, fostering fairness, and valuing student opinions (Turabik & Gün, 2016). Moreover, democratic classroom practices involve strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, promoting inclusivity and participation (Biamba et al., 2021). This engagement is crucial as it supports a fair and participatory learning environment where students feel heard and respected.

Teacher perceptions and efforts in implementing a democratic classroom atmosphere are essential for encouraging active student participation, providing equal opportunities, embracing diversity, and promoting freedom of expression without fear of consequences (Berliana, 2024). Research indicates that democratic practices, such as classroom discussions, effectively engage students and instill democratic values (Gnawali, 2023). Students' perceptions of the implementation of democratic classrooms, particularly in subjects like mathematics, are significantly influenced by the teaching approaches employed

by instructors (Johar et al., 2017). In a democratic classroom, teachers play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between the classroom environment and student engagement by fostering open communication and idea-sharing (Ahmad et al., 2014). Understanding teachers' perspectives on classroom management behaviours, including autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire approaches, is vital for creating effective learning environments. Proper classroom management is essential to prevent a negative learning environment that can lead to student demotivation and teacher burnout (Rokhaniyah, 2024).

Curriculum design should incorporate democratic values through classroom discussions and assignments to educate students about democratic principles (Irmawati & Mayasari, 2021). Teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management significantly influences the teacher-student relationship, classroom management, and disruptions, underscoring the importance of teachers' confidence in managing student behaviour (Wettstein et al., 2021). Guiding classroom discussions for democratic citizenship education is crucial for promoting democratic values and active participation among students (Schuitema et al., 2017). Therefore, the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management in the classroom are influenced by various factors, including teacher attitudes, student engagement, and the implementation of democratic practices. Collaborative efforts between lecturers and students are crucial for creating a democratic classroom environment that fosters inclusivity, participation, and the development of democratic values among learners. These efforts are essential for preparing students to actively engage in democratic processes both within and outside the classroom, ultimately contributing to the development of a more democratic society.

#### 1.4.3 Challenges of democratic management practices in university classrooms

Challenges that impede the effective implementation of democratic principles in university classrooms encompass various factors. Empirical research has shown that obstacles such as teachers' prior beliefs, the teaching context, and teachers' limited willingness to change are significant barriers to adopting new classroom management approaches (Girardet, 2017). Furthermore, factors like classroom size, the number of pupils, and lack of support from school management hinder the development of classroom management practices that promote students' understanding of themselves and their choices, thereby undermining the cultivation of a democratic classroom environment (Postholm, 2013).

Insufficient teacher skills in establishing supportive environments for students with behavioural challenges and a lack of awareness among educators such as students, teachers, lecturers and other relevant instructors regarding the importance of democratic spaces in the classroom also contribute to the challenges faced in implementing democratic classroom practices (Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Biamba et al., 2021). The tension between promoting student opinions and adhering to curriculum constraints further complicates the adoption of democratic management practices in classrooms (Biamba et al., 2021). Inadequate training in classroom management exacerbates these challenges, highlighting the need for effective teacher-training programs to support the implementation of democratic management practices (Oliver et al., 2017).

Additionally, rivalry among stakeholders in university governance can constrain collegial governance, which in turn impacts the adoption of democratic practices in university classrooms (Shawa, n.d.). Teachers' commitments to democratic values may face challenges in heterogeneous classrooms with diverse student backgrounds, further highlighting the complexities of implementing democratic education in practice (Sibbett, 2022). Moreover, the lack of open listening

practices in university classrooms can hinder the development of pedagogical social justice and democratic principles (Duncan, 2003).

Therefore, the challenges hindering democratic management practices in university classrooms arise from a combination of teacher-related factors, institutional constraints, student perceptions, and the broader educational context. Overcoming these challenges requires addressing teacher beliefs, providing adequate training, promoting awareness of democratic values, and fostering inclusive and supportive classroom environments conducive to democratic principles. Additionally, implementing systemic changes to support teacher development and create collaborative governance structures is essential for the effective adoption of democratic management practices. These efforts are critical for fostering an educational environment that supports student engagement, critical thinking, and the development of democratic values.

#### 1.4.4 Strategies to improve democratic management practices in university classrooms

The implementation of evidence-based strategies can be beneficial in enhancing democratic management practices in university classrooms. One effective approach is utilising classroom-level positive behaviour supports that align with School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Reinke et al., 2012). These strategies aim to create a positively charged classroom environment that promotes students' social-emotional and behavioural outcomes, thereby fostering an atmosphere conducive to democratic practices by encouraging inclusivity and active participation.

Furthermore, the implementation of coaching and behaviour support planning within a universal classroom management program has shown positive outcomes in reducing disruptive behaviour, increasing prosocial behaviour, and improving

student engagement (Reinke et al., 2014). This approach emphasises personalised support for students with disruptive behaviour, thereby promoting a more inclusive and democratic classroom setting. The focus on tailored interventions ensures that all students, regardless of their behavioural challenges, can fully participate in the learning process.

Furthermore, it has been established that the utilization of evidence-based practices in classroom management, which encompass preventive strategies and interventions to support behaviour, can significantly augment teachers' comprehension and execution of efficacious classroom management strategies (Moore et al., 2016). Through the systematic teaching, reinforcement, and monitoring of classroom rules, the provision of structured activities, and the provision of appropriate instructional support, teachers can establish a nurturing environment that is in line with democratic ideals. These practices not only contribute to maintaining discipline but also empower students by equipping them with a comprehensive comprehension of expectations and the necessary skills to fulfil them. Furthermore, incorporating movement integration into regular classroom time has been shown to reduce off-task behaviour and support academic performance, thereby contributing to improved classroom management practices (Moon et al., 2020). This engagement is crucial for democratic management as it helps students feel more connected and involved in the classroom community.

Therefore, the implementation of evidence-based strategies such as positive behaviour supports, coaching, preventive interventions, and movement integration can significantly enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms. These approaches improve classroom management and create inclusive and supportive learning environments that align with democratic principles. The systematic application of these strategies ensures that all students have the opportunity to actively engage in their education, fostering a sense of

community and shared responsibility that is essential for democratic education. The investigation into enhancing democratic classroom management practices in teacher education classrooms at a selected South African university addresses a critical gap in the literature. Despite the acknowledged benefits of democratic classroom environments, several challenges hinder their effective implementation, including teachers' prior beliefs, institutional constraints, inadequate training, and logistical issues (Girardet, 2017; Postholm, 2013; Oliver et al., 2017). Furthermore, there is a need for evidence-based strategies that can be tailored to the unique socio-cultural context of South African universities, where diverse student backgrounds and educational disparities pose additional challenges (Sibbett, 2022). By focusing on these specific barriers and potential solutions, this study aims to provide actionable insights into fostering democratic classroom management practices that promote inclusivity and participation, ultimately contributing to the development of a more equitable and effective educational system.

#### 1.4 Main Research Question

- How can democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms be enhanced in a selected South African University?

##### 1.4.1 Sub-Research Questions

- How do democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms?
- What are the apparent challenges that hinder effective democratic management practices in university classrooms?
- What are the opportunities that democratic management practices present to enhance learning experiences in university classrooms?

- Which strategies can be used to enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms?

### 1.5 Aim of the study

- The aim is to investigate how to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms in a selected South African University.

#### 1.5.1 Objectives of the Study

- To explore how democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms.
- To examine the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms.
- The study will examine the challenges that hinder effective democratic management practices in university classrooms.
- To explain the opportunities that democratic management practices present in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms.
- To examine strategies that can be used to improve democratic management practices in university classrooms.

### 1.6 Research Methodology

This section presents the preliminary research questions utilised to execute the study, encompassing the adopted research paradigm, research approach and design. It includes the instrument employed to elicit data, a description of the participants, and the method of data analysis. Additionally, this section discusses the ethical considerations employed in this study.

#### 1.6.1 Research Paradigm

This study adopts a transformative paradigm, which centres on examining the nature of social and historical reality (Chilisa, 2012). Within this paradigm, critical theory is utilised as a framework to challenge the prevailing structures in teaching and learning practices, particularly in educational institutions. By analysing power dynamics and advocating for social change, critical theory

becomes a potent tool to question existing norms and establish more equitable educational environments. From an epistemological standpoint, the transformative paradigm underscores the importance of building trust-based relationships between the researcher and the participants (Mertens, 2010). These relationships foster a collaborative approach to knowledge generation, ensuring that diverse perspectives and experiences are taken into consideration when exploring social realities and power dynamics within educational contexts.

To align with the emphasis on collaboration and inclusivity in the transformative paradigm, this study adopts a Participatory Research (PR) design. PR strongly emphasises actively involving all stakeholders in the research process, allowing their voices to be heard and their experiences to be valued. This methodological approach is especially well-suited for the study's objectives as it promotes the co-creation of knowledge and the exploration of diverse perspectives on democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms. By involving participants as active partners in the research process, participatory research fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, ultimately contributing to transformational practices and the advancement of social justice within educational institutions.

### 1.6.2 Research approach

In this research, a qualitative research approach was adopted to comprehend individuals' experiences and perspectives within their natural contexts (Yilmaz, 2013). Qualitative research is focused on exploring meanings, understandings, and lived experiences, making it well-suited for investigating complex phenomena like democratic practices in teacher education classrooms. In this study, we will concentrate on the perceptions and experiences of students and lecturers regarding democratic management practices. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), qualitative researchers employ inductive reasoning to generate new theories or describe phenomena, enabling a nuanced understanding of the subject matter. By selecting this qualitative research approach, I will be able to explore

diverse perspectives and experiences, providing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Moreover, the qualitative research approach allows me to collect rich and detailed data that captures the intricacy of democratic practices in teacher education classrooms (Almalki, 2016). Through methods such as interviews and observations, the researcher gathered in-depth insights into how democratic principles are perceived and implemented in classroom settings. This comprehensive approach assists the researcher in exploring the factors that influence the implementation of democratic management practices, including power dynamics, communication, and collaboration. By utilising the qualitative research approach, our study aims to contribute valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge on democratic education and inform the development of strategies to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms.

### 1.6.3 Research Design

In this study, the Participatory Research design was utilised to examine the internal practices and processes that underlie the assumptions of social realities within the teacher education process (MacDonald, 2012). PR is particularly well-suited for this study as it emphasises equality between researchers and participants, encouraging collaboration and shared decision-making throughout the research process (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Pain & Francis, 2003; Omodan et al., 2019). By actively involving both lecturers and student-teachers in the research process, PR ensures that diverse perspectives and experiences are considered, thereby enhancing the validity and relevance of the findings. Additionally, PR helps address power imbalances between lecturers and student-teachers, empowering participants to transform their social reality (Pain & Francis, 2003; Wood & Hendricks, 2017). This collaborative approach not only

facilitates the identification of significant issues but also encourages the development of contextually relevant solutions.

Furthermore, PR is highly applicable to this study as it enables lecturers and students to engage in collaborative knowledge construction, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment (MacDonald, 2012). By actively involving participants in the research process, PR creates a platform for dialogue and collective problem-solving, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable interventions. Through collaborative inquiry and reflection, PR facilitates the co-creation of knowledge, ensuring that the insights generated are meaningful and actionable for all stakeholders involved. Overall, the adoption of PR as the research design for this study underscores a commitment to inclusivity, collaboration, and empowerment, ultimately contributing to the advancement of democratic management practices within teacher education classrooms.

#### 1.6.4 Data Collection

The study employed observation and semi-structured interviews to elicit information from participants. Observation was utilised to collect data for objective 1, which aimed to determine the implementation of democratic classroom management practices in selected university classrooms. This method was selected due to its ability to directly observe the extent of democratic practices in real-time classroom settings. Specifically, four active classrooms within the selected university were observed, providing valuable insights into the current practices and dynamics of democratic management.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to address objectives 2 to 4. This method allowed both students and university lecturers to openly discuss issues relevant to the study's problem (Baumbusch, 2010). The choice of this method facilitated a thorough exploration and nuanced understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences. Through semi-structured interviews,

participants had the opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions concerning democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms. Notably, these methods align with the principles of Participatory Research (PR), as they promote collaboration among participants in defining challenges and collectively finding solutions (Escalada & Heong, 2014). Overall, the combination of observation and semi-structured interviews enabled the study to gather comprehensive data and insights necessary for addressing the research objectives and advancing the understanding of democratic management practices in teacher education contexts.

#### 1.6.5 Selection of research participants

To address objective 1, the study included four active classrooms from a selected university. Each classroom consisted of an unspecified number of students and four lecturers. Although the exact number of students was not specified, including both students and lecturers allowed for a thorough observation of the dynamics and practices related to democratic management. By directly observing these classrooms, the researcher gained firsthand insights into the implementation of democratic practices and assessed the level of student participation, collaboration, and inclusivity. This approach provided valuable contextual information necessary for understanding the current state of democratic management within teacher education classrooms.

For objectives 2 to 4, the study involved a total of 15 participants, including 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers. The selection criteria required student participants to have at least three years of experience at the university, while lecturers were required to have a minimum of two years of teaching experience at the selected university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The Convenient Participant Selection Technique was used to select participants for the interviews, as it offers a quick and accessible method of recruitment, particularly in settings where time constraints may be a concern (Etikan et al.,

2016; Alvi, 2016). This approach ensured the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences among both student and lecturer participants, enriching the data collected during the interviews and contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms.

#### 1.6.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Thematic analysis was the selected method utilised in this study to analyse the data obtained from both observation and interviews. Thematic analysis is a widely recognised qualitative analysis approach that involves the systematic identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns or themes within the data (Clarke et al., 2015). These themes represent recurring patterns or topics that emerge from the data, thus offering valuable insights into the research questions and objectives (Terry et al., 2017). One of the main advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility, allowing researchers to apply it to various types of qualitative data, including interviews (Joffe, 2012).

The study employed the six-step process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to conduct a thematic analysis. The initial step involved familiarising oneself with the data, whereby the researcher thoroughly immersed themselves in the observation notes and interview transcripts to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the content. Subsequently, the data were systematically coded, with descriptive labels or codes assigned to meaningful text segments. These codes were then collected and organized to identify overarching themes within the dataset. The third step entailed identifying and defining these themes, which represented recurring patterns or topics across the entire dataset. Following this, the themes were reviewed to ensure their alignment with the data and their relevance to the research objectives. Each theme was then given a concise name that captured its essence. Finally, the researcher interpreted the significance of the themes in relation to the research questions and the broader theoretical

framework. By following these six steps, the thematic analysis facilitated a systematic analysis and interpretation of the data, ultimately providing valuable insights into the investigated phenomenon.

### 1.7 Value of the proposed research

The outcomes of the study have significant benefits for various stakeholders, including scholars, government agencies like the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), policymakers, university management, education students, and their lecturers. By conducting a comprehensive investigation into democratic practices within the teacher education system, the study contributes to the knowledge base of the field and provides insights that are essential for guiding policy formulation and decision-making processes at governmental and institutional levels. This improved understanding of democratic principles plays a crucial role in promoting equitable and inclusive educational practices, aligning with broader goals of social justice and democratic governance in education.

Furthermore, the study's meticulously designed methodologies and innovative strategies offer new approaches to address long-standing challenges in classroom management within university settings. By prioritizing inclusivity and collaboration, these approaches not only mitigate existing barriers but also create environments that facilitate meaningful engagement and learning. Additionally, the study's findings serve as a starting point for future research, providing a wealth of data and insights that lay the groundwork for further exploration into the complexities of democratic management practices in educational contexts. Through the dissemination of knowledge and methodological frameworks, the study encourages researchers to deepen their understanding and refine their approaches to advance the discourse on democratic education.

Ultimately, the study aims to promote democratic practices in university classrooms, aligning with the goal of creating nurturing and empowering learning environments for all stakeholders involved. By championing principles of participation and equity, the study enriches the educational experience for students and enables lecturers to adopt pedagogical approaches that prioritise student voice and agency. In doing so, it establishes the groundwork for a transformative shift towards more democratic and inclusive educational practices, where students and lecturers actively participate in the co-construction of knowledge and the development of critical thinking skills necessary for navigating an increasingly complex world.

### 1.8 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations in this study were implemented in accordance with the ethical approval and protocol of the University of the Free State to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants. A key aspect of this protocol was the guarantee of voluntary participation, allowing participants to choose whether or not to take part in the study and to withdraw at any point if they felt uncomfortable or for any other reason. The principle of voluntary participation was followed, and informed consent was obtained through the distribution and signing of participant consent forms prior to their involvement in the study. These forms provided a comprehensive outline of the study procedures, potential risks, and participants' rights, ensuring that individuals had a clear understanding of the research and their role before giving their consent. This proactive approach to informed consent aligns with ethical guidelines, emphasising the importance of transparency and autonomy in research participation.

Moreover, the ethical process prioritised the protection of participants' privacy and confidentiality throughout the study. Measures were implemented to ensure the anonymity of participants and the confidentiality of their responses, minimising the potential for harm or adverse consequences resulting from their

involvement. This commitment to privacy and confidentiality is crucial in creating a safe and trustworthy environment for participants, thereby upholding the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice (Okeke et al., 2022). Additionally, in accordance with ethical standards, gatekeeper permission was obtained from the selected university, ensuring institutional support and oversight for the study. This collaborative approach reflects a dedication to ethical integrity and responsible research conduct, safeguarding the rights and well-being of all individuals involved while upholding the highest standards of ethical practice in research.

### 1.9 Data Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a key consideration in evaluating the quality of research. Several factors contribute to trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

**Credibility:** Credibility is paramount in establishing the trustworthiness and validity of a study. This study recognised the importance of credibility by aligning its research design and methodologies with established principles outlined by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012) and Cope (2014). By employing a qualitative methods approach and utilising multiple qualitative data collection techniques, the study employed triangulation to strengthen and enhance the reliability of its conclusions. The use of qualitative methods, such as interviews and observations, provided comprehensive and nuanced insights into the perspectives of the stakeholders. Additionally, the researcher demonstrated reflexivity and transparency throughout the research process, critically examining their own biases and assumptions. These measures ensured that the findings were firmly rooted in reality, bolstering the credibility and validity of the study in addressing the research problem.

**Transferability:** Transferability was highlighted as a critical factor by Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, and Elo (2020) in order to ensure the relevance and applicability of

the findings beyond the specific context of the South African University. To incorporate transferability within the scope of qualitative research, the study employed convenient sampling to choose participants with diverse backgrounds and experiences, thereby ensuring a wide range of perspectives related to democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms. Additionally, the study provided comprehensive descriptions of the research context, participants, and data collection procedures to facilitate the reader's comprehension of the study's context and methods. This transparent reporting enabled readers to assess the extent to which the findings could be applicable to their own contexts or situations. By prioritising diverse participant selection and transparent reporting, the study aimed to enhance the transferability of its findings, thereby expanding their applicability and relevance beyond the specific setting of the South African University.

**Dependability:** As emphasised by Kyngäs, Kääriäinen, and Elo (2020), dependability plays a crucial role in establishing the reliability and replicability of research findings. The present study meticulously documented every aspect of the research process and methodology, from participant selection to data collection and analysis procedures. This comprehensive documentation aimed to ensure transparency and clarity and facilitate understanding. It also provided an opportunity for others to critique and evaluate the methods used, thereby contributing to the dependability of the study. This emphasis on thorough documentation and adherence to sound research practices aimed to instil confidence in the reliability and credibility of the study's findings, ultimately enhancing its dependability as a rigorous research endeavour.

**Confirmability:** Confirmability, the final criterion for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research, emphasises the importance of basing study findings solely on participants' stories and statements, free from researcher bias or

preconceptions. This study established confirmability by rigorously adhering to high-quality data processing procedures, ensuring that the collected and analysed data were unbiased and reflective of participants' perspectives. The researcher employed various methods to further enhance confirmability, including member checks, triangulation, and peer debriefing. Member checks allowed participants to review and confirm the accuracy of their contributions, while triangulation involved cross-referencing multiple data sources to validate findings. Peer debriefing involved seeking feedback from other researchers to ensure the objectivity and credibility of the study's interpretations. Additionally, the researcher used participatory data collection and analysis methods, ensuring that the voices of those experiencing the issue were central to the research process, further enhancing the confirmability of the study's findings. Through these rigorous measures, the study ensures that other researchers can confirm and validate its findings, thereby enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the research.

### 1.9 Definition of Key Terms

The following key terms were defined conceptually and operationally as it is used in the study.

- **Democratic Education:** Democratic education refers to a classroom system in which students possess increased autonomy over their education and are empowered to exercise self-determination (Sant, 2019). This concept entails that students are provided with the opportunity to choose what and how they study within the parameters set by the educational community and assume responsibility for their own learning (Hess & McAvoy, 2014). Within the context of this study, democratic education is viewed as a classroom process that instils values of unity, cooperation, collaboration, fairness, and justice within the hearts of students.

- **Teacher Education:** Teacher education refers to the structures, institutions, and processes utilized to prepare students for work in the school setting, including elementary and secondary schools (Sykes, Bird & Kennedy, 2010). On the other hand, teacher education can be understood as teacher training that encompasses various measures, techniques, and services aimed at equipping teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills necessary to effectively carry out their responsibilities in the classroom, school, and broader community (Zhu & Han, 2006). According to this study, teacher education involves lecturers training student-teachers in the real-world context.
- **Democratic classrooms:** Democratic classrooms are characterised by students having a say in the management of the classroom (Morrison, 2008). This includes making decisions about the topics covered, the structure of lessons, and even disciplinary measures. The adoption of a democratic approach can create a more engaging and empowering learning environment for students as they feel that their voices are valued and respected (Sydnor et al., 2021). In this study, democratic classrooms refer to teaching and learning practices where students are actively involved in the co-creation of knowledge and their voices are acknowledged throughout the classroom process.
- **Democratic practices:** Democratic values in the classroom are those where lecturers or teachers can create an environment in which all students feel welcome, respected, and valued (Devkota, 2021). These values help foster a love of learning and a commitment to civic engagement, as well as promoting equity, respect for all voices, and a sense of community. Classrooms that incorporate democratic practices help create a positive learning environment for all students.
- **Democratic Management Practices:** Democratic Management Practices, as defined in the literature, can be understood as strategies involving all

members of an organization or classroom in decision-making. These practices emphasize inclusivity, collaboration, and transparency, as highlighted by various researchers (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992; Guinot, Monfort & Chiva, 2021; Tabancalı, 2022). In the specific context of this study, these practices involve engaging student teachers and lecturers in participatory teaching methods. The aim is to create a learning environment where diverse voices are not only heard but also valued while encouraging active involvement in classrooms. This approach seeks to establish a more inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environment that aligns with democratic principles. Additionally, it aims to prepare future teachers to effectively implement these practices in their own classrooms.

## 1.8 Layout of Chapters and Articles Arrangement

### **Chapter One: Introduction and Orientation**

### **Chapter Two: The Article Plan based on the objectives.**

- Objectives 1 and 2 form an article for publication.
- Objectives 3 and 4 form an article for publication.
- Objective 5 forms an article for publication.

### **Chapter Three: Final Reflection, Conclusion and Recommendations**

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ARTICLE PLAN BASED ON THE OBJECTIVES

This section presents the three articles as promised in chapter one. The objectives of the studies were four which are:

- The study explores how democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms.
- The study investigates the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms.
- The study examines the challenges that hinder effective democratic management practices in university classrooms.
- To explain the opportunities that democratic management practices present in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms.
- The study provides strategies that can be used to improve democratic management practices in university classrooms.

Among the five objectives, objectives 1 and 2 formed the first research article titled “Exploring Democratic Practices: Perceptions and Implementations of Democratic Classroom Management in University-Based Teacher Training”. This article also answered two research questions formulated from the tile. The two research questions are:

- How do democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms?

Secondly, among the five objectives, objectives three and four formed an article for publication titled “Challenges and Opportunities for effective democratic management practices in university classrooms”. This article also answered two research questions formulated from the tile. The two research questions are:

- What are the apparent challenges that hinder effective democratic management practices in university classrooms?
- What are the opportunities that democratic management practices present to enhance learning experiences in university classrooms?

Lastly, among the five objectives, objective five formed an article for publication titled “Strategies to Enhance Democratic Management Practices in University Classrooms”. This article also answered one research question formulated from the tile. The research question is:

- How can university lecturers be equipped with strategies and tools to manage classrooms using democratic practices more effectively?

The research articles are presented below:

## ARTICLE ONE: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT A UNIVERSITY

### **Abstract**

In South Africa, translating democratic principles into actionable classroom management strategies remains a challenge, particularly in teacher-educator training programmes, commonly known as universities. To address these challenges, this study explores the practices and perceptions of student-teachers and lecturers regarding democratic classroom management practices at a university in South Africa. The research is guided by critical theory as a theoretical framework and adopts a transformative research paradigm within a qualitative research approach. A participatory research design is employed, and data is collected through observation and semi-structured interviews with 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers at a selected university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Thematic analysis reveals that some classrooms primarily rely on traditional lecture-based approaches with limited student engagement and minimal use of participatory methods, while others demonstrate efforts to create a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. The research also finds that students emphasize the importance of feeling heard and valued, advocating for active involvement in decision-making processes. In contrast, lecturers emphasise the empowering nature of democratic management in promoting student ownership of education and collaborative learning environments. The research uncovers challenges in translating theory into practical techniques due to student reluctance and highlights the positive impact of providing students with opportunities for decision-making in class activities. Furthermore, the research underscores the significance of flexibility and adaptability in implementing democratic practices. In conclusion, the research suggests that successful democratic management depends on nurturing a collaborative environment where students feel empowered, while also ensuring alignment with educational objectives.

**Keywords:** Democratic Practices, Democratic Classroom, Classroom Management, University-Based Teacher Training.

## Introduction

The contemporary educational landscape acknowledges the importance of democratic classroom management in creating inclusive, participatory, and diverse learning environments. However, there remains a challenge in translating democratic principles into tangible strategies for managing classrooms, particularly in teacher-educator training programs (Chauke, 2021; Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020). Democratic education highlights the significance of student participation, choice, and exposure to diverse perspectives in promoting holistic development and critical thinking (Mafhala, 2015). Nevertheless, there is a noticeable gap in the implementation of these democratic paradigms, as many lecturers still rely on traditional and potentially anti-democratic management practices. This gap has considerable implications, potentially leading to a generation of teachers ill-equipped to foster democratic values and adversely affecting inclusivity and diversity in education (Uleanya, 2020, 2022). Concerns are mounting that disparities in the incorporation of democratic classroom management practices may compromise student performance and erode trust in democratic ideals. As the focus on inclusivity and diverse voices in education grows, it is imperative to clarify perceptions and implementations of democratic management practices in university classrooms. This study examines the practices and perceptions of student-teachers and lecturers regarding democratic classroom management practices at a university and underscores the need to reshape teacher education to align with democratic and inclusive pedagogical frameworks.

A study conducted by Demirtas (2005) investigated the attitudes and behaviours related to democratic classroom management among university students in Turkey. The survey consisted of 1,023 students from various departments at Inonu University in Malatya, Turkey. The research findings were divided into two sections: students' personal information and the findings and evaluations of the Democratic Classroom Management Scale. The study revealed that a majority of students in faculties were male, with the largest group being in the faculty of education. Moreover, the study identified significant differences in students' opinions on democratic classroom management based on gender, faculty, and class. In conclusion, the study emphasized the importance of educating students on democratic values to uphold and enhance democratic management practices, with educational institutions playing a crucial role in this process.

Another significant study conducted by Izawa (2022) examined the concept of classroom democracy and its potential to promote social justice in education. The study employed a methodology that involved critically analyzing existing literature on classroom management and educational philosophy, as well as conducting a case study of a successful implementation of democratic practices in a Japanese elementary school. The findings indicated that classroom democracy can effectively foster social justice in education by cultivating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. However, implementing classroom democracy requires a thorough reassessment of current educational practices and policies, as well as a commitment to ongoing collaboration and communication among teachers, students, and parents.

The discourse surrounding teacher education acknowledges both positive advancements and persistent gaps that perpetuate the development of undemocratic management skills among prospective educators. A body of literature from various global and local perspectives substantiates this claim.

International research studies, for instance, pinpoint the disparity between the advocated theoretical models of democratic education and their practical implementation, revealing a lack of genuine democratic classroom management skills. Empirical investigations conducted outside of Africa further highlight this paradox. The work of scholars such as John Dewey and Alfie Kohn has drawn attention to the disconnect between professed democratic educational ideals and their actual manifestation in teaching practices (Dewey, 1916; Kohn, 2006). These findings underscore the challenges associated with translating theoretical knowledge into effective classroom management strategies.

Turning attention to the African context, noteworthy research conducted by esteemed academics in Kenya and Nigeria provides additional support for this observation. Kubow's research in Kenya (2005) and Adeyemo's research in Nigeria (2012) unveil a concerning trend across diverse educational settings - the difficulty of translating theoretical democratic frameworks into practical classroom management techniques. These findings underscore the critical need for comprehensive reforms in teacher education that prioritize bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and practical applications in order to cultivate effective and democratic educational practices.

Now, directing attention towards South Africa, De Jager's (2019) research highlights the evident disparities within the teacher education system. There is a distinct contrast between the desired principles of democracy and the actual implementation of classroom management practices. This fundamental incongruity underscores the significance of investigating and rectifying the anomalies within the teacher education process. Consequently, this study aims to bridge the existing research gap by examining the perspectives and applications of democratic classroom management in university-based teacher training programs in South Africa. By doing so, this study seeks to provide fresh insights

and perspectives that have the potential to ameliorate the current discrepancies within the teacher education process and foster a comprehensive approach towards cultivating democratic classroom management skills.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the practices and perceptions of student-teachers and lecturers regarding democratic classroom management practices at a University. This is warranted by the manifesto on values, education, and democracy released by the Department of Education (2001), which outlines the values that should serve as the foundation of the South African education system, including democracy, social justice, and equity. This policy framework advocates for the implementation of democratic classroom management practices by promoting values that encourage active participation, critical thinking, and respect for diversity. To guide the study, the following research objectives were formulated based on the identified gap:

- The study explores how democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms.
- The study investigates the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms.

### Research Questions

In order to actualise the objectives of the study stated above, the following research questions were raised and answered:

- How do democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms?

### Theoretical Framework

This study is rooted in the principles of critical theory, which serves as its theoretical framework. Critical theory originated from the ideas of German

Marxist intellectuals in the early 20th century, and it has since expanded to encompass various social and political phenomena, including education. Critical theory critiques existing societal structures and aims to bring about transformative change (Bronner, 2013; Friesen, 2008). The term "critical theory" was coined by Max Horkheimer, a prominent figure in the Frankfurt School, a group of intellectuals who examined authority, obedience, and social justice (Landmann, 2011; Johnson, 2005). This theory combines Marxist analysis with Freudian psychoanalytical insights and is based on the belief that there are inherent dysfunctions in society that require interventions to establish fair and just frameworks (Brand, 2016). The Frankfurt School sought to understand the paradox of obedience to unjust authority and to develop strategies for creating a more equitable society.

Critical theory examines power dynamics within established systems of knowledge and control, making it a valuable tool for challenging oppressive and exclusionary educational models (Giroux, 2004). With its transformative approach, critical theory rejects traditional hierarchical education and advocates for a participatory and inclusive learning environment. It highlights collaboration and dialogue as alternatives to the competitive and individualistic focus often found in education. Proponents of critical theory argue that education should be a liberating experience that dismantles traditional power structures and values the perspectives of all participants.

Critical theory is relevant in the study because it strives to democratize classroom management and promote participatory and inclusive approaches. It provides a framework for analyzing classroom interactions, curriculum planning, and student-lecturer relationships. By utilizing critical theory, I can investigate whether university classrooms facilitate democratic practices, inclusivity, and unbiased learning environments. This theory encourages lecturers to be conscious

of their biases and create a collaborative atmosphere that fosters equality and mutual respect among students. It also helps us understand the lack of democracy in classroom management practices and guides the integration of transformative, democratic practices in teacher education programs.

To establish the connection between theory and the study's objectives, critical theory serves as a transformative and analytical lens. It is crucial to examine the implementation of democratic management practices in university classrooms and explore student teachers' and lecturers' perceptions of these practices. This theory enables us to comprehend the complex interplay of power structures, knowledge systems, and interactive dynamics in educational settings. It also aids in examining the presence of democratic elements and operational inclusivity in classroom management. Critical theory allows us to scrutinize and interpret the biases, assumptions, and prevailing ideologies that influence student teachers and lecturers, providing insights into their understanding and experiences of democratic practices in university classrooms. Therefore, by employing this approach, one can comprehensively understand the discrepancies and commonalities between theoretical democratic concepts and their practical applications, thereby promoting a more inclusive and participatory educational paradigm.

## Methodology

### Research Paradigm

The transformative paradigm is essential for this research because it emphasises the need to understand and address the various structures, perceptions, and practices within the educational sector that may limit the creation of democratic and participatory classroom management practices. This paradigm is particularly relevant to the study's objectives, which are to explore democratic management practices and examine the perspectives of student teachers and lecturers on these practices in university classrooms. The transformative paradigm is based on the

recognition that research is influenced by values and the importance of approaching inquiry with a commitment to social justice and emancipation (Mertens, 2007; Romm, 2015). By adopting a transformative paradigm, the study acknowledges the potential inequalities and power imbalances in educational settings and provides a framework to navigate, understand, and address issues of inequality, marginalisation, power dynamics, and exclusivity in the learning environment. This approach promotes active engagement with democratic principles (Hurtado, 2015) and helps situate the study within the broader discourse on democratisation in education. Moreover, it facilitates the exploration of complex, contextual interactions and contributes to the development of more equitable and inclusive classroom spaces.

### Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research approach in order to align with its objectives of investigating democratic management practices and examining different perspectives within university classrooms. The use of a qualitative approach allows for a more thorough exploration of the complex dynamics, experiences, and viewpoints (Petty et al., 2012) related to democratic classroom management. Unlike quantitative approaches that focus on numerical data and generalized findings (Sukamolson, 2007), qualitative research delves into the intricacies of human behaviour, offering a comprehensive understanding of the various interpretations, beliefs, and interactions that take place in educational settings. By utilizing a qualitative approach, the study effectively captures the valuable insights of student teachers and lecturers regarding democratic practices, providing a holistic perspective of the underlying values, motivations, and challenges that influence the implementation of democratic management principles in university classrooms. This in-depth exploration facilitated by the qualitative approach is crucial for understanding the subtleties of classroom dynamics, contributing to the discussion on inclusive, participatory education,

and providing practical insights for nurturing democratic classroom environments.

### Research Design

The study strategically adopts Participatory Research (PR) as a research design due to its relevance in promoting active and democratic participation among individuals directly experiencing the investigated problems. This design is particularly suitable as it aligns with the goal of democratizing classroom environments, enabling student teachers and lecturers to actively engage in identifying and addressing the challenges associated with implementing democratic management practices in university classrooms (Higginbottom & Liamputtong, 2015). The use of PR facilitates a collaborative exploration of experiences, perceptions, and potential solutions, fostering a sense of ownership and mutual respect among participants (Marinkovic-Chavez et al., 2022). By placing the individuals facing the challenges at the centre of the inquiry process, PR ensures a more authentic, contextually rich understanding of the dynamics of democratic classroom management, thus contributing to the development of comprehensive, inclusive, and practical strategies to enhance participatory learning environments and democratic engagement in the educational sector.

### Data Collection Methods

This study employs observation and interview data collection methods to obtain relevant information from participants. Observations are focused on the first objective, which pertains to democratic management practices. The use of observation as a method of data collection offers a unique advantage in capturing nuanced dynamics and unspoken social cues (Sudipa et al., 2018). Observational data collection can provide insights into social cues that individuals may not be consciously aware of or may not express through verbal communication (Tran et al., 2013). This method allows for the validation of the extent and degree of implementation, or lack thereof, of democratic practices in selected university

classrooms. The researcher specifically observed four active classrooms within the chosen university in order to gain concrete insights into the real-world application of democratic practices. Additionally, semi-structured interviews are utilized to address the second objective and create an environment conducive to candid discussions. This approach allows both students and lecturers to express their perspectives on issues related to the study's central problem (Baumbusch, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are particularly suitable for extracting in-depth information from participants and are aligned with participatory research principles, promoting participant collaboration in identifying institutional problems and co-constructing solutions. By employing these two methods, the study ensures a comprehensive exploration of the topics at hand, bringing together theoretical insights and practical realities.

#### Participants and selection of participants

To achieve the first objective, the study involves the participation of student-teachers and lecturers from four distinct active classrooms. For the second objective, the participants consist of 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers, totaling 15 individuals. The selected student-teachers are third-year university students in the faculty of education, while the lecturers possess a minimum of two years of teaching experience within the chosen university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The study uses the Convenient Participant Selection Technique to select participants, offering efficiency and accessibility (Etikan et al., 2016; Alvi, 2016). This technique is advantageous due to its time-efficient nature, enabling a prompt and seamless approach to subjects, thereby facilitating the exploration of the study's focal points.

#### Method of data analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data gathered from observations and interviews in this study. This method is a fundamental component of qualitative analysis as it aids in the identification, analysis, and interpretation of

patterns or "themes" that are present in the data. It enables a thorough understanding of the underlying dynamics, behaviours, and perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Clarke et al., 2015). By employing thematic analysis, the study was capable of investigating and comprehending the various perceptions, interactions, and implementations associated with democratic management practices in university classrooms, as expressed by the participants. This method was vital in elucidating student teachers' and lecturers' diverse and intricate experiences and opinions, providing a comprehensive and contextualized insight into the prevailing practices and attitudes regarding democratic classroom management. Therefore, thematic analysis played a pivotal role in enhancing the depth, coherence, and relevance of the study's findings, ensuring a well-rounded and substantiated exploration of the research themes.

### Ethical Considerations

In accordance with research integrity standards, this study obtained approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Free State. One of the most important considerations was obtaining informed consent from all participants. They were given detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, ensuring that they had the autonomy to make informed decisions about their involvement. To protect the participants' privacy and the sensitive nature of the information shared, anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. Pseudonyms such as S1, S2, and S3 were used for student participants, and L1, L2, and L3 were used for lecturer participants to ensure that personal information was not revealed. This layer of protection allowed participants to openly express their views, experiences, and perceptions without fear of reprisal or harm. As a result, the collected data was rich and authentic. These ethical safeguards not only enhanced the study's moral character but also increased its trustworthiness.

## Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through various measures addressing credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. **Credibility** was achieved by utilising multiple data collection methods, such as observations and semi-structured interviews. This yielded comprehensive, triangulated insights into democratic management practices. Furthermore, member checking was employed to allow participants to review and validate the findings, thus ensuring the accurate capture of their perspectives. **Dependability** was upheld by extensively documenting the research process, including the research design, data collection, and analysis procedures. This created an audit trail that can be examined by other researchers. **Transferability** was supported by providing a detailed description of the research context, participants, and findings. This enables readers to assess the applicability of the results to other settings. **Confirmability** was maintained by maintaining a reflexive journal where the researchers recorded their reflections and potential biases throughout the study. Additionally, direct quotes from participants were utilized to substantiate the findings. These combined efforts enhance the study's reliability and the validity of its conclusions.

## Presentation of data

This section presents data collected through a combination of observation and interviews. The purpose of this data collection was to address the following research questions: How do democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms? What are the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms?

## Democratic management practices unfold in the classrooms

To answer question number one, data was collected through observations in four different classrooms with different lecturers. I took notes on various categories, including class details, instructor behaviour, student engagement, participatory

methods, and management of disruptions. The details are provided in the table below.

**Table 1:** Observational checklist for the study

<b>CLASSROOM 1</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Class Details:	The undergraduate lecture was held in a classroom with limited seating arrangements.
Instructor Behaviour:	The instructor primarily adopts a lecture-based approach, delivering content using PowerPoint slides. Limited interaction with students was observed; the instructor maintains control over the classroom but does not actively engage with students.
Student Engagement	Students appear attentive but passively engaged. Limited opportunities for student interaction or participation were observed during the session.
Participatory Methods	There is no evident use of participatory methods such as group discussions or collaborative activities. Instruction remains primarily one-way, with minimal student involvement.
Management of Disruptions	No disruptions were noted during the observation; the instructor maintained a calm and orderly classroom environment throughout the session.
<b>CLASSROOM 2</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Class Details:	Undergraduate lectures are conducted in a smaller classroom setting without circular tables for group discussions.
Instructor Behaviour:	The instructor adopts a discussion-based approach, encouraging active participation and dialogue among students. It provides opportunities for students to share their perspectives and engage in critical analysis, but the classroom seating arrangement was a

	challenge for the students as they could not engage as they wanted. The seating arrangement was in a traditional setting where students sat as the audience while the lecturers stood in front of the class delivering the lecture.
Student Engagement	A high level of student engagement with lecture was observed; students actively participated in questions and answers, asked questions, and offered insights.
Participatory Methods	Utilises participatory methods such as group discussions, case studies, and peer presentations to facilitate collaborative learning experiences, but the group discussion, as recommended by the lecturer, was not active because the student can only work in a group outside the classroom hour, as a result of the uncondusive classroom seating arrangement.
Management of Disruptions	Minimal disruptions were observed; the lecturer effectively manages discussions and redirects focus when necessary, maintaining a respectful and inclusive atmosphere.
<b>CLASSROOM 3</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Class Details:	Undergraduate laboratory classroom sessions were conducted in a well-equipped laboratory space with designated workstations.
Instructor Behaviour:	The instructor adopts a hands-on approach, guiding students through practical experiments and demonstrations. Provides clear instructions and support to ensure student safety and understanding.
Student Engagement	Students actively engage in hands-on activities, following instructions and enthusiastically conducting technical work. The instructor encourages questions and discussions during the session.

Participatory Methods	In this session, the lecturer's activities promote active participation and collaboration among students, fostering a cooperative learning environment.
Management of Disruptions	No significant disruptions were noted; the lecturer controls the laboratory environment and promptly addresses any safety concerns.
<b>CLASSROOM 4</b>	
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Observations</b>
Class Details:	The undergraduate classroom is held in a medium-sized classroom with tables arranged in a normal face-me-and-face-you classroom section where the lecturer stays at the front and faces the students.
Instructor Behaviour:	The lecturer facilitates problem-solving exercises and provides individualised assistance to students as needed. Encourages students to work together and share their approaches.
Student Engagement	Students could not actively participate in solving problems and discussing concepts because of the difficulty in movement, as some students seem to prefer to work with other students who are not closely seated with them. The lecturer, however, seems to lack the ability to create a supportive atmosphere where students feel comfortable asking questions and seeking clarification.
Participatory Methods	The lecturer emphasises interactive problem-solving activities and peer learning strategies to engage students in learning. However, this seems to be the abstract, as the students are too handicapped to implement such an atmosphere.

Management of Disruptions	Minimal disruptions were observed; the instructor maintained a structured yet flexible teaching session, managing student interactions and inquiries but not as effectively as it should, as students asked questions even when they were not pointed at.
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The observations from the four classrooms illustrate a wide range of classroom management practices and levels of student engagement. Classroom 1 follows a traditional lecture-based approach characterized by limited interaction between the instructor and students. Although disruption was minimal because of the small number of students, student engagement appears passive, with few opportunities for active participation or collaborative learning. This observation aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the persistence of traditional teaching methods (Chauke, 2021), which can hinder the integration of democratic principles into classroom management practices. On the other hand, Classroom 2 adopts a more participatory approach, with the instructor encouraging discussion and promoting active student engagement. However, there are challenges due to the physical layout of the classroom, which hampers effective group discussions as recommended by the instructor. This discrepancy between theoretical ideals and practical constraints echoes the findings of Dewey (1916) and Kohn (2006), who emphasize the gap between espoused democratic values and their implementation in educational settings.

Classroom 3 demonstrates a hands-on teaching style, where students actively participate in practical experiments and collaborative learning activities. The instructor creates a cooperative learning environment that promotes engagement and interaction among students. This observation aligns with literature that highlights the importance of participatory methods in fostering inclusive and engaging learning environments (Mafhala, 2015). However, Classroom 4 faces challenges related to its physical layout, which affects student mobility and peer

interaction. Despite the lecturer's efforts to facilitate interactive problem-solving activities, students encounter difficulties engaging in classroom activities due to the constrained seating arrangement. This highlights the significance of aligning classroom infrastructure with pedagogical goals to facilitate democratic classroom management practices, as Demirtas (2005) and Izawa (2022) noted.

The perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic classroom management practices

This section answers research question two, which generated three sub-themes as indicated below: Student and lecturer perspectives on democratic classroom management, benefits and challenges of democratic classroom management, and strategies for implementing democratic classroom management.

Theme 1: Student and Lecturer Perspectives on Democratic Classroom Management

In exploring the perceptions of both students and lecturers regarding democratic management practices in university classrooms, it is crucial to understand their perspectives on student involvement, decision-making processes, and the balance between autonomy and order. This introduction sets the stage for the transcript below, which presents diverse viewpoints surrounding democratic management from both stakeholders - students and lecturers:

*S1: "I feel like democratic management means lecturers listening to students and letting us have a say in class activities."*

*L1: "In my opinion, democratic management empowers students and fosters a sense of ownership over their education. However, we need to balance this, and this is where the challenge is: balancing student autonomy with maintaining order in the classroom is a challenge when implementing democratic management practices."*

*S2: "It's when everyone in the class feels like they're part of the decision-making process and their opinions matter. As for me, I believe this is it."*

*L2: "I believe democratic management is about creating a collaborative learning environment where students feel valued and heard. However, it can be challenging to implement when students have varying levels of participation or disagreement."*

*S3: "In my opinion, democratic management is about giving students choices and making us feel involved in our learning."*

*L3: "While democratic management is valuable for student empowerment, it's important for students to understand the boundaries and responsibilities that come with it. Respect for each other's opinions and the teacher's authority is essential for a harmonious classroom."*

*S4: "Big classes make it hard to have democratic management since there's not enough time for everyone to talk."*

*L4: "I've found that democratic management fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among students, leading to increased engagement and motivation. However, it's crucial to provide clear guidelines and expectations to maintain order in the classroom."*

*S5: "I enjoy classes where teachers use democratic management because it makes learning feel more interactive and engaging."*

*L5: "While democratic management may require more planning and flexibility, the benefits of increased student involvement and empowerment outweigh the challenges. This is why I encourage this time to time."*

The data reveals a range of perspectives on democratic classroom management from students and lecturers. Students, such as S1 and S2, emphasize the importance of feeling heard and valued in the classroom. They stress the need to have a say in class activities and be part of the decision-making process. On the other hand, lecturers like L1 and L2, highlight how democratic classroom management practices empower students and foster a sense of ownership over education. They also mention the creation of a collaborative learning

environment. However, they do acknowledge the challenges of implementing democratic practices, particularly in finding a balance between student autonomy and maintaining order in the classroom. This is articulated by L1 and L3. Furthermore, the data shows that both students and lecturers recognize the benefits of democratic management, including increased engagement, motivation, and student involvement. This is noted by S4 and L5.

Additionally, the data argues for the need for clear guidelines and expectations to ensure the effectiveness of democratic management. This is mentioned by L4. This sentiment aligns with the literature, as Dewey (1916) advocates for structured environments that still allow for student autonomy. He emphasizes the importance of finding a balance between freedom and order in democratic classrooms. Furthermore, the challenges highlighted by students and lecturers regarding the practical implementation of democratic management align with the findings of Kubow (2005) and Adeyemo (2012). These researchers emphasize the difficulties of translating theoretical frameworks into practical classroom techniques, especially in diverse educational environments. Therefore, while perspectives may vary, the data suggests a shared recognition of the potential benefits and challenges associated with democratic management. This highlights the importance of further exploration and refinement of strategies to foster inclusive and participatory learning environments.

## Theme 2: Challenges of Democratic Management

In exploring the perceptions of both students and lecturers regarding the challenges of democratic management practices in university classrooms, this theme presents diverse viewpoints surrounding democratic management from both stakeholders. See the below statements:

*S6: "Sometimes it's tough to implement democratic management because even when I was teaching in my practice school, not all students wanted to participate in the activities."*

*S7: "While democratic management is beneficial, it can be frustrating if not everyone agrees on decisions, leading to conflicts. For example, we tend to disrupt the classrooms when we are all allowed to talk on all issues."*

*S8: "I think it is challenging for our lecturers to use democratic management when they have to cover a lot of material in a short amount of time."*

The data reveals several challenges associated with the implementation of democratic management practices in university classrooms, as perceived by both students and lecturers. Student S6 discusses the difficulty of engaging all students in democratic activities based on their experience in a practice school. This challenge aligns with Adeyemo's (2012) findings, which emphasise the struggle of translating theory into practical classroom techniques due to student reluctance or disinterest. Student S7 acknowledges the potential for frustration and conflicts when consensus is not reached, leading to disruptions when all voices are given equal weight. This reflects the challenges highlighted by Kubow (2005), who emphasizes the difficulty of balancing student autonomy with maintaining order in diverse classroom settings. The issue of conflict and disruption underscores the need for structured guidelines and effective facilitation to manage democratic processes in the classroom.

Additionally, Student S8 points out the challenge lecturers face in employing democratic management practices while needing to cover extensive material within limited time frames. This time constraint issue complicates the implementation of democratic practices, as it requires additional time for discussion and consensus-building, potentially hindering the ability to cover the full curriculum effectively. One can then argue that while democratic management practices offer significant benefits, the data highlights the practical challenges of student engagement, managing conflicts, and balancing curriculum

coverage within time constraints. Addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, structured guidelines, and effective facilitation to ensure that democratic principles can be implemented successfully without compromising educational goals.

### Theme 3: Benefits of Democratic Management

"In exploring the perceptions of both students and lecturers regarding the benefits of democratic management practices in university classrooms, this theme presents diverse viewpoints surrounding democratic management from both stakeholders. See the statements below.:

*L1: "As a lecturer, it's crucial for me to find ways to incorporate democratic management while still meeting curriculum requirements. Students seem to be more engaged and motivated when they feel like they have a say in their learning."*

*L2: "It is essential for lecturers to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. Yes, it is good."*

*L3: "From my experience, democratic management encourages student autonomy and critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, it's essential to strike a balance between student input and maintaining classroom discipline."*

The data reveals the benefits of democratic management practices in university classrooms, as highlighted by both students and lecturers. Lecturer L1 emphasises the importance of incorporating democratic management while still meeting curriculum requirements. They suggest that student engagement and motivation increase when students feel empowered in their learning processes. This perspective aligns with Dewey's (1916) advocacy for structured yet participatory environments where students have a say in their learning while adhering to academic standards.

Lecturer L2 underscores the necessity of creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. They highlight

the positive impact of democratic management on student engagement and participation. Similarly, Lecturer L3 emphasizes the positive outcomes of democratic management, such as fostering student autonomy and critical thinking skills. However, L3 also highlights the importance of striking a balance between student input and maintaining classroom discipline. This echoes the notion that effective democratic management requires structured guidelines and expectations (Dewey, 1916).

These diverse viewpoints illustrate that while democratic management practices can significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, autonomy, and critical thinking, they must be implemented within a framework that maintains academic standards and classroom discipline. This balance is essential for creating an educational environment that is both democratic and effective in achieving learning outcomes.

### Theme 3: Strategies for Implementing Democratic Management

In order to better understand the perceptions of students and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms, it is important to examine their experiences and perspectives. This introduction serves as a prelude to the transcripts from the participants, which will explore the various viewpoints on the implementation strategies of democratic classroom management.

*S9: "I remember a time when our lecturer asked us to choose topics for group projects, and it made me feel more invested in the class."*

*L4: "Implementing democratic management requires flexibility and adaptability from the lecturers. That is why I try as much as possible to create a good atmosphere for my students. It's important to create opportunities for student participation while ensuring that learning goals are still met."*

*L5: "From my experience, democratic management encourages student autonomy and critical thinking skills. Nevertheless, it's essential to strike a balance between student input and maintaining classroom discipline."*

The data reveals divergent viewpoints on the implementation and outcomes of democratic management practices in university classrooms. S9 students recount instances where their involvement in decision-making processes, such as choosing group project topics, increased their commitment to the class. This aligns with Dewey's (1916) emphasis on engaging students in activities that cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility in their learning. On the other hand, lecturer L5 emphasizes the positive outcomes of democratic management, such as student autonomy and the development of critical thinking skills. However, L5 also emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between student input and maintaining classroom discipline, in accordance with the notion that effective democratic management requires clear guidelines and expectations.

Moreover, the focus on specific strategies, such as topic selection, creating a positive learning environment, and providing opportunities for student participation, is crucial for the successful implementation of democratic management practices. Choosing topics that interest students can significantly enhance their engagement and sense of responsibility towards their learning. Establishing a positive learning environment where students feel safe and respected encourages active participation and collaboration. Offering opportunities for student participation in decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and investment in their educational experience. As emphasized by various studies (Kubow, 2005; Dewey, 1916), these strategies are essential in laying the foundation for democratic classroom management.

Furthermore, conflicting perspectives arise regarding the strategies for implementing democratic management. While employing democratic practices,

lecturer L4 underscores the importance of flexibility and adaptability in creating opportunities for student participation. This dichotomy reflects the challenges highlighted by Kubow (2005), who noted the difficulties in balancing student autonomy with maintaining order in diverse classroom settings. Despite these challenges, the data suggests a shared recognition of the potential of democratic management in enhancing student engagement and investment in their learning experiences.

### Discussion of Findings

Based on observations conducted to address research question one, the study found significant variation in democratic classroom management practices across observed university classrooms. Some classrooms primarily employ traditional lecture-based approaches with limited student engagement and minimal use of participatory methods, while others demonstrate efforts towards a more inclusive and interactive learning environment. This diversity in classroom management aligns with existing literature, which highlights the impact of different management strategies on student outcomes. These strategies have been shown to positively influence academic, behavioural, emotional, and motivational outcomes for students (Korpershoek et al., 2016). Additionally, the study's findings resonate with research emphasising the importance of teacher-classroom management practices in influencing student behaviour (Oliver et al., 2011). The relationship between classroom management and learning has been extensively studied, emphasising the impact of various management dimensions on creating a positive learning environment, managing instructional activities, and enhancing student motivation and engagement (Kucukakin & Demir, 2021). However, challenges related to physical classroom layout, instructional strategies, and the integration of participatory methods persist, hindering the full realisation of democratic classroom management principles. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive reforms in teacher education and the alignment of

classroom infrastructure with pedagogical goals to foster inclusive and engaging learning environments that accommodate diverse student needs.

The study also reveals a variety of perspectives on democratic management within university classrooms. These perspectives reflect both the aspirations and challenges associated with implementing such practices. Students emphasize the importance of feeling heard and valued and advocate for active involvement in decision-making processes. Meanwhile, lecturers highlight the empowering nature of democratic management in fostering a sense of student ownership of education and collaborative learning environments. However, there is a consensus among students and lecturers that there are challenges involved, particularly in balancing student autonomy with maintaining classroom order. This finding is consistent with the literature, specifically the insights of Dewey (1916), who emphasizes the need for structured yet autonomous learning environments.

Furthermore, there is recognition of the benefits of democratic classroom management, such as increased engagement and motivation, which aligns with the broader discourse on inclusive pedagogical practices. However, the study argues that clear guidelines and expectations are crucial to ensure the effectiveness of democratic management. This echoes previous research by Kubow (2005) and Adeyemo (2012) on the challenges of translating theoretical knowledge into practical classroom techniques. Therefore, while acknowledging the potential benefits, the findings emphasize the importance of refining strategies to cultivate inclusive and participatory learning environments in higher education.

The study explores a range of perspectives on the benefits and challenges of democratic management practices in university classrooms. Participants highlight

the challenge of getting students fully engaged, supporting Adeyemo's (2012) observation that it can be difficult to apply theory to practice due to student reluctance. However, participants also recognize the value of incorporating democratic management to boost student involvement and motivation, which aligns with Dewey's (1916) call for structured yet participatory learning environments. Magwa and Mohangi (2022) further emphasize the importance of fostering democratic student-teacher relationships and providing opportunities for autonomous learning to enhance student participation, motivation, and academic performance. This underscores the significance of creating a collaborative and inclusive environment that empowers students and involves them in their own learning process. Iqbal et al. (2021) discuss the influence of teachers' classroom management styles on student-teacher connectedness and anxiety, suggesting that a blend of democratic and authoritative approaches leads to more positive student outcomes. Conflicting viewpoints arise as student S7 acknowledges the potential for frustration and conflicts when consensus is absent, echoing Kubow's (2005) emphasis on finding a balance between student autonomy and maintaining order. On the other hand, lecturer L3 highlights the positive results of democratic management, such as student autonomy and the development of critical thinking skills, while also recognizing the need for structured guidelines and expectations consistent with Dewey's ideas. Therefore, the analysis demonstrates an understanding of democratic management, revealing its potential benefits for empowering students and its challenges when implemented in academic settings.

The study examines the implementation and outcomes of democratic management practices in university classrooms. Students' memories of feeling more invested in class activities when given decision-making opportunities, such as choosing group project topics, align with Dewey's (1916) emphasis on fostering student ownership in learning. Dewey suggests that classrooms that

embrace democracy and encourage active student participation in decision-making promote deeper engagement and intrinsic motivation. However, instructors also emphasize the importance of flexibility and adaptability when implementing democratic practices and meeting curriculum requirements, which is consistent with Pak et al.'s (2020) findings. Pak et al. stress the need for lecturers to strike a balance between student autonomy and maintaining academic standards and instructional goals. This aligns with the concept of "flexible specificity" introduced by Stornaiuolo et al. (2023), which aims to provide specific and useful guidance on curriculum and professional learning based on stakeholder needs. Conflicting viewpoints arise regarding the challenges faced by lecturers, with some recognizing the difficulty of covering a large amount of material within limited time frames. This challenge echoes Kubow's (2005) concerns about maintaining order in diverse classroom settings while allowing for student autonomy. Despite these challenges, there is a shared recognition of the potential benefits of democratic management in enhancing student engagement and autonomy in their learning processes, as Freire (1970) advocates. Freire argues that democratic classrooms cultivate critical thinking skills and empower students, leading to more meaningful learning experiences.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The culmination of the diverse perspectives uncovered in the study on democratic management practices in university classrooms relies on the research findings. The findings emphasize the complexity involved in implementing such practices. Students emphasize the importance of feeling invested in their learning through decision-making opportunities, while lecturers emphasise balancing student autonomy with academic requirements. These insights suggest that successful democratic management depends on creating a collaborative environment where students feel empowered while also aligning with educational objectives. However, challenges remain, particularly in maintaining order when conflicting

viewpoints arise and in covering extensive material within limited timeframes. Nevertheless, the study reveals a shared recognition of the potential benefits of democratic management in enhancing student engagement and critical thinking skills, echoing the sentiments of educational theorists like Dewey and Freire.

In light of these findings, several recommendations emerge for classroom practices and further research.

- Firstly, lecturers should prioritise creating structured yet participatory environments that foster student ownership and responsibility in their learning processes. This may involve integrating decision-making opportunities into lesson planning and providing clear guidelines for student involvement.
- Secondly, ongoing professional development programs should be offered to lecturers to enhance their pedagogical skills in implementing democratic management practices effectively. These programs could include workshops on facilitation techniques, conflict resolution strategies, and methods for balancing student autonomy with academic requirements.
- Additionally, further studies are warranted to explore the long-term effects of democratic management on student outcomes, including academic achievement, motivation, and social-emotional development.
- Future research could also investigate the role of contextual factors, such as class size, student demographics, and institutional culture, in shaping the implementation and impact of democratic management practices.

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## ARTICLE TWO: EXAMINING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

### Abstract

The study examines the challenges and opportunities in embedding democratic management practices in university classrooms. Grounded in the theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy, as advocated by Paulo Freire, and utilising a transformative paradigm within a participatory research design, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, including 10 student teachers and 5 lecturers from a selected university in Eastern Cape, South Africa. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The findings reveal significant challenges to the adoption of democratic practices, such as entrenched traditional teaching methods and a lack of institutional support and resources. However, the study also highlights the transformative potential of democratic practices in fostering critical thinking, personal growth, and a more inclusive educational environment. In conclusion, the study emphasises the need to reassess and revamp educational policies and practices in order to support the implementation of democratic principles in classroom management. It calls for a comprehensive approach that includes professional development for lecturers, curriculum redesign, and the provision of sufficient resources to overcome the identified challenges and leverage the opportunities for creating a more engaging, inclusive, and empowering learning experience for all students.

**Keywords:** Classrooms management, democratic practices, university classrooms, challenges and opportunities.

### Introduction

The quality of educational frameworks worldwide, including those in South Africa, depends heavily on the proficiency and professionalism of teachers. Teachers at all levels are the cornerstone of the educational environment. It is

crucial for a system that aims to foster enlightened and profound knowledge to create a democratic atmosphere that encourages open student interactions. Democratic approaches in classrooms are essential for promoting student participation, inclusivity, equitable collaboration, and critical thinking. These approaches allow for a thorough examination of assumptions from diverse perspectives and active student engagement. These characteristics are closely connected to the policies and procedures that shape teacher education in the nation and its academic institutions. Therefore, it is important to consider the regulatory paradigms, cultural ethos, and pedagogical practices that are integral to teacher education in universities (Mcube, 2018).

This perspective aligns with the proposition that the process of teacher education should develop teachers who are intrinsically motivated, conscientious, and skilled. They should possess the intellectual capacity and democratic values necessary for effective classroom management and adaptability in changing educational landscapes (Department of Education, 2002; Sentürk & Oyman, 2014). However, despite these ambitious goals, recent studies conducted in South Africa by Omodan and Ige (2021) highlight the apparent inability of universities to effectively promote democratized educational interactions and inclusive student participation. This raises concerns about the realization of truly democratic and inclusive learning environments in many teacher education institutions.

International research indicates that teacher education programs worldwide face similar challenges, suggesting a widespread inadequacy in preparing teachers to effectively address the diverse needs of their students. In the United States, one longstanding critique is the perceived lack of emphasis on democratic practices within teacher education programs. Morrison (2008) highlights the concern that these programs do not foster equitable and inclusive learning environments that

encourage active student participation. This deficiency negatively affects student learning and engagement, as well as teacher morale (Edwards, 2010). Similar challenges can be observed in China, where issues related to identity hinder the establishment of democratic learning spaces. Sung (2020) describes the ongoing struggle in the Republic of China to establish a distinct Taiwanese identity and maintain autonomy from the prevailing Chinese historical narrative. This struggle is prominently displayed in debates that highlight the absence of democratic consciousness among educators, reflecting a wider challenge in reconciling national identity with principles and practices in education.

In Turkey, the hindrance to democratic practices within university classrooms is clearly evident. Numerous studies attribute the decline in critical engagement to the increasing authoritarian tendencies in societal structures and strict government restrictions on differing viewpoints (Esen and Gumuscu, 2021). These societal and political dynamics have significant impacts on educational environments and result in the intimidation of lecturers and students who express dissenting opinions, particularly those critical of government policies and practices (Taştan, Ördek, and Öz, 2020; Hünler, 2022). This pervasive atmosphere of constraint and repression has led to an academic landscape where students are exposed to a limited range of democratic management perspectives and are rarely prompted to critically scrutinize and reflect on the complex issues affecting their nation. Therefore, the lack of dynamic and diverse dialogues within the classroom is not only a symptom of external authoritarianism but also a significant obstacle to the development of analytical and democratic thinking among future contributors to Turkey's societal and political fabric. From a continental perspective, the historical military dictatorships in West African nations like Ghana, Gambia, and Nigeria have had a significant impact on students' rights and freedom of speech (Agyemang, 2012). Enu and Eba (2014) support this view and advocate for a comprehensive reassessment of teaching

methodologies in Nigeria. They emphasize the need for student-teachers to develop democratic discernment in order to instil democratic practices during instructional sessions.

In a South African context, student-teachers have reflected on a substantial democratic deficit in classroom activities, as elucidated by Omodan and Ige (2021). This deficit is characterized by a predominantly one-way transfer of knowledge, with teachers or lecturers being the sole providers. Echoing this democratic gap, de Jager (2019a) previously highlighted the lack of critical thinking and cooperative abilities among South African students. This hinders their engagement in reflective, student-centred learning. Lawrence and Maphalala (2021) further support this notion and argue that a dedicated focus on democracy and social justice within university classrooms in South Africa is essential. The absence of such a focus poses a significant obstacle to achieving democratic education and has adverse effects on broader societal and governance structures.

While several solutions have been proposed to address the lack of democratic practices in educational settings, including practical guides for teachers (Davids & Waghid, 2012), improvements in teacher training and professional development (Mashau et al., 2016), and promotion of experiential learning among student-teachers (de Jager, 2019b), the underlying issue remains unresolved. Observation reveals that many lecturers continue to adopt authoritarian and traditional classroom management styles. This ongoing problem can be attributed to a lack of focus in existing research on the crucial stage of student-teacher training at universities, where seeds of democratic management practices need to be sown and nurtured. Previous interventions have largely overlooked this foundational phase, neglecting the cultivation of democratic ethos and practices at the early stages of teachers' professional journey.

This study examines the challenges and opportunities in embedding democratic management practices in university classrooms. By focusing on this uncharted territory, the research seeks to uncover transformative strategies that can fundamentally change the trajectory of classroom management paradigms, promoting democratic principles and practices from the beginning of teacher education.

### Research Objectives

This research is underpinned by two objectives aimed at unravelling the complexities inherent in the adoption of democratic management practices within university classrooms:

- Identify the challenges of implementing democratic management practices in university classrooms.
- Evaluate the opportunities that effective democratic management practices present in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms.

The first objective is to examine the challenges associated with implementing democratic management practices in academic settings. This includes analyzing resistance to participatory learning, constraints arising from existing institutional structures, and limitations due to a lack of resources and capabilities. The objective aims to identify the barriers that prevent the use of democratic pedagogies and interactions in university classrooms. The second objective is to evaluate the opportunities provided by effective democratic management practices in enhancing learning experiences within university environments. This involves exploring the role of participatory learning in promoting critical thinking and civic engagement, identifying ways to foster inclusive and equitable learning atmospheres, and examining the impact of democratic approaches on academic outcomes and student satisfaction. These objectives aim to examine the challenges and opportunities involved in embedding democratic management practices in

university classrooms. They also provide a framework for future academic interventions and enhancements.

### Theoretical Framework

Critical Pedagogy, initially proposed by Paulo Freire in his influential work, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" in 1970 (Freire, 1970), serves as the fundamental theory that underlies this study. According to Freire, education is intrinsically political and can either liberate or oppress individuals. Critical Pedagogy aims to disrupt traditional pedagogical structures that reinforce societal inequalities. Instead, it seeks to empower students by cultivating their critical consciousness to question, challenge, and transform societal norms and power dynamics (Erevelles, 2000). This transformative educational approach highlights the importance of dialogue, reflection, and participatory learning, with the intention of creating an educational environment in which learners actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011). By advocating for an egalitarian and interactive learning atmosphere, Critical Pedagogy emphasizes the significant role that teachers and lecturers play in fostering democratic principles within the learning process. It promotes a sense of agency, autonomy, and critical reflection among students.

In the context of this study, Critical Pedagogy provides a robust framework for analyzing and interpreting the efficacy of democratic management practices in university classrooms. Through the application of this theory's principles, the study aims to investigate how classroom management practices can either challenge or perpetuate existing power structures and inequalities within educational institutions. The lens of Critical Pedagogy enables a detailed examination of the dynamics between lecturers and students, scrutinizing whether current practices foster critical inquiry, reflective dialogue, and participatory learning (McLaren, 2003). Therefore, this theoretical framework facilitates a

nanced understanding of the democratic foundations of classroom interactions and engagements, offering insights into the pedagogical transformations necessary for the realization of an emancipatory, democratic educational paradigm.

Critical Pedagogy has significant relevance in the promotion of democratic classroom management. It allows pre-service teachers to critically analyze and question the hierarchical structures that have traditionally been present in educational settings. By creating a learning environment where authority is decentralized and participatory dialogue is encouraged, students are given the opportunity to critically engage with the subject matter and contribute to the learning process (Freire, 1970). This approach is essential in fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective learning, both of which are crucial components in shaping classrooms that adhere to democratic principles. Additionally, this theory promotes an inclusive environment that recognizes and incorporates diverse perspectives and voices. By employing this critical teaching method, obstacles to equitable participation in the classroom can be dismantled, ensuring that the learning process is both inclusive and empowering (Giroux, 2011). It is imperative that pre-service teachers understand and apply these democratic and egalitarian principles in order to cultivate professional competencies that align with contemporary educational needs and values.

From an academic perspective, the adoption of Critical Pedagogy within teacher education programs has a profound impact on the professional development of pre-service teachers as they transition into the workforce. Incorporating this theoretical framework equips aspiring teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster critical thinking, reflection, and democratic engagement in their future classrooms (Giroux, 2010). Furthermore, it shapes their pedagogical approaches to be more student-centered, creating an environment that encourages

active participation, collaboration, and ongoing dialogue - all of which are essential for meaningful learning experiences. These experiences, which are rooted in democratic practices, are integral in preparing pre-service teachers to navigate the diverse and ever-changing educational landscapes they will encounter. Ultimately, this promotes adaptability, continuous learning, and a commitment to social justice and educational equity (McLaren, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate principles of Critical Pedagogy into the teacher education curriculum in order to align professional development with the evolving needs and expectations of modern education.

Critical Pedagogy is a foundational theoretical framework for this study due to its ability to address the objectives in a clear and comprehensive manner. First, it provides a robust perspective for identifying the challenges associated with implementing democratic management practices in university classrooms. By delving into power dynamics, structural inequalities, and hierarchical norms, we gain a deeper understanding of the barriers that may hinder the realization of democratic principles in educational settings (Freire, 1970; Darder et al., 2023). Moreover, this framework illuminates the areas that necessitate transformative interventions in order to foster more participatory, inclusive, and egalitarian learning environments.

Additionally, critical pedagogy facilitates a thorough evaluation of the opportunities presented by democratic management practices to enhance learning experiences. It highlights the potential of these practices to establish environments characterized by critical reflection, participatory dialogue, and mutual respect. These attributes contribute significantly to the development of student-centred, inclusive, and reflective learning experiences (Giroux, 2004; McLaren, 2015). By considering the implications of democratic practices on student engagement, knowledge construction, and critical thinking, this

framework aligns the investigative process with the intricate complexities involved in educational democratization.

## Methodology

### Research Paradigm

This study is rooted in the transformative research paradigm, which aims to bring about transformative shifts in teaching and learning. The ontological foundation of this paradigm involves examining the interaction of social and historical realities, providing a platform to critically analyze and challenge existing hegemonies in educational contexts (Chilisa, 2019). This paradigm is closely connected to Critical Pedagogy, which seeks to dismantle established teaching and learning hegemonies in order to bring about transformative changes in education. Epistemologically, the transformative paradigm emphasizes the importance of building trustful relationships between the researcher and the participants (Mertens, 2019). It promotes inclusive dialogues and reflections in order to uncover diverse perceptions of reality and power dynamics. The focus on inclusive knowledge generation and exploration of power relations inherent in this paradigm leads to the adoption of Participatory Research (PR) as the preferred research design. This aligns with the study's commitment to facilitating egalitarian knowledge co-construction and transformative insights in order to address the challenges of democratic management practices in university classrooms.

### Research Approach

The positioning of this study within a qualitative research approach is crucial for exploring democratic practices in teacher education classrooms. A qualitative research approach focuses on exploring individuals' experiences, understandings, and interpretations in their natural settings, giving importance to the meanings and contexts that shape these phenomena (Yilmaz, 2013). Given the study's aim to examine the challenges and opportunities involved in embedding democratic

management practices in university classrooms, the qualitative approach provides a comprehensive framework to investigate the lived experiences and complex dynamics of the participants. This approach is supported by the use of inductive reasoning, which allows for the generation of theories and descriptions of phenomena, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2016). It offers a holistic approach to interpreting the multifaceted nature of democratic practices in educational settings. The adoption of qualitative methodologies is crucial in acquiring detailed, contextual insights that enable a thorough exploration of the depth and breadth of democratic practices within teacher education classrooms. This ensures a comprehensive understanding of the underlying phenomena (Almalki, 2016).

### Research Design

Adopting Participatory Research (PR) as the research design for this study is crucial. It facilitates a nuanced exploration of the internal practices and processes within the teacher education process (MacDonald, 2012), specifically within the classroom. This design is particularly important as it promotes equality and collaboration between the researcher and the participants, empowering them to actively address the identified issues (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Pain & Francis, 2003; Omodan et al., 2019). The collaborative dynamics inherent in PR are instrumental in mitigating power disparities between lecturers and student-teachers. This promotes an environment where participants are encouraged to actively transform their social realities (Pain & Francis, 2003). This inclusive and collaborative approach not only highlights the relevance of PR in addressing the complexities of the educational context but also emphasises its role in facilitating transformative solutions through collaborative knowledge construction between lecturers and students. This allows for a comprehensive and shared understanding of democratic practices in teacher education classrooms (MacDonald, 2012).

### Method of data collection

This study uses semi-structured interviews to gather detailed information from participants, including both students and university lecturers. Semi-structured interviews are considered suitable because they create an environment where participants can freely share more information about the study's focal issues (Baumbusch, 2010). This method closely aligns with the principles of Participatory Research (PR), which promote participant collaboration and facilitate a collective exploration of challenges within the institutions. Additionally, it allows for the development of practical solutions through collaboration (Omodan & Dastile, 2023). This approach not only facilitates a deeper understanding of the participants' individual perspectives but also enhances the collaborative nature of the research, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter.

### Participants and Selection of Participants

This study included a participant pool of 15 individuals, consisting of 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers from a selected university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The student-teachers were all third-year students in the faculty of education, while the lecturers had at least two years of teaching experience at the university level. Participants were chosen using the Convenient Participant Selection Technique, a method known for its efficiency and accessibility. This approach allows for quick and easy recruitment of subjects, which is particularly beneficial due to its time-saving nature (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Alvi, 2016).

### Method of data analysis

In this research, thematic analysis was used to examine the data obtained from observations and interviews. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytical method that plays a crucial role in identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns within the data. It helps to uncover recurring themes that address the research questions and objectives (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). These themes or patterns found

in the data provide valuable insights that are relevant to the research questions and objectives, enabling a detailed understanding of the subject matter. Guest et al. (2011) state that this method is versatile and adaptable, making it suitable for various types of data sources, including interviews. Moreover, this study followed the six procedural steps for thematic analysis outlined by Braun and Clark (2006), which include becoming familiar with the data, coding the data, identifying themes, reviewing themes, naming themes, and interpreting and synthesizing the themes. This ensures a careful and comprehensive interpretation of the interview data.

### Ethical considerations

In accordance with the ethical protocol established by the University of the Free State, a comprehensive set of measures was implemented to safeguard the well-being of all study participants. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, thereby granting individuals the freedom to choose whether or not to participate and allowing them to withdraw at any time they deemed necessary. A detailed consent form was distributed to the participants, who were required to sign it in order to provide informed consent. This form meticulously outlined the study procedures, potential risks, and the rights of the participants, as a thorough understanding of these elements is crucial prior to making a decision to participate in any research endeavour. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants were strictly maintained in accordance with the ethical standards outlined by Okeke, Omodan and Dube (2022). Furthermore, permission from the relevant university, acting as a gatekeeper, was obtained to further legitimize the research process. To further ensure the protection of the participants' identities, pseudonyms such as L1, L2, L3 were assigned to the lecturers, while S1, S2, S3, etc. were given to the students.

## Presentation and analysis of data

This section presents and analyses data that align with the study's objectives. Each objective corresponds to a theme, and each theme is divided into two sub-themes. Objective one focuses on identifying the challenges of implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms, while objective two aims to evaluate the opportunities that effective democratic management practices provide in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms. Please refer to the table below.

Table 1: Thematic representation of data analysis

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify the challenges of implementing democratic management practices in university classrooms.</li></ul>	Resistance to Participatory Learning Due to Traditional Teaching Methods
	Institutional Constraints and Lack of Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explain the opportunities that democratic management practices present in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms.</li></ul>	Personal and Professional Development
	Enhanced Learning Environment and Inclusivity

### Objective 1, Theme 1: Resistance to Participatory Learning Due to Traditional Teaching Methods

As indicated by the data collected from the participants, one of the challenges to implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms is resistance to participatory learning due to traditional teaching methods implemented in the classrooms. This is evidenced in the following transcripts from participants:

*S1: "In my experience, the main challenge has been the traditional lecture style that dominates most classes, leaving little room for student participation not to talk of dialogue."*

*L1: "Balancing deep engagement with large class sizes is a constant struggle, limiting the opportunity for individual interaction. This is the case in most of our classes."*

*S2: "Most lecturers, mostly the part-time ones, seem to prefer delivering long lectures without engaging with students, which stifles open discussion and critical thinking."*

*S7: "Sometimes you watch some online lecturers on YouTube, but when you get to class, you are taught with outdated teaching methods that don't encourage interaction among us. To me, this a barrier to democratic practices in the classroom."*

*S4: "I have noticed a lack of encouragement for us as students to ask questions or challenge ideas, which is crucial for us to feel among the knowledge process."*

*L3: "Though, this is not our fault because to foster a democratic classroom requires a shift in mindset that's hard to achieve in a curriculum that's rigid and exam focused."*

*S5: "The classroom atmosphere is often not conducive to participatory learning; it feels like there's an invisible barrier between students and lecturers because we are even afraid sometimes to talk to the lecturers."*

*L8: "Students' reluctance to engage critically with content is often compounded by their previous educational experiences, which valued rote over reflection."*

*S10: "From what I've seen, the educational system still heavily favours a top-down approach to teaching, which limits our engagement."*

*L4: "Creating an environment where every student feels comfortable to speak up is challenging, especially in diverse classrooms where students protest day and night in order to get away with their laziness."*

The statements made by participants clearly highlight a significant challenge in implementing effective democratic management practices within university classrooms. This challenge is the resistance to participatory learning, which is largely attributed to the persistence of traditional teaching methods. Participants' testimonies reveal that there is a widespread reliance on lecture-based instruction, which prioritizes the delivery of information over interactive learning. As a result, opportunities for student participation and dialogue are minimized. Both students and lecturers acknowledge this traditional approach, noting that large class sizes, lengthy lectures preferred by part-time lecturers, and outdated teaching methods create an environment that hinders open discussion and critical thinking. The observations made by students S1, S2, S4, S5, S7, and S10, along with insights from lecturers L1, L3, and L4, underscore a prevalent educational model that undervalues student engagement and critical inquiry. Consequently, this model fosters an atmosphere where students often feel disconnected from the learning process and are hesitant to challenge or contribute to discussions.

Furthermore, the feedback received points to systemic issues within university classrooms that impede the adoption of more democratic and participatory teaching practices. These issues include inflexible curricula and assessment methods focused on exams. Lecturer L3's admission that the lack of a democratic classroom is not solely the fault of lecturers but is also influenced by curricular constraints suggests that achieving transformative change requires more than just adjustments to pedagogy. It necessitates a comprehensive shift in educational philosophy and structure. Additionally, the mention of students' previous educational backgrounds, which may have emphasized rote learning over critical engagement (as noted by L8), further complicates efforts to foster a more

inclusive and interactive learning environment. The participants' reluctance to participate, fear of engaging with lecturers, and perception of a top-down teaching approach highlight the multifaceted barriers to realizing truly democratic classroom practices. This analysis indicates an urgent need for educational reform that not only reevaluates teaching methods but also addresses the broader pedagogical and institutional frameworks that shape learning experiences in universities.

#### Objective 1 Theme 2: Institutional Constraints and Lack of Resources

The data collected from the participants indicates that one of the challenges to implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms is the presence of institutional constraints and a lack of resources. This is evident in the following transcripts from participants:

*S3: "Another major challenge is the large class sizes, which make it difficult for any meaningful interaction between us and the lecturers."*

*L2: " Even naturally, the absence of necessary technological resources makes it difficult for me to implement diverse teaching strategies in classrooms. Sometimes the projector is not available, and sometimes, you cannot find a socket to connect things."*

*S5: "In our classrooms, it is obvious that there are not enough resources, which may have hindered our lecturers; you know we can not always blame them. It appears there is no support for implementing more interactive teaching methods."*

*L3: "The concept of democratic teaching is not something that you can know as a result of being a lecturer; I think without adequate training in democratic teaching methods, many of us will be left to navigate these waters blindly."*

*S9: "Yeah, even the curriculum structure doesn't leave much space for innovative teaching practices that foster democracy in the classroom."*

*This is not only true in universities but also in schools. You have too much to attend to, and you must cover it all."*

*L5: "As I said earlier, the major issue here is resource constraints, especially in previously disadvantaged universities like ours, severely limit our capacity to create interactive and engaging learning environments."*

*L4: "You don't know, at times, when you are teaching too many modules, the pressure to cover the syllabus will shorten your plan to implement engaging practices within limited time frames."*

*L1: "The lack of institutional support for innovative pedagogies often means defaulting to traditional lecture methods."*

The data highlights a significant obstacle to the adoption of democratic management practices in education: institutional constraints and limited resources. Both students and lecturers express the various challenges posed by these constraints, including large class sizes hindering interactive learning and a lack of technological resources and support for innovative teaching strategies. For example, S3 and S5 emphasize how large classes and insufficient resources directly impact the quality of interaction between students and lecturers. Meanwhile, L2 and L5 express frustration over the logistical hurdles that prevent the implementation of diverse teaching methodologies. These constraints are not only logistical but also pedagogical. L3 points out the deficiency in training for democratic teaching methods, indicating a gap in professional development that leaves lecturers ill-equipped to foster participatory classrooms. Additionally, S9 notes that the inflexibility of the curriculum highlights a systemic issue within educational institutions that prioritize material coverage over the quality of learning experiences, further limiting opportunities for democratic engagement.

Furthermore, the participants' reflections reveal a deeper underlying issue: a pervasive lack of institutional support for pedagogical innovation. L1 identifies

this as a significant factor that leads lecturers to rely on traditional, lecture-based teaching methods. L4 corroborates this observation by mentioning the pressure to cover extensive syllabi as a deterrent to engaging teaching practices. These institutional and resource-related challenges are even more pronounced in contexts of previously disadvantaged universities, where resource scarcity is particularly acute, as mentioned by L5. This analysis highlights the complex interplay of institutional, resource, and cultural factors that collectively hinder the realization of democratic and participatory learning environments in higher education. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that involves not only infrastructure and resource improvements but also cultural and systemic changes within educational institutions to support and value democratic pedagogies.

#### Objective 2, theme 1: Personal and Professional Development

Based on the data collected, one of the opportunities inherent in opportunities in effective democratic management practices is the enhancement of personal and professional development as presented by the participants below:

*S1: "I think when teaching and learning is democratic, it could make learning more interactive, where every student's opinion is valued. Also, it will enhance our friendship and engagement."*

*L1: "Speaking as a professional now, when this is implemented, it can strongly enhance critical thinking and a deeper exploration of topics, leading to more insightful discussions."*

*S3: "When we as students are encouraged to participate actively, it can boost confidence and public speaking skills in us and also help us to become the good teachers we always want to be."*

*S4: "I always love to have a say everywhere I find myself, so having a say in the learning process makes me feel more relevant. And I am sure I am not the only one feeling this"*

*S5: "Well, what I know is when there is a level of friendship between lecturers and us, it brings opportunities to lead discussions without feeling timid and also can prepare us for leadership roles in our future careers when we get a job."*

*S7: "According to what you said about democratic classrooms, this kind of practice in classrooms will let me have more respectful and understanding interactions with other students, most especially those with diverse backgrounds."*

The data strongly supports the benefits of effective democratic management practices in university classrooms for personal and professional development. Participants, including students and lecturers, unanimously emphasise the various growth opportunities that this approach can offer. S1 and S5 highlight the role of democratic teaching in increasing interactivity and fostering camaraderie among students, which can enhance their social skills and prepare them for future leadership roles. L1 provides a professional perspective, emphasizing the academic benefits such as improved critical thinking skills and the ability to delve deeper into topics, leading to more insightful classroom discussions. Additionally, S3 and S4 discuss the personal gains from active participation, such as increased confidence, improved public speaking skills, and a stronger sense of relevance and autonomy in their learning journey. S7 extends this idea to social interactions, noting that democratic classrooms can promote more respectful and understanding exchanges among students from diverse backgrounds. Overall, these insights highlight the transformative potential of democratic management practices in education, suggesting that such approaches not only enhance academic learning but also equip students with crucial life and professional skills.

#### Objective 2, theme 2: Enhanced Learning Environment and Inclusivity

Based on the data collected, another opportunity inherent in effective democratic management practices is that it enhanced the learning environment and inclusivity, as presented by the participants below:

*S2: "In my understanding, a democratic classroom is an opportunity and such opportunities for group discussions and debates can really help us understand complex subjects or assignments because we will learn a lot."*

*L2: "Yeah, this will surely foster a sense of responsibility and autonomy among students and will also make them understand and prepare them for real-world challenges, not only in their future workplace but in all endeavours."*

*L3: "It is definitely the best method for more inclusive classroom activities, where diverse perspectives enrich learning experiences."*

*L4: "In my own opinion, this practice can lead to innovative problem-solving as students learn to approach issues from multiple angles from multiple perspectives."*

*L5: "I used to advise my colleagues to listen to their students because by valuing student's input, we can create a more engaged and motivated learning community."*

*S9: "I used to consult my students before taking some vital decisions even to make learning more aligned with students' interests."*

*S7: "Through democratic practices, classrooms can become spaces where every voice matters because we need a sense of belonging."*

The data clearly shows that effective democratic management practices offer a significant opportunity to enhance the learning environment and foster inclusivity. Both students and lecturers agree that facilitating group discussions and debates is essential for dissecting complex subjects and deepening students' understanding. L2 and L3 stress that these democratic practices also cultivate a sense of responsibility and autonomy among students, preparing them for real-world challenges by encouraging the exploration of diverse perspectives. As noted by L3 and L5, this leads to more inclusive classroom dynamics where every student's viewpoint is considered valuable. Additionally, L4 highlights the focus

on innovative problem-solving strategies, demonstrating the potential for democratic management practices to inspire creativity and a multifaceted approach to learning and problem-solving. The student contributions, particularly from S2, S7, and S9, affirm the benefits of these practices, including enhanced engagement, a sense of belonging, and alignment of learning with students' interests. Therefore, one can argue that these insights demonstrate the transformative impact of democratic management practices on creating a learning environment that is not only more engaging and inclusive but also better prepares students for the complexities of the modern world.

## Discussion of Findings

### Objective 1, Finding 1

As deduced from the data analysis for theme one, the study reveals that one of the challenges in implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms is resistance to participatory learning due to traditional teaching methods. This finding aligns with Mcube's (2018) observation that the quality of educational frameworks relies heavily on the proficiency and professionalism of educators, emphasising the crucial role of teaching methodologies in shaping educational outcomes. Similarly, Morrison (2008) criticises teacher education programs for their failure to foster democratic practices, highlighting a lack of equitable and inclusive learning environments that promote active student participation. This critique emphasises the gap between educational aspirations and the prevailing pedagogical approaches, which favour traditional lecture-based teaching methods instead of interactive, participatory learning. In addition, this study found that students are resistant to participatory approaches that require more effort.

The theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy, as posited by Paulo Freire (1970), further supports this finding by advocating for education as a practice of freedom rather than domination. Freire suggests that traditional teaching methods

may unintentionally perpetuate hierarchical dynamics that suppress student voice and engagement. Freire emphasizes the importance of dialogue and problem-posing education, which contrasts sharply with the "banking" model of education, where knowledge is deposited into students without fostering critical thinking or active participation. Additionally, Giroux (2011) extends Freire's critique by highlighting the necessity of empowering students to become active participants in their learning process. Giroux argues that democratic education should challenge the power dynamics inherent in traditional pedagogical practices. These theoretical perspectives shed light on the fundamental conflict between traditional teaching methods and the principles of democratic management practices, which aim to cultivate an educational environment characterized by critical engagement, inclusivity, and collaborative learning.

#### Objective 1, Finding 2

The study found that one of the challenges in implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms is the "Institutional Constraints and Lack of Resources." This aligns with concerns raised by Agyemang (2012), who emphasized the impact of historical and systemic factors on the educational environment, particularly in regions with a legacy of authoritarian regimes that have significantly influenced educational policies and practices. Enu and Eba (2014) further support the idea that the lack of democratic understanding among student-teachers and insufficient resources are significant obstacles to incorporating democratic practices during instructional sessions. From the theoretical perspective of Critical Pedagogy, Freire (1970) emphasizes the importance of moving beyond traditional boundaries of education to embrace a more liberatory practice hindered by rigid institutional structures and a lack of supportive resources. Giroux (2011) strengthens this argument by advocating for the transformation of educational institutions into spaces for critical inquiry and democratic engagement, a transformation that is greatly limited by existing institutional constraints and resource deficiencies. These insights collectively

highlight the critical need for systemic change within educational institutions to eliminate barriers to democratic education, emphasizing the importance of institutional support and adequate resources in facilitating such a shift.

#### Objective 2, finding 1

The study reveals that Personal and Professional Development is an opportunity to implement effective democratic management practices in university classrooms. This finding supports the views expressed by the Department of Education (2002) and Sentürk & Oyman (2014), who emphasize the transformative power of education in equipping individuals with the intellectual acumen and democratic ethos needed for effective classroom management and adaptability to changing educational landscapes. These perspectives highlight the role of democratic practices in creating a learning environment that not only promotes academic excellence but also contributes to the holistic development and professional friendship between students and lecturers. From a Critical Pedagogy perspective, Paulo Freire (1970) advocates for an education that cultivates critical consciousness, enabling individuals to question, challenge, and transform societal norms and power dynamics. This approach positions education as a crucial arena for personal growth and societal engagement. Additionally, Henry Giroux (2011) builds on Freire's foundations to argue for the potential of education to empower students and teachers to become agents of change, thereby contributing to their personal and professional development. By fostering an environment that encourages dialogue, reflection, and participatory learning, democratic management practices in education can significantly enhance the personal and professional capacities of all participants, preparing them for active and engaged citizenship.

#### Objective 2, finding 2

The study demonstrated that implementing democratic management practices in university classrooms can lead to an improved learning environment and foster

inclusiveness. This finding supports the insights of Omodan and Ige (2021), who argued that democratic educational interactions have a significant impact on promoting inclusivity and active student participation. This, in turn, contributes to creating truly democratic and inclusive learning environments. Lawrence and Maphalala (2021) also emphasized the importance of prioritizing democracy and social justice within university classrooms in order to overcome obstacles to democratic education. This aligns with the potential of democratic practices to generate more inclusive and engaging learning environments. According to the participants, democratic classroom management provides added opportunities for innovative problem-solving as students learn to approach issues from multiple angles and perspectives. Within the theoretical framework of Critical Pedagogy, as proposed by Paulo Freire (1970), teachers are encouraged to create learning environments that recognise and value the diverse voices and experiences of all students, thereby promoting liberation and inclusivity. Giroux (2011) further extends this discourse by highlighting the role of lecturers in fostering educational spaces that challenge existing inequalities and empower students to participate actively in their learning processes. Taken together, these perspectives collectively suggest that effective democratic management practices, by enhancing the learning environment and promoting inclusivity, have the potential to transform classrooms into spaces where diversity is celebrated and every student is engaged and valued.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex interplay between the challenges and opportunities of implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms. Key challenges identified include resistance to participatory learning due to entrenched traditional teaching methods and institutional constraints, as well as a notable lack of resources. These barriers significantly hinder the adoption and effectiveness of democratic pedagogies. On

the other hand, the study also illuminates the potential of democratic practices to foster personal and professional development, improve the learning environment, and promote inclusivity. These practices promise a more engaged, reflective, and cohesive educational experience, demonstrating the transformative impact of democratic management on both lecturers and students alike.

Based on these findings, the study puts forth several recommendations:

- Firstly, educational institutions and policymakers are urged to prioritise professional development programmes that equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement democratic teaching methods
- Additionally, there is a pressing need to reassess and redesign the curriculum and assessment methods to support participatory learning and critical thinking better.
- Moreover, addressing the resource disparities and institutional barriers is crucial to ensure that all classrooms are adequately equipped to support dynamic and inclusive educational experiences.

These strategic recommendations aim to foster a transformative educational approach grounded in democratic principles, emphasising inclusivity, engagement, and holistic development as essential components in preparing students for the complexities of the contemporary world.

#### Implication for Classroom Management

The findings of this study have significant implications for classroom management in rural universities. These universities often face challenges in implementing effective democratic management practices due to limited resources and institutional constraints. The study identified resistance to participatory learning, which is a result of traditional teaching methods, as well as a lack of resources. These findings emphasize the critical need for innovative approaches to classroom management that go beyond conventional pedagogies.

Rural universities, operating within tight budgetary constraints and facing unique logistical challenges, are particularly affected by these issues. This can hinder efforts to create inclusive and engaging learning environments. The study highlights the potential of democratic practices to enhance personal and professional development and promote inclusivity in classrooms. Therefore, it is urgent for rural universities to adopt these methods as part of a broader strategy to improve educational outcomes in these settings. The findings call for action from rural universities to recruit resources and invest in professional development for lecturers, creatively leverage technology and community resources, and advocate for policy changes that support the integration of democratic practices into classroom management. By doing so, rural universities can overcome inherent challenges and unlock the transformative potential of education. This will align classroom management strategies with the evolving needs and aspirations of their diverse student populations.

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## 2.3 ARTICLE THREE: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE DEMOCRATIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN UNIVERSITY CLASSROOMS

### Abstract

The main issue at hand is that, although democratic education is widely supported in theory, many instructors find its practical implementation in university classrooms to be unclear. This lack of clarity undermines the experience of pre-service teachers. The objective of this study is to explore strategies that can improve the practice of democratic classroom management and consequently reshape classroom management in schools. The study employs Participative Management Theory as a framework and is carried out within a transformative paradigm and participatory design. Semi-structured interviews are utilized to gather data from 15 participants, consisting of 10 student teachers and 5 instructors from a selected university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Thematic analysis is employed to analyze the data. The study identifies four primary strategies for enhancing democratic classroom management: involving students in decision-making, promoting collaborative learning, fostering critical thinking and reflection, and creating inclusive and safe environments. The study proposes the "Democratic Classroom Engagement Model" as a framework to empower students, encourage teamwork, challenge assumptions, and ensure that every student feels valued. This collective effort aims to foster a democratic and engaging learning atmosphere.

**Keywords:** University Pedagogy, Democratic Classroom, Management Strategies, Future teachers.

### Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing focus on the effectiveness of classroom management strategies. Educational research consistently emphasizes the crucial role of classroom management in creating an optimal learning environment that directly impacts student achievement (Marzano et al.,

2003). Classroom management goes beyond just discipline; it encompasses how teachers structure their lessons, interact with students, and cultivate a positive and productive atmosphere. However, despite its significance, there is an alarming trend: many teachers seem to struggle with classroom management. Some scholars argue that these challenges stem from the training they received as student teachers during their formative years in university (Oliver & Reschly, 2010). These critical years lay the foundation for teachers' approach to their profession, shaping their pedagogical knowledge and classroom management strategies. If this foundation is weak, it may lead to less effective practices when they begin their teaching careers.

In line with the democratic values of our larger society, classrooms should serve as microcosms of democracy, encouraging active engagement, participation, mutual respect, and collaboration. According to John Dewey, education is not just preparation for life but is life itself (Sikandar, 2015; Dewey, 1916). If students are to be prepared for life in a democratic society, their formative years in the classroom should expose them to democratic practices, helping them understand and appreciate the values and responsibilities involved. However, many current classroom management models inadvertently promote an authoritarian approach that stifles student voices and hampers active participation (Freire, 1970). This gap between democratic ideals and classroom realities calls for critical reflection on and restructuring how classroom management is addressed in university teacher education programmes. By emphasising democratic classroom management practices in these programmes, future teachers can be better prepared to create classrooms that effectively manage, inspire, and engage students. This perspective aligns with the prevailing belief that the process of teacher education should aim to cultivate highly motivated, conscientious, and effective teachers suitable for all educational levels. This process should provide teachers with both a solid intellectual foundation and a democratic ethos, ensuring

adaptability in the face of evolving educational landscapes (Department of Education, 2002; Senturk & Oyman, 2014).

However, many teacher education institutions, particularly those in rural areas, seem to fail to promote democratic principles in teaching and learning processes. This gap is characterized by limited inclusive participation from both lecturers and students in achieving institutional goals. Reinforcing this concern, de Jager (2019) highlighted that students in South African tertiary institutions often lack the necessary skills for immersive, reflective, student-centred learning experiences, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and cooperation.

The challenge of implementing democratic classroom management practices is not limited to South Africa. In the United States, there has long been criticism that teacher education programs do not adequately prepare teachers for their roles. One recurring concern is the perceived deficiency in promoting democratic principles, particularly in fostering inclusive classrooms that ensure equitable student participation. Such shortcomings can undermine student engagement, impede learning, and dampen teachers' morale (Morrison, 2008; Edwards, 2010). Similarly, Sung (2020) highlights Taiwan's struggle to establish a distinct Taiwanese identity free from the overarching Chinese historical narrative. This internal battle becomes apparent when examining discussions about teachers' democratic consciousness. Turkey also faces challenges in upholding democratic values within university classrooms. The country's increasing societal authoritarianism, coupled with the government's suppression of dissent, has permeated educational spaces. This has led to instances where faculty and students face intimidation for expressing contrary views and where educational materials critical of the government are censored (Yılmaz, 2007; Ochoa-Becker, 2006). As a result, students are often shielded from diverse perspectives, hindering their ability to engage in critical discourse about national issues.

From an African perspective, Agyemang (2012) notes that the history of military dictatorships in West African nations, such as Ghana, Gambia, and Nigeria, has had lasting effects on students' freedom of expression. Enu and Eba (2014) support this claim, emphasizing the shortcomings in teaching practices in Nigeria. They argue that student-teachers often lack the necessary democratic expertise to cultivate democratic values during teaching practice sessions. The recommendation arising from this observation emphasizes the need for a strong democratic classroom pedagogy designed to uplift and empower learners.

Based on the preceding discussion, one can argue that democratic classroom management practices are crucial because they promote student participation, expose learners to diverse perspectives, and provide multiple avenues for engagement. However, it is disconcerting to note that teacher-education training programs still adhere to traditional classroom management methods, which have been identified as anti-democratic by Chauke (2021), Chitsamatanga & Rembe (2020), and Mafhala (2015). Omodan (2019) emphasizes that while democratic practices can enhance student choice and collaboration, many student teachers lack the knowledge to implement them. This deficit can result in a generation of teachers ill-equipped to instil democratic principles in their classrooms. Uleanya (2020, 2022) traces this challenge to undemocratic teacher training at universities, where power dynamics often sideline student voices in curriculum planning and execution (Makhanya & Zibane, 2020). This disconnect appears to hinder secondary schools' ability to manage inclusivity and diversity. The crux of the matter is that while democratic education may be widely endorsed in theory, its practical adoption within university classrooms remains unclear to many lecturers, thus weakening the pre-service teacher experience. Therefore, if left unaddressed, this lack of democratic classroom management practices could hinder student performance and erode their trust in democratic systems.

However, scholars have proposed strategies and approaches to enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms. In the Philippines, Obispo et al. (2021) conducted a study using Indiana University as a case study and found that a combination of democratic and authoritative classroom management styles can lead to more positive outcomes for students. Additionally, a study conducted in middle schools in America showed that adopting democratic classroom practices, such as morning advisory sessions, student voice and choice in content-specific classes, and student-centred discipline, can positively influence student outcomes, particularly in civic and school engagement (Guillaume et al., 2015). Moreover, a study conducted at Gassia College Preparatory Academy among African–American students in America showed that other strategies to foster a democratic classroom community involve promoting social and dialogic interactions, transferring meanings about democracy from the collective group to individual members, and enhancing students' participation and responsibility within the classroom culture (Klockow, 2008). Based on this, one can argue that classroom discussions play a vital role in democratic practices, encompassing conflict resolution, equity, student involvement in decision-making, and fostering a conversation culture. Furthermore, creating a classroom environment aligned with democratic, humane, and inclusive principles through pedagogy is another suggestion that can address various issues within educational settings (Duncan, 2003).

A study conducted in East Nigeria (Biamba et al., 2021) revealed that the adoption of democratic practices in the classroom is marginal. While teachers have made some effort to incorporate democratic elements, there is still room for improvement in fully implementing student-centered and participatory teaching methods. The study emphasizes the importance of enhancing democratic management practices in classrooms to develop students' critical thinking

abilities, prepare them for active civic engagement, and reduce negative behaviors among youths.

In South African universities, there is a growing recognition of the need to equip teachers with the skills to promote democratic citizenship among students (Dlamini, 2022). Studies highlight the importance of revising teacher education curricula to empower teachers to instill democratic values and practices in classrooms. However, challenges persist in South African educational environments, with issues like poor acoustics in urban schools impacting the learning atmosphere (van Reenen & Plessis, 2021). Additionally, cadre deployment in South Africa has been identified as hindering democratic governance and impeding service delivery improvement, diverting resources from their intended purposes (Makole, 2022). The need for inclusive pedagogy in multilingual higher education classrooms underscores the significance of creating environments that cater to diverse linguistic backgrounds and promote inclusivity (Wunseh, 2023).

The status of democratic management practices in South African educational settings is characterised by a shift towards participative leadership, the integration of democratic values in teacher preparation, and the acknowledgement of the importance of inclusive pedagogy. However, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, political influences on governance, and the necessity for curriculum transformation persist, emphasising the ongoing efforts required to enhance democratic practices in South African educational contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to address this critical gap and provide a comprehensive blueprint for university lecturers, illustrating how democratic management practices can be seamlessly integrated into teacher education processes. Such an approach would cultivate an inclusive, participatory learning

environment, strengthen democratic values, enhance student engagement, and foster trust in the pedagogical process.

However, transitioning toward more democratic classroom management practices in university settings requires a multifaceted approach. This approach involves exploring various strategies to instil these values in aspiring teachers. The aim of this study is to conceptualise strategies that can enhance democratic management practices and, consequently, reshape the landscape of classroom management in schools.

### Research Question

Based on the above, the following research question was raised to guide the study:

- Which strategies can be used to enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms?

### Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Participative Management Theory, rooted in the broader context of human relations and organizational behaviour, and gained prominence in the mid-20th century as a response to the limitations of traditional authoritarian management models. This theory emphasises the importance of involving employees at all levels in the decision-making process, arguing that such involvement leads to increased motivation, job satisfaction, and overall organisational effectiveness (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). Early proponents like Rensis Likert and Douglas McGregor challenged the prevailing top-down approaches, highlighting the value of participative techniques in fostering a more engaged and productive workforce (Likert, 1967; McGregor, 1960). Likert's System 4 management model, in particular, advocates for a participative group system where decision-making is decentralised, and employees are empowered to contribute ideas and feedback, leading to enhanced organisational performance (Likert, 1961).

Central to Participative Management Theory are several key assumptions of human behaviour and organisational dynamics. First, it assumes that employees are motivated not solely by financial incentives but also by intrinsic factors such as recognition, a sense of achievement, and the opportunity to contribute to organisational goals (Herzberg, 1968; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This contrasts with traditional management theories, which often view employees primarily as economic beings motivated by extrinsic rewards. Second, the theory posits that employees have valuable insights and capabilities that can significantly contribute to problem-solving and innovation when allowed to participate in decision-making (Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Cotton, 1993). This assumption is based on the belief that collaborative decision-making processes can harness the collective intelligence and creativity of the workforce, leading to better outcomes and a more adaptive organisation (Bennis, 1966; Lawler, 1992).

Furthermore, Participative Management Theory assumes that involving employees in decision-making processes enhances their commitment to the organisation and its goals, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability (Kanter, 1983; Spreitzer, 1996). This participatory approach is believed to reduce resistance to change, as employees who are involved in shaping decisions are more likely to support and implement them effectively (Lines, 2004). Additionally, the theory suggests that open communication and transparency, which are integral to participative management, can lead to improved trust and collaboration within the organisation (Denison, 1990). In the educational context, applying participative management principles can create a more democratic and inclusive classroom environment where students are actively engaged in their learning processes and feel valued and respected (Freire, 1970). This aligns with contemporary educational theories that emphasise student-centred learning and the importance of fostering critical thinking and active participation in the classroom (Brookfield, 2017).

Participative Management Theory is highly relevant to the study because it offers a robust framework for integrating democratic principles into classroom management practices. That is, by emphasising the involvement of all members in decision-making processes, this theory aligns with the study's goal of fostering an inclusive and engaging learning environment where student voices are valued and heard. Participative management encourages collaborative learning and teamwork, which can help create a democratic classroom atmosphere that empowers students and promotes active engagement. Furthermore, the theory's focus on open communication and transparency supports the development of critical thinking and reflection among students, essential components of effective democratic education. Therefore, by adopting participative management strategies, lecturers can create a classroom environment that not only enhances student participation and engagement but also prepares future teachers to implement these democratic management practices in their classrooms, thereby contributing to a more equitable and effective educational system. This alignment with the study's objectives highlights the potential of participative management to transform university pedagogy and address the identified gaps in current teacher education programs.

## Methodology

The study adopts the transformative paradigm, which is deeply committed to rectifying social inequalities through research (Mertens, 2007). According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), this paradigm prioritizes the perspectives of marginalized or oppressed groups, aiming to produce research outcomes that promote social justice, equity, and empowerment. Therefore, the transformative paradigm is not solely a choice of paradigm but also a statement about the purpose and ethos of the research. In terms of the study's goal to enhance democratic classroom management in teacher education training processes, the

transformative paradigm ensures a critical examination of existing power dynamics and democratic management strategies that may marginalize certain voices or perspectives (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This alignment underscores the study's commitment to understanding educational practices and fostering more inclusive, just, and democratic learning environments.

The study employs a qualitative research approach, which focuses on understanding phenomena in their natural settings and aims to interpret these phenomena in terms of the meanings people attribute to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This approach values depth over breadth, exploring individual experiences, perceptions, and the complexities inherent in human behaviour and society. Given the study's objective to enhance democratic classroom management in teacher education training, a qualitative approach is particularly appropriate. It allows for a nuanced exploration of lecturers' and students' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes toward classroom management. It facilitates a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for existing practices and the challenges associated with promoting democratic principles. Through this qualitative lens, the study can extract rich, detailed insights that are crucial to formulating strategies and interventions tailored to the real-world intricacies of the educational landscape.

The study employs participatory research (PR) as its research design, a method grounded in the belief that research should be a collaborative and democratic process that directly involves those affected by the issue being studied (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). By fostering active collaboration between researchers and participants, PR democratizes knowledge production and ensures that the research outcomes are directly relevant and actionable for the community involved. Given the study's emphasis on identifying strategies that can be used to enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms, the choice

of PR is particularly fitting. By actively involving lecturers and students in the research process, the study captures authentic voices, experiences, and perspectives, ensuring that the resulting recommendations and interventions are grounded in the lived realities of those in the educational field. Furthermore, the democratic ethos of PR strongly resonates with the study's core objectives, making it not just a methodological choice but also a clear alignment of research practice with the study's overarching goals.

### Method of data collection

The study employed semi-structured interviews as a means of collecting data from participants. This approach facilitated open discussions between students and university lecturers, enabling them to delve into issues pertinent to the study's focus. Semi-structured interviews strike a balance between the provision of predetermined questions and the allowance for participants to freely articulate their perspectives in their own words. This method is well-suited to align with the principles of Participatory Research (PR), which emphasize the collaboration of participants. By creating an environment where participants can elucidate the challenges they encounter within institutions and work collectively towards finding solutions, this approach ensures that the insights and recommendations are grounded in the authentic experiences of those directly impacted by the problem. As a result, the study's credibility and relevance are reinforced.

### Participants and Selection of Participants

This research study involved a cohort of 15 participants, comprising 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers affiliated with a specific university in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The student-teachers possessed a foundational experience, as they had successfully completed a minimum of three years of study at the university, specifically in their third year. On the other hand, the lecturers

contributed their expertise, having accumulated a minimum of two years of teaching experience at the tertiary level. The Convenient Participant Selection Technique was employed as the recruitment strategy. As argued by Emerson (2021), this technique is highly regarded for its efficiency and accessibility, enabling researchers to swiftly and directly engage with potential participants, thus reducing the time-consuming nature of the process and optimizing the research timeline.

### Method of data analysis

Thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), was employed in this study for data analysis. This method encompasses six rigorous steps, ranging from familiarizing oneself with the data to defining and naming themes. Given the study's focus on comprehending participants' experiences and perceptions regarding democratic classroom management, thematic analysis is particularly relevant. It enables a thorough exploration of the rich qualitative data obtained, ensuring that the emerging themes genuinely represent the voices of the participants. The systematic approach of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework provides a robust structure to the analysis, guaranteeing that the findings are both comprehensive and nuanced, thus making it highly suitable for analyzing the data from this study.

### Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the University of the Free State. Comprehensive safeguards were implemented to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Participation was voluntary, allowing participants to join, pause, or withdraw without any constraints. A detailed consent form was distributed and signed, outlining the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and

participant rights. The importance of informed consent in ethical research was emphasized. Maintaining confidentiality was a crucial aspect of these safeguards. Participants' identities and responses were kept anonymous in accordance with ethical standards established by Okeke, Omodan, & Dube (2022). Furthermore, the study obtained the necessary permissions from the selected university to validate its research efforts. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms such as L1, L2 for lecturers and S1, S2 for students were consistently used, protecting participants' identities throughout the research and reporting phases.

### Presentation of Results

This section provides answers to the research question of the study, which focuses on the strategies that can be employed to improve democratic classroom management practices in university classrooms. Through the collection and analysis of data using thematic analysis, four themes emerged as strategies to enhance democratic management among student teachers as they transition into the professional world. These themes include involving students in decision-making, promoting collaborative learning, fostering critical thinking and reflection, and creating inclusive and safe learning environments.

#### Theme 1: Encouraging the involvement of students in decision-making

The data collected from the participants indicates that involving students in decision-making in the classroom is a strategy that can equip student teachers with democratic classroom management skills for their future careers. This is supported by the following statements from the participants:

*S1: "I feel really empowering when we get to suggest topics for our projects together with the lecturers."*

*S3: "I appreciated when our lecturer asked us to help set the class rules. It made me feel respected and even controlled me not to break the rules because it gave me some kind of guilty mind when I broke the rules I set by myself."*

*L1: "I have found that student involvement in course design significantly enhances their engagement and ownership of the learning process."*

*S6: "Leading a class discussion was a bit scary to me sometimes but really made me feel like my voice matters here."*

*S7: "Choosing our assignment topics helped me dive deeper into what I'm passionate about."*

*L3: "Asking students to contribute to setting classroom norms creates a more respectful and collaborative environment for us as lecturers and even for themselves as students."*

The testimony from students and lecturers vividly illustrates the significant role that democratic strategies play in enhancing democratic management practices. These strategies perfectly embody the principles discussed in the literature on university pedagogy and classroom management. The student narratives (S1, S3, S6, S7) about feeling empowered, respected, and more engaged when involved in decision-making processes, such as suggesting project topics, setting class rules, and choosing assignment topics, are a testament to the effectiveness of democratic classroom management strategies. This approach aligns with the findings of Reinke et al. (2012), who highlight the critical role of classroom-level positive behaviour supports in creating conducive learning environments that impact students' social-emotional and behavioural outcomes. Similarly, the reflections shared by the lecturers (L1, L3) about the benefits of student involvement in course design and classroom norms underscore the importance of fostering a collaborative and respectful environment, as advocated by Moore et al. (2016). They point out the need for better preparation of student teachers in

classroom management through active participation and engagement during their university education.

The data collected from the participants indicated that involving students in decision-making in the classroom is one of the strategies that could equip student teachers with democratic classroom management skills when they enter the workforce. The participants' statements reveal how such involvement not only enhances the immediate learning environment but also prepares students for future roles as teachers, where they will be required to foster similar democratic and participatory spaces. Drawing from the works of Reinke et al. (2014) and Moon et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of individualised behaviour support and movement integration, it is evident that the participants' experiences reflect a pedagogical shift towards more democratic and inclusive practices. This shift is crucial for the cultivation of teachers who are not only knowledgeable in their subject matter but are also skilled in creating classrooms that are microcosms of the democratic society they will serve, thereby reinforcing the connection between democratic classroom practices and the preparation of future teachers for the challenges of the professional world.

From the perspective of Participative Management Theory, these findings underscore the importance of involving all members of an organisation, or in this case, the classroom, in decision-making processes to enhance democratic management practices (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). The theory posits that when students are actively involved in shaping their educational experience, they are more likely to feel empowered and committed, reflecting the experiences shared by the students and lecturers. This approach aligns with the idea that open communication and collaborative decision-making lead to better outcomes, as it taps into the collective intelligence and creativity of the group (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). By implementing evidence-based strategies such as positive behaviour

supports, coaching, preventive interventions, and movement integration, as discussed by Reinke et al. (2012) and Moore et al. (2016), lecturers can create a more inclusive and democratic classroom environment. This not only enhances democratic classroom management but also prepares future teachers to implement these democratic principles in their classrooms, thereby contributing to a more equitable and effective educational system (Sibbett, 2022).

## Theme 2: Promoting Collaborative Learning

Collaborative teaching and learning emerge as a key strategy to foster democratic classroom management, as highlighted by participant statements during data collection. This approach reflects the shared belief in the power of group work, peer learning, and roundtable discussions to indicate real-world democratic practices and problem-solving, enhancing student participation and engagement. The following statement justifies further:

*L3: "I believe that using collaborative learning tasks mirrors the complexities of real-world problem-solving, preparing students for democratic participation outside the classroom."*

*S2: "I believe that working in groups teaches so many skills. I mean, working in groups on projects taught me to work with different opinions and personalities."*

*S4: "I love group work because learning from my peers during group sessions was as valuable as learning from the lecturer."*

*S9: "Roundtable discussions made the class feel more like a dialogue than a monologue; it is social and participative. In my opinion, this is more of a democratic thing."*

*S3: "When we solve problems as a group, it helped me see the value in working together."*

*L4: "I integrate peer teaching and group projects to encourage students to value and learn from each other's insights."*

*S6: "I still believe that collaborative tasks is one of the best ways to teach us how to be democratic. Being in diverse teams was challenging but taught me a lot about understanding others."*

*S1: "In another way, debating current events helped me learn how to argue points respectfully and listen to others."*

The emphasis on collaborative learning and teaching, as highlighted by both students (S2, S4, S9, S3, S6, S1) and lecturers (L3, L4) in their statements, significantly aligns with the theoretical framework of Participative Management Theory. This theory emphasises the importance of involving all members of an organization in decision-making processes and fostering a culture of collaboration and mutual respect (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). Participative Management Theory suggests that individuals are more likely to be engaged and committed when they are actively involved in shaping their environment. This aligns with the students' and lecturers' experiences of feeling more empowered and respected through collaborative learning and teaching practices. These practices, such as group projects, peer teaching, and roundtable discussions, mirror the democratic process by valuing diverse perspectives and fostering mutual understanding. Ultimately, they prepare students for real-world challenges by simulating complex problem-solving situations (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

Furthermore, the participants' experiences with collaborative learning echo the principles of Participative Management Theory by highlighting the importance of engaging with diverse viewpoints and developing a democratic ethos among students. As noted by Cotton (1993), participative management strategies help to tap into the collective intelligence and creativity of the group, leading to better decision-making and more innovative solutions. Through collaborative learning, students acquire not only academic knowledge but also essential skills such as

empathy, respect for differing opinions, and the ability to engage in constructive dialogue. These qualities are indispensable for democratic participation and align with the goals of participative management, which seeks to create more inclusive and effective organizations by involving all members in the decision-making process (Denison, 1990). The shared reflections from the participants demonstrate that collaborative teaching and learning practices do not merely enhance academic performance but also contribute significantly to the development of individuals who are capable of contributing to a democratic society (Kanter, 1983).

By incorporating evidence-based strategies such as positive behaviour supports, coaching, preventive interventions, and movement integration, as discussed by Reinke et al. (2012) and Moore et al. (2016), lecturers can create a more inclusive and democratic classroom environment. This not only enhances classroom management but also prepares future teachers to implement these democratic principles in their own classrooms, thereby contributing to a more equitable and effective educational system (Sibbett, 2022). The application of Participative Management Theory in this context reinforces the idea that education should go beyond the acquisition of knowledge to include the fostering of social and civic competencies, preparing students not just for exams but for the complexities of democratic life (Lawler, 1992; Likert, 1961).

### Theme 3: Enhancing Critical Thinking and Reflection

Another strategy that can be employed to enhance democratic classroom management is to ensure that classrooms are designed to foster critical thinking and reflection. This is supported by the statements provided by the participants during the process of data collection. The statements are:

*S7: "I think when we are engaged in activities that make us think, such as writing reflection essays, it made me more aware of my own biases and how they affect my views."*

*L4: "Incorporating case studies that question societal norms provokes critical discussion, pushing students to think beyond the textbook."*

*S5: "Also, some case studies that challenge norms made me think critically about our society."*

*L2: "No doubt, I know that critical thinking is the cornerstone of democratic education. I use a variety of pedagogical strategies to challenge students' assumptions and encourage deep reflection."*

*S2: "You know, it is good for lecturers to allow us to question them; this is because questioning the lecturer's assumptions encouraged me to think for myself and not to rely only on the lecturer."*

*L3: "The questioning method is another tool I use to foster a culture of inquiry, promoting critical thinking and active learning."*

*S3: "Some kind of question and answer session in the classroom forced me to ask questions, making me more engaged in learning."*

*S8: "Also, asking us to keep a reflective journal made me more conscious of my learning progress and personal growth."*

The focus on fostering critical thinking and reflection in democratic classroom management is illustrated by both students (S7, S5, S2, S3, S8) and lecturers (L4, L2, L3), aligning seamlessly with the principles outlined in Participative Management Theory. According to this theory, involving individuals in decision-making processes enhances their engagement, critical thinking, and commitment (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). In the context of classroom management, this means that students who are encouraged to participate in reflective activities, such as reflection essays and case studies, develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and become more aware of their biases and the complexities of

their societal contexts (Cotton, 1993). This approach is evident in the participants' experiences, where lecturers actively encourage questioning assumptions, promoting a culture of inquiry and independent thinking, which are essential components of effective democratic classroom management (Vroom & Yetton, 1973).

The dialogues between students and lecturers, highlighted through methods such as questioning and discussions, embody the essence of participative management, where critical thinking and active learning are prioritized. This participatory approach to learning is crucial for the development of students' critical consciousness, enabling them to analyze and challenge the status quo, preparing them for active and informed participation in democratic life (Denison, 1990). These practices not only align with the aims of Participative Management Theory but also reinforce the democratic values of mutual respect, collaboration, and shared authority within the learning environment (Lawler, 1992). By creating spaces where students are encouraged to question, reflect, and engage in critical discussions, lecturers are not just transmitting knowledge but are actively contributing to the formation of critically aware and democratic citizens ready to navigate and transform their societal landscapes (Kanter, 1983).

Incorporating evidence-based strategies such as positive behaviour supports, coaching, preventive interventions, and movement integration, as discussed by Reinke et al. (2012) and Moore et al. (2016), can significantly enhance democratic classroom management practices by fostering critical thinking and reflection. These strategies ensure that students are not only engaged in their learning but also empowered to actively contribute to their educational environment. This participative approach aligns with the principles of Participative Management Theory, which advocates for involving all members in decision-making processes to enhance organizational effectiveness and individual satisfaction (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). By applying these strategies,

lecturers can create inclusive and supportive learning environments that prepare students for the complexities of democratic life, thereby contributing to a more equitable and effective educational system (Sibbett, 2022).

#### Theme 4: Creating Inclusive and Safe Learning Environments

Participants emphasised the importance of creating inclusive and safe classroom environments to enhance democratic classroom management practices. Their statements emphasized the need for spaces that make students feel comfortable and motivated to actively participate in classroom activities. This is evident in the following participants' statements:

*S10: "Anything that will make me feel that I am valued; feeling my background was valued in class discussions made me more comfortable sharing my opinions further."*

*L1: "We need to create inclusive classrooms. Creating an inclusive environment means ensuring every student feels their voice is heard and valued, regardless of background."*

*L2: "In my classrooms, I used to make a concerted effort to use materials that reflect a diversity of perspectives, making all students feel represented."*

*S9: "Our classroom's safe space made me feel supported and respected by my peers."*

*L3: "Safe space agreements are vital in maintaining a supportive classroom where students feel comfortable expressing themselves without any fear whatsoever."*

*S4: "Having equal access to resources ensured everyone had the same chance to succeed."*

*L5: "Accessibility to learning resources and accommodations for all students is non-negotiable for truly democratic education, hence I recommend it."*

The collective insights from both students (S10, S9, S4) and lecturers (L1, L2, L3, L5) highlight the importance of inclusivity and safety in classroom environments. These factors play a significant role in fostering meaningful student engagement and academic success. This approach aligns with the principles of Participative Management Theory, which advocates for involving all members of the organization in decision-making processes and creating a supportive environment where diverse voices are respected and valued (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). As suggested by L1 and L3, creating inclusive and safe spaces is essential to ensure that every student feels heard and valued. This sentiment is echoed by Reinke et al. (2012), who emphasize the role of positive behaviour supports in fostering a conducive learning environment. Furthermore, L2's effort to incorporate diverse materials and L5's emphasis on accessibility highlight practical steps lecturers can take to actualise these inclusive principles. These steps resonate with Cotton (1993), who underscores the importance of participative management in creating inclusive and empowering educational environments.

As mentioned by S9 and L3, the emphasis on safe spaces and equitable access to resources, as advocated by S4 and L5, are crucial in dismantling barriers to participation and success in the classroom. These strategies not only enhance the learning experience by making students feel supported and respected but also contribute to levelling the educational playing field. Every student is given the same opportunity to thrive, reflecting an equitable approach foundational to Participative Management Theory (Lawler, 1992; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). This approach aims to prepare students not only academically but also as engaged

citizens capable of contributing to a diverse and inclusive society. Such educational practices are instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging and community among students, furthering the goal of participative management to transform education into a tool for equity and inclusion (Denison, 1990; Kanter, 1983). By integrating these inclusive and safe practices, one can create a classroom environment that respects and values diversity and actively contributes to the holistic development of students as democratic participants in their communities.

Incorporating evidence-based strategies such as positive behaviour supports, coaching, preventive interventions, and movement integration, as discussed by Reinke et al. (2012) and Moore et al. (2016), can significantly enhance democratic classroom management practices by ensuring inclusivity and safety. These strategies ensure that students are not only engaged in their learning but also empowered to actively contribute to their educational environment. This participative approach aligns with the principles of Participative Management Theory, which advocates for involving all members in decision-making processes to enhance organizational effectiveness and individual satisfaction (Likert, 1961; Lawler, 1992). By applying these strategies, one can create inclusive and supportive learning environments that prepare students for the complexities of democratic life, thereby contributing to a more equitable and effective educational system (Sibbett, 2022).

### Major Findings as a Model to Promote Democratic Classrooms among Student Teachers

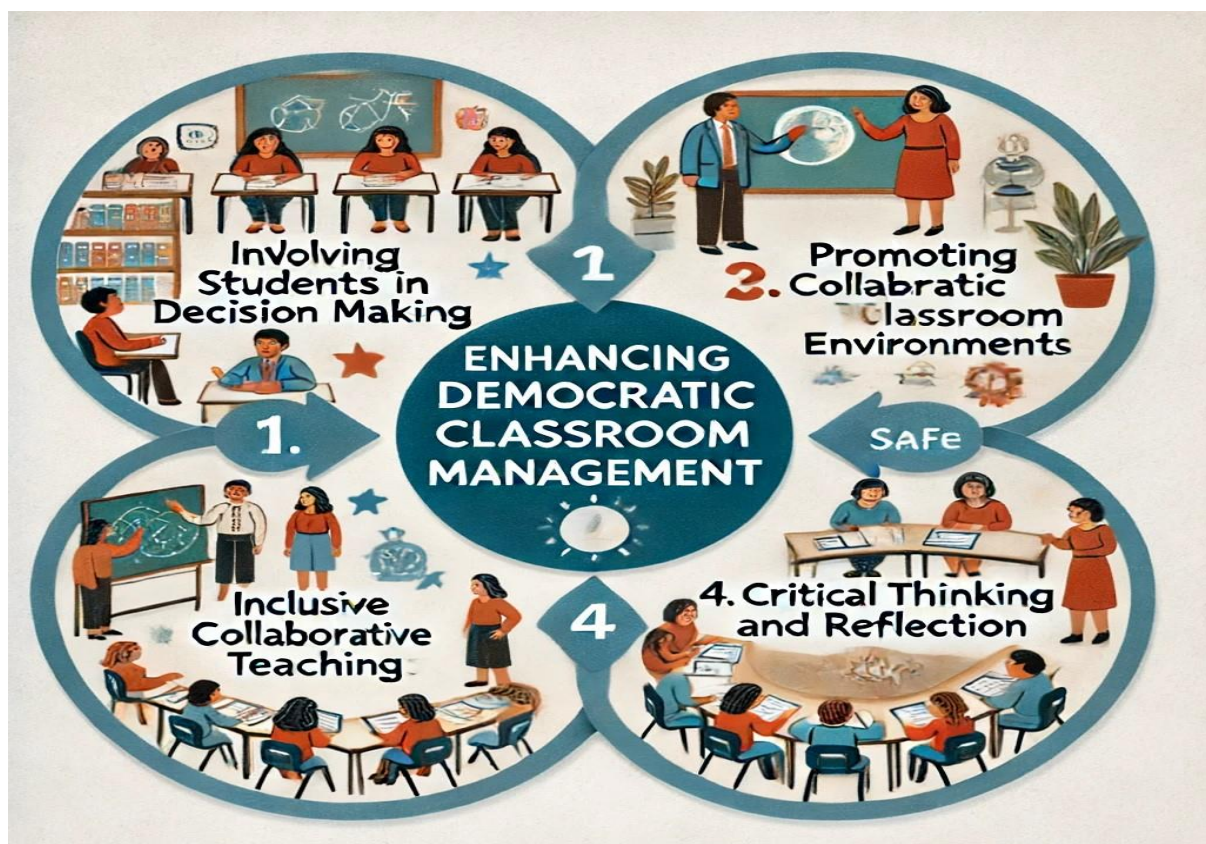
Below are the highlights of major findings and how they inform the model that could be adopted by lecturers in order to install democratic practices in student teachers:

**Encouraging the involvement of students in decision-making:** The research emphasises the crucial role of engaging students in decision-making within the classroom. This is seen as a foundational strategy for equipping them with democratic classroom management skills. By actively participating in setting class rules, choosing project topics, and contributing to the curriculum, students take ownership of their learning process and develop skills essential for democratic engagement in their professional futures. This approach fosters a sense of responsibility, encourages active participation, and prepares students for real-world challenges by mirroring the democratic processes they will encounter in the workplace.

**Promoting Collaborative Teaching and Learning:** The study highlights collaborative teaching and learning as a pivotal strategy for nurturing democratic classroom management. This method, which includes group projects, peer teaching, and collaborative problem-solving, serves as an academic exercise and a practical application of democratic principles. It equips student teachers with the ability to facilitate an environment that values diverse perspectives, promotes mutual respect, and encourages teamwork. These experiences are instrumental in developing the facilitation skills necessary for promoting democratic practices in their future classrooms and professional environments.

**Critical Thinking and Reflection:** Emphasising critical thinking and reflection as key components of democratic classroom management, the study reveals how these strategies can deepen students' understanding and appreciation of democratic values. Through activities such as reflection essays, critical analysis of societal norms, and questioning of assumptions, students are encouraged to examine their biases and consider diverse viewpoints critically. This approach not only enhances their problem-solving and analytical skills but also prepares them to navigate and contribute to a democratic society with a more informed and reflective perspective.

**Inclusive and Safe Classroom Environments:** The research identifies creating inclusive and safe classroom environments as essential for maximising student engagement and success. This supports the development of democratic practices. Ensuring every student feels valued, heard, and safe to express themselves without fear fosters a sense of belonging and community. This inclusive approach is fundamental in teaching future teachers about building classrooms that respect and celebrate diversity. It lays the groundwork for a more democratic educational system where every student has the opportunity to thrive.



**Figure 1:** Democratic Classroom Management Model

The visual model effectively captures the essence of a holistic approach needed to promote democratic values in educational settings, particularly for student-teacher preparation. Involving students in decision-making empowers them and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning journey, laying the groundwork for democratic engagement. The focus on collaborative teaching

and learning further enriches this framework by encouraging peer interaction and teamwork, which are vital skills for navigating the complexities of modern democratic societies. Critical thinking and reflection are presented as essential components that challenge both students and teachers to question assumptions, engage with diverse perspectives, and critically evaluate societal norms, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of democracy itself. Including inclusive and safe classroom environments as a core element underscores the importance of creating spaces where all students feel valued and secure, essential for the free exchange of ideas and nurturing a truly democratic spirit. Together, these interconnected components form a robust cycle that not only enhances the pedagogical skills of student teachers but also prepares them to create classroom environments that reflect democratic ideals, ensuring that the next generation is better equipped to engage with and contribute to democratic processes both within and beyond the classroom.

### Conclusion and recommendations

The "Democratic Classroom Management Model (DCMM)" emphasizes the importance of taking a multifaceted approach in creating democratic classrooms. This approach is crucial in preparing student teachers to participate in and contribute to a democratic society. By involving students in decision-making, promoting collaborative teaching and learning, encouraging critical thinking and reflection, and establishing inclusive and safe environments, this model highlights the necessary components for enhancing student engagement and academic success. This comprehensive approach not only equips student teachers with effective classroom management skills, but also instills democratic values that extend beyond the classroom. It shapes future teachers who can promote democratic principles in their teaching practices.

Based on the findings of the DCMM Model, educational institutions should prioritize the integration of democratic practices into their curricula and pedagogical strategies. Firstly, teacher education programs should provide structured opportunities for student teachers to practice decision-making and leadership within a classroom setting. This strengthens their ability to engage students in a democratic manner. Secondly, fostering an environment that values collaborative learning experiences can further enhance the development of democratic skills among student teachers. Additionally, curricula should place emphasis on critical thinking and reflective practices. This enables student teachers to constructively challenge societal norms and biases. Finally, it is crucial for teacher education programs to advocate for and model inclusive and safe learning environments. By implementing these strategies, student teachers' learning experiences will be enriched while also preparing them to create classrooms that embody democratic values. This promotes a more engaged and inclusive educational landscape.

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# CHAPTER THREE

## FINAL REFLECTION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 3.1 Final Reflection and Findings

The study investigated how to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms in a selected South African university. Specifically, it provided an answer to a major research question: How can democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms be enhanced in a selected South African university?

**In order to answer the main research question, the following sub-research questions were formulated to guide the study.**

- How do democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms?
- What are the apparent challenges that hinder effective democratic management practices in university classrooms?
- What are the opportunities that effective democratic management practices present in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms?
- Which strategies that can be used to enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms?

Among the five objectives, objectives 1 and 2 are the focus of the first research article titled "Exploring Democratic Practices: Perceptions and Implementations of Democratic Classroom Management in University-Based Teacher Training". This article also addresses two research questions derived from the title. The two research questions are:

- How do democratic management practices unfold in university classrooms?
- What are the perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms?

Secondly, among the five objectives, objectives three and four were combined to form an article for publication titled "Examining Challenges and Opportunities for Effective Democratic Management Practices in University Classrooms". This article also addressed two research questions that were derived from the title. The two research questions are:

- Identify the challenges of implementing effective democratic management practices in university classrooms.
- Evaluate the opportunities that effective democratic management practices present in enhancing learning experiences in university classrooms.

Lastly, among the five objectives, objective five resulted in an article titled "Strategies to Enhance Democratic Management Practices in University Classrooms". This article also addressed one of the research questions posed in the title. The specific research question is:

- How can university lecturers be equipped with strategies and tools to manage classrooms using democratic practices more effectively?

### 3.1.1 Findings for Article One

The study uncovers significant variations in classroom management practices at the university level, ranging from traditional lecture-based approaches to more interactive and comprehensive methods. However, there are still obstacles that impede the full realization of democratic principles. Therefore, comprehensive reforms in teacher education are necessary to foster inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students.

Diverse perspectives on democratic management emerge, shedding light on the aspirations and challenges associated with its implementation. Students advocate for active involvement, while instructors emphasize empowerment and collaboration. Clear guidelines are considered crucial to strike a balance between student autonomy and classroom discipline, echoing Dewey's call for structured yet autonomous learning environments.

Perspectives on the benefits and challenges of democratic management practices reflect the struggle of translating theory into practical techniques. While there is recognition of its potential to enhance student engagement and motivation, difficulties in achieving full student participation persist. The establishment of a collaborative and inclusive environment that empowers students requires a delicate balance between autonomy and order, thereby highlighting conflicting viewpoints and the challenges of implementation.

Personal recollections of feeling more engaged in class activities when given decision-making opportunities resonate with Dewey's emphasis on student ownership in learning. Instructors emphasize the importance of flexibility in meeting curriculum requirements, thus underscoring the need to strike a balance between autonomy and academic standards. Despite the obstacles faced, there is an acknowledgement of the potential benefits of democratic management in fostering critical thinking and empowerment among students.

### 3.1.2 Findings from Article Two

The study highlights the challenge of resistance to participatory learning due to traditional teaching methods in implementing democratic classroom management practices in university classrooms. This challenge is in line with criticisms of teacher education programs prioritising traditional approaches over interactive methods, which hinder the development of equitable and inclusive learning environments.

Institutional constraints and a lack of resources also pose obstacles to the effective implementation of democratic management practices. Historical legacies and limited resources impede the adoption of democratic practices, necessitating systemic changes within educational institutions to remove barriers and promote democratic education.

Democratic management practices in university classrooms offer personal and professional development opportunities. The transformative power of education enables individuals to develop critical consciousness, promoting personal growth and societal engagement. This is in accordance with the principles of Critical Pedagogy advocated by Freire and Giroux.

Effective democratic management practices also create an enhanced learning environment and foster inclusiveness. By promoting inclusivity and active participation, democratic practices create engaging learning environments that value diversity and empower students. These practices align with the principles of Critical Pedagogy advocated by Freire and Giroux.

### 3.1.3 Findings from Article Three

The research emphasises the crucial role of student engagement in decision-making within the classroom as a foundational strategy for equipping them with democratic classroom management skills. Active participation in setting class rules, choosing project topics, and contributing to the curriculum enables students to take ownership of their learning process and develop skills necessary for democratic engagement in their future careers. This approach promotes a sense of responsibility, encourages active participation, and prepares students for real-world challenges by mirroring the democratic processes they will encounter in the workplace.

The study highlights the significance of collaborative teaching and learning as a pivotal strategy for nurturing democratic classroom management. This method, which includes group projects, peer teaching, and collaborative problem-solving, serves not only as an academic exercise but also as a practical application of democratic principles. It equips student teachers with the ability to create an environment that values diverse perspectives, promotes mutual respect, and encourages teamwork. These experiences are crucial in developing the facilitation skills necessary for promoting democratic practices in their future classrooms and professional environments.

Emphasizing critical thinking and reflection as key components of democratic classroom management, the study reveals how these strategies can deepen students' understanding and appreciation of democratic values. Through activities such as reflection essays, critical analysis of societal norms, and questioning of assumptions, students are encouraged to examine their biases and critically consider diverse viewpoints. This approach not only enhances their problem-solving and analytical skills but also prepares them to navigate and contribute to a democratic society with a more informed and reflective perspective.

The research identifies the creation of inclusive and safe classroom environments as essential for maximising student engagement and success, thereby supporting the development of democratic practices. Ensuring that every student feels valued, heard, and safe to express themselves without fear fosters a sense of belonging and community. This inclusive approach is fundamental in teaching future teachers the importance of building classrooms that respect and celebrate diversity, thereby laying the groundwork for a more democratic educational system where every student has the opportunity to thrive.



**Figure 3.1:** Democratic Classroom Management Model

The visual model effectively captures the essence of a holistic approach needed to foster democratic values in educational settings, with a specific focus on student-teacher preparation. By involving students in the decision-making process, they not only gain empowerment but also develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their learning journey. This establishes a foundation for democratic engagement. The emphasis on promoting collaborative teaching and learning further enriches this framework by encouraging peer interaction and teamwork, which are crucial skills for navigating the complexities of modern

democratic societies. Critical thinking and reflection are presented as pivotal components that challenge both students and teachers to question assumptions, engage with diverse perspectives, and critically evaluate societal norms. This fosters a deeper understanding of democracy itself. The inclusion of inclusive and safe classroom environments as a core element underscores the necessity of creating spaces where all students feel valued and secure. This is essential for free exchange of ideas and nurturing a truly democratic spirit. Together, these interconnected components form a robust cycle that enhances the pedagogical skills of student teachers and prepares them to create classroom environments that embody democratic ideals. This ensures that the next generation is better equipped to engage with and contribute to democratic processes both within and beyond the classroom.

### 3.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

The "Democratic Classroom Engagement Model (DCMM)" emphasises the significance of adopting a multifaceted approach to foster democratic management classrooms. This approach is essential for cultivating student teachers who are capable of navigating and contributing to a democratic society. The model highlights key elements such as student participation in decision-making, collaborative teaching and learning, critical thinking and reflection, and the establishment of inclusive and safe environments. The model aims to augment student engagement and academic achievement by integrating these elements. This comprehensive approach not only equips student teachers with effective classroom management skills but also instills democratic values that extend beyond the confines of the classroom. Consequently, student teachers become educators who can promote democratic principles in their instructional practices.

Based on the findings of the DCMM Model, educational institutions should prioritize the integration of democratic practices into their curricula and

pedagogical strategies. Firstly, teacher education programs should offer structured opportunities for student teachers to engage in decision-making and leadership within a classroom setting. This will enhance their capacity to involve students in democratic processes. Secondly, fostering an environment that values collaborative learning experiences can further cultivate the democratic skills of student teachers. Additionally, curricula should place emphasis on critical thinking and reflective practices. This empowers student teachers to constructively challenge societal norms and biases. Finally, it is crucial for teacher education programs to advocate for and exemplify inclusive and safe learning environments. These strategies not only enrich the learning experiences of student teachers but also prepare them to foster classrooms that embody democratic values. In turn, this promotes a more engaged and inclusive educational landscape.

### 3.3 Recommendations for Practice

- **Revise Teacher Education Programs:** In order to address the need for inclusive learning environments that cater to the diverse requirements of students, the implementation of comprehensive reforms in teacher education programs is of utmost importance. These reforms should prioritise the training and development of aspiring teachers, equipping them with the necessary skills to establish such environments. An especially crucial aspect is the integration of training modules that emphasize interactive and participatory teaching methods. By imparting these skills to student teachers, teacher education programs can ensure that future educators are adept at creating fair and inclusive learning environments. These reforms not only enhance lecturers' ability to engage and support diverse student populations but also foster a more inclusive and effective educational experience for all learners.

- **Provide Ongoing Professional Development:** Continuous professional development is essential for lecturers to keep up with current pedagogical trends and best practices. Offering ongoing professional development opportunities centred on democratic management principles can enhance the ability of current and future teachers to encourage student engagement and participation. These opportunities allow lecturers to stay updated with innovative teaching methods and strategies that promote inclusivity and equity in the classroom. By continuously refining their skills and knowledge, lecturers can effectively manage classrooms and create dynamic learning environments that support student success. Furthermore, ongoing professional development ensures that lecturers have the necessary tools to address the evolving needs of diverse student populations, ultimately leading to improved academic outcomes and overall student well-being.
- **Foster Collaborative Learning Environments:** Enhancing collaborative learning environments involves promoting teaching and learning approaches that emphasize cooperation and active engagement among students. This can be achieved by encouraging practices such as group projects, peer teaching, and collaborative problem-solving. Not only does this align with democratic principles, but it also equips student teachers with essential facilitation skills for their future classrooms. By participating in collaborative activities, students develop the ability to collaborate effectively, communicate proficiently, and appreciate diverse perspectives. This cultivates a sense of shared responsibility and ownership of the learning process. Moreover, these experiences empower student teachers to establish inclusive and participatory classrooms where each student's voice is

valued and respected. Ultimately, fostering collaborative learning environments prepares student teachers to create dynamic and engaging classrooms that promote active learning and critical thinking skills among their future students.

- **Emphasize Critical Thinking and Reflection:** Fostering democratic classroom management practices requires a strong emphasis on critical thinking and reflection. By prioritizing activities such as reflection essays, critical analysis of societal norms, and questioning assumptions, students are motivated to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of democratic values. These strategies not only improve problem-solving skills but also prepare students to navigate and contribute to a democratic society with a thoughtful and well-informed perspective. Students learn to think independently, evaluate information, and make informed decisions by critically examining various perspectives and societal issues. Integrating these activities into the classroom creates an environment where students feel empowered to challenge norms, engage in meaningful dialogue, and actively shape their own learning experiences. Ultimately, by emphasizing critical thinking and reflection, students gain the necessary skills and mindset to become informed and active citizens in a democratic society.
- **Policymakers:** Policymakers play a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape and ensuring the successful implementation of democratic classroom management practices. To support these initiatives, policymakers should advocate for and facilitate comprehensive reforms in teacher education programs. The integration of interactive and participatory teaching methods should be prioritised. Additionally, policymakers should ensure the provision of ongoing professional development opportunities focused on

democratic management principles. This will enable lecturers to stay current with pedagogical trends and best practices. By promoting policies that encourage collaborative learning environments and emphasize critical thinking and reflection, policymakers can help create an inclusive and equitable education system. Such a system will prepare students to be active and informed citizens. It is also important for policies to address the allocation of resources. This will support these initiatives and ensure that all lecturers have access to the necessary tools and training. This will enable them to foster inclusive and dynamic learning environments.

### 3.4 Contribution to Knowledge

Below are the major contributions to knowledge deduced from the study. This is subdivided into three phases: the theoretical contribution to knowledge, the conceptual contribution as a model, and the contributions from the major findings.

#### 3.4.1 Theoretical Contribution

The integration of Critical Theory and Participative Management Theory in this study makes a significant contribution to the field of educational research. It provides an active framework for managing classrooms in a democratic manner. By combining Critical Theory's emphasis on challenging traditional, hierarchical, and oppressive educational paradigms with Participative Management Theory's focus on inclusive decision-making processes, the study presents a comprehensive approach to fostering democratic classroom environments. This integrated framework encourages lecturers to prioritize collaboration, dialogue, and critical thinking, helping to dismantle biases and promote equity and democratic engagement among students. Involving both students and lecturers in the decision-making process enhances motivation, engagement, and a sense of ownership and accountability within the classroom. This participatory approach

aligns with the principles of social justice and prepares students for active participation in democratic societies.

The study demonstrates that adopting participative management strategies within the context of critical theory enables lecturers to implement practical techniques. These techniques promote open communication, transparency, and collaborative problem-solving, supporting the development of critical thinking and reflection, essential components of effective democratic practices in classrooms. The framework further provided by this integration enables lecturers to create inclusive and dynamic learning environments where every student's voice is valued and respected. This approach not only enhances classroom management but also prepares future teachers to implement these democratic practices in their own classrooms. It addresses gaps in current teacher education programs and contributes to a more equitable and effective educational system. Thus, the synthesis of Critical Theory and Participative Management Theory offers a robust and holistic framework for reimagining and enhancing democratic management practices in university classrooms.

### 3.4.2 Contribution as a Conceptual Model

The Democratic Classroom Management Model (DCMM) offers lecturers a structured framework for effectively implementing democratic management in the classroom. This model emphasizes student involvement, collaborative learning, critical thinking, and inclusivity. Lecturers empower students and cultivate a sense of ownership and responsibility by actively involving them in decision-making processes. This, in turn, enhances student engagement and motivation. The emphasis on collaborative teaching and learning encourages peer interaction and teamwork, which are essential skills for understanding diverse perspectives and navigating democratic societies. Integrating critical thinking and reflection allows students to question assumptions and engage with diverse

viewpoints, fostering a culture of independent thought and inquiry. Creating inclusive and safe environments also ensures that all students feel valued and secure, facilitating the free exchange of ideas. This holistic approach not only enhances pedagogical effectiveness but also prepares future teachers to implement democratic practices in their own classrooms, contributing to a more equitable and democratic educational system.

### 3.4.3 Contribution from Findings

The major findings of this study contribute significantly to the existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence and practical insights into the implementation of democratic management practices in university classrooms. Firstly, the study highlights the current variations in classroom management practices, ranging from traditional to interactive methods, and emphasizes the need for comprehensive reforms in teacher education to cultivate inclusive and democratic learning environments. This finding underscores the importance of reconsidering teacher training programs to better prepare student teachers for fostering democratic practices in their classrooms.

Moreover, the study reveals the critical perspectives of both students and lecturers on democratic management practices, emphasizing the advantages of active student involvement in decision-making processes. These insights enhance understanding of how democratic engagement can improve student motivation, empowerment, and participation, providing lecturers with a practical framework to effectively implement these practices. The identification of challenges, such as resistance to participatory learning and institutional constraints, contributes to the ongoing discourse on the barriers to democratic education. Acknowledging these obstacles, the study informs policymakers and educational institutions about the systemic changes necessary to support democratic management practices.

Finally, the study's development of the Democratic Classroom Management Model (DCMM) offers a structured approach to integrating democratic principles into classroom management. This model provides lecturers with a comprehensive guide, highlighting strategies such as collaborative teaching, critical thinking, and creating inclusive environments. By offering a practical and theoretical framework, the DCMM model serves as a valuable tool for enhancing the pedagogical skills of current and future teachers, ultimately contributing to the advancement of democratic education and social justice in educational settings.

### 3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter comprehensively summarises the study's final reflections and findings. It addresses the main research question, which explores how democratic management practices can be enhanced in teacher education classrooms at a selected South African university. The chapter unpacks the final reflections and findings derived from three research articles, each focusing on different aspects of democratic classroom management practices. Furthermore, the chapter introduces the Democratic Classroom Engagement Model (DCMM) as a framework for implementing democratic principles in educational settings. The model emphasizes the importance of student involvement, collaborative teaching, critical thinking, and creating inclusive and safe learning environments. The chapter concludes with detailed recommendations for practice, including revising teacher education programs, providing ongoing professional development, fostering collaborative learning environments, and emphasizing critical thinking and reflection. It also highlights the role of policymakers in supporting these initiatives through comprehensive reforms and resource allocation to create inclusive and dynamic educational environments.

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# Appendix One: Approval of the Study Proposal



17 August 2023

## APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

**Applicant:** Omodan, T

**Student Number:** 2019832480

**Discipline:** Education Management and Leadership

**Study Code:** Doctoral (EMLA9100)

Dear Ms Omodan


Your registered title is as follows: *"Exploring strategies to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms in a South African University"*.

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Patrick Mafora  
Chair: CTR committee



Ms CS Duvenhage  
Secretary: CTR committee

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## Appendix Two: Ethical Approval Letter



### **GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)**

12-Dec-2023

Dear Mrs Taiwo Omodan

#### **Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**Exploring strategies to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms in a South African University**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2023/1898**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

**Adri  
Du  
Plessis**  
Digitally  
signed by Adri  
Du Plessis  
Date:  
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## Appendix Three: Consent Forms



### Research study information leaflet and consent form

#### Date

1<sup>st</sup> October 2023

#### Title of the research project

Exploring strategies to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms in a selected South African University.

#### Principle investigator / researcher(s) name(s) and contact number(s):

*Taiwo Cristianah Omodan*      2019832480      0765241667

#### Faculty and Department:

Faculty of Education  
*Department of Education Management, Policy and Comparative Education*

#### Study leader(s) name and contact number:

*Bernie Platjies (0874164)*  
0768116066

#### What is the aim/purpose of the study?

*The aim is to investigate how to enhance democratic management practices in teacher education classrooms in a selected South African University.*

#### Who is doing the research?

*I am Taiwo Cristianah Omodan, a PhD Student from the Faculty of Education, University of the Free State. The study is meant to complete my doctoral studies.*

#### Has the study received ethical approval?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

**Approval number:** UFS-HSD2023/1898

#### Why are you invited to take part in this research project?

You are selected as a student-teacher/lecturer to participate in this study based on your experience as one of the important classroom stakeholders with adequate university classroom experience as a student or lecturer. The study will encompass a total of 15 participants, consisting of 10 student-teachers and 5 lecturers. The student-teachers have completed at least three years at Walter Sisulu University, while the lecturers have accrued at least two years of teaching experience within the Faculty of Education. Participant contact information will be procured from the heads of departments at the Faculty of Education, Butterworth campus. The selection of all participants is crucial to the research. Your role in implementing



democratic classroom practices make their insights invaluable in identifying and addressing challenges associated with democratic classroom management.

### What is the nature of participation in this study?

*The study involves audio taping of semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. The questions of the interview will be around knowing how democratic management practices currently unfold in university classrooms, perceptions of student teachers and lecturers on democratic management practices in university classrooms, challenges that hinder effective democratic management practices in university classrooms, and strategies that can be used to enhance democratic management practices in university classrooms. Each interview will not last more than 30 minutes with each participant, and the classroom observations will last for the duration of each class. However, participants are not open to any risks and will only be interviewed at their preferred free time.*

### Can the participant withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you decide to participate, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

The possible benefits for participants include the pride of participating in a study that will lead to practical solutions to democratic teaching and learning in South Africa. This also means that you are contributing to the national interest in democratic citizenship. The subject's participation in the study will be kept confidential, but your responses will be given to the study leader (supervisor) for quality assurance purposes.

### What is the anticipated inconvenience of taking part in this study?

The only foreseeable risk for you as a participant is lost teaching and learning time. I will mitigate this by asking you and other participants to indicate your preferred time and date to be interviewed.

### Will what I say be kept confidential?

For confidentiality purposes, please note that your name will not be recorded anywhere, and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym, and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods, such as conference proceedings. Only the researcher, the study leader and the transcriber will have confidential access to the data; the transcriber will be made to consent to a confidential agreement to protect the data. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Please note that you may choose to stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

### How will the information be stored and ultimately destroyed?

The researcher will store hard copies of your answers for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in my house for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a

password-protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After five years, this data will be destroyed by burning the printed copy and permanently deleting the soft copies. However, there is no foreseeable risk for your participation in the study.

#### Will I receive payment or any incentives for participating in this study?

There is no payment or any financial incentives, and you as a participant will not incur any cost for participating because you will be interviewed on campus or as may be indicated by you as the participant. However, there is no foreseeable risk identified.

#### How will the participant be informed of the findings/results of the study?

If you want to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mrs Taiwo Omodan at 0765241667 or email: taibabalola@gmail.com. The findings are accessible Between March and June 2024. Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or mobile phone numbers are acceptable. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact 0765241667 or email: taibabalola@gmail.com. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact [PlaatjiesBO@ufs.ac.za](mailto:PlaatjiesBO@ufs.ac.za) or 0768116066.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.**

## Consent to participate in this study

I, the undersigned,

\_\_\_\_\_ (participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

\_\_\_\_\_ (the "Study") in relation to

\_\_\_\_\_ and which Study is being conducted by

\_\_\_\_\_ (insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that—

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the <insert specific data collection method>.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix Four: Proof of Language Editing

