FOR THE LOVE OF TEACHING!

NARRATIVES OF TEACHER IDENTITY AND TEACHER EMOTION OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

by

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, in the Graduate Programme in Teacher Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Selina Moodliar declare that

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Student Signature Date

…….. Dr. Jaqueline Naidoo..... ..... [redacted] .....

Supervisor Signature

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Zaid, whose tenacious spirit inspired me to become a better teacher and awakened in me, a true sense of purpose in the field of learning support. And to all children around the world: I dedicate my efforts to you so that a sound and responsive education which addresses whatever learning barriers you may be experiencing, helps you to achieve your true potential.

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The children who I teach daily, who inspire me and give layers of meaning to my own pedagogy. I hope you will benefit from any and all progress in learning support.

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My husband, Prenay and my daughters, Jasodha and Miraya who helped me navigate my own identity as a working, student mom and put up with my radical plans and emotional outbursts that come with that territory.

Leanne, Shaa'ista and Laura: my motivator, my sounding board and my rock respectively.

ABSTRACT

There is a growing need to develop teachers in the field of inclusive education. This thesis presents an exploration and understanding of the stories and lived experiences of learning support teachers. Given that this qualitative study aimed to unearth the multiplicity of teacher identity and deep-rooted nature of teacher emotion through narrative inquiry; and how these relate to career phases and inclusive pedagogical choices, a tree metaphor is used to present this dissertation. Embedded in an interpretive paradigm, the narratives of seven learning support teachers in Pietermaritzburg were constructed. Semi-structured interviews, self-boxes, Tree-of –Life drawings and vignettes were used as data generating instruments. Thematic data analysis resulted in the construction of rich and thick narratives of participants which enabled a glimpse of their lives in order to understand their teacher identities as learning support teachers. The frameworks that informed this study were Day and Kington's (2008) structure on the dimensions of teacher identity which analysed the personal and professional identities of learning support teachers, Zembylas' (2002) theory on the genealogies of teacher emotion which was used to locate participants' emotions within an individual, social or socio-political context; and Day and Gu's (2007) framework on Professional Life Phases of teachers which was used to compare and contrast the narratives of participants against typical teacher profiles by career age. The findings of this study show that not only do the identities of learning support teachers fluctuate within the personal, professional and situated dimensions of teacher identity, but they are also deeply interconnected, shaped by critical influences and are resilient in nature. This study revealed a fourth dimension of teacher identity: a counter-narrative that described elements of a concealed or fragmented identity.

With regards to teacher emotion, learning support teachers were found to be emotionally invested in their work and they therefore reported feeling either positively motivated or negatively disempowered in the workplace as a result of this emotional investment. Furthermore, the constant need for learning support teachers to negotiate emotional boundaries stimulated reflective practice and the formation of emotional relationships ('bonds') between themselves and others at school. Largely-negative emotional experiences made learning support teachers feel vulnerable and inhibited their willingness to adapt and improve their teaching practice, whilst largely-positive emotional experiences made them feel self-confident and encouraged learning support teachers' to adapt and improve their teaching practice. Weak

emotional bonds demotivated learning support teachers and made them less productive whilst strong emotional bonds promoted higher work engagement and productivity. The findings from applying Day and Gu's (2007) framework on the professional life phases of teachers to the participants' narratives resulted in a common theme. The narratives indicated that being a learning support teacher is ultimately, a journey of self-discovery. Additionally, learning support teachers identified 'teamwork and collaboration' as fundamental to their productivity irrespective of their professional life phase. The resulting effect of teacher identity and teacher emotions on learning support teachers' work engagement and productivity highlights the dynamic nature of inclusive education and hence that, the future of inclusive education lies in the hands of teachers. The findings of this study will hopefully contribute positively to studies on professional teacher development in the field of learning support. Moreover, in light of Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) which is compulsory for South African teachers, to maintain their teaching accreditation, a deeper understanding of teacher identity and teacher emotion - and their inextricable influence on teaching practice and teacher productivity - is crucial to the improvement of professional teacher development programs.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DBST	District-Based Support Team
DH	Departmental Head
DoE	Department of Education
EI	Emotional Intelligence
HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus
IEP	Individual Education Plan
IESP	Individualised Educational Support Plan
ISP	Individual Support Plan
KZN	KwaZulu- Natal
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LSPID	Learners with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SBST	School-Based Support Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
SMT	School Management Team
SNES	Special Needs Education Services
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCED	Western Cape Education Department
WP6	White Paper 6

CHAPTER 1: A VIEW FROM THE TREETOP – AN INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW

According to Mittler (2000, p. xi), *"Inclusion is a vision, a road to be travelled but a road without ending, and a road with all kinds of barriers and obstacles, some of them invisible and some of them in our own heads and hearts".* It speaks to the role of learning support teachers and other stakeholders, in realising the ideals of educational inclusion and symbolizes that this realisation is guided by their thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, identities and emotions. It is against this backdrop that Chapter 1: A View from the Treetop, gives a synopsis of the study.

Since South Africa's publication of the visionary Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (WP6), the country has endured the pains of Tantalus - who in Greek mythology, stood in a pool of water beneath a fruit tree with low branches, with the fruit ever eluding his grasp (Cartwright, 2017) – with the ideals of inclusive education always in sight but out of reach. Although the initial time frames described in WP6 (DoE, 2001) seemed realistic for the early implementation of inclusive education and training, the department's 2021 target for the provision of services has barely sprouted progress. While post-apartheid South Africa struggled under extreme conditions and a lack of resources to redress the historical marginalisation of learners along racial lines, there was a growing consensus to recognise inclusive education nationally as a strategic lever of change. Despite the paradigmatic and policy shift towards inclusivity which echoed the global call for action to establish a compassionate and humane society for all (UNESCO, 1994), Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey (2005, p. 2), argue that teachers are not sufficiently equipped to support inclusion:

> Inclusive education by its very nature, cannot exist in environments where some children are educated separately or substantively differently from their peers. Inclusion involves regular schools and classrooms genuinely adapting and changing to meet the needs of all children, as well as celebrating and valuing differences.

The professional development of teachers is thus vitally important for high work engagement and productivity. Dreyer (2013) firmly supports this view claiming that traditionally, initial teacher training separated teachers too: into a group of mainstream teachers and those teachers with a set of expert skills to teach learners with a diversity of special/remedial education needs.

This resulted in a perception that the onus was therefore on the few special needs/remedial teachers and paraprofessionals to conduct differentiated instruction and assessment.

The transformation of the traditional structure, nature and themes of remedial and special education to that of modern learning support, brings with it increased potential for fluidity and multiplicity in its application. As a result, this growing practice challenges these teachers' identities, emotions, opinions, attitudes and methodologies concerning teaching, which is consistent with the findings of Yaraya, Masalimova, Vasbieva and Grudtsina (2018). Yaraya et al. (2018, p.7) argue that a positive attitude towards inclusion is determined by numerous factors "related to teachers themselves (such as gender, age, teaching experience); learners (such as learner's degrees of difference and the nature of disorders); and the environment (such as availability of staff and financial support)". This view echoes the study of Day and Kington (2008) that shows teacher identity being influenced by fluctuating dimensions of personal, professional and situated experiences.

1.2 Focus and purpose

The study focused on the real life stories and experiences of learning support teachers in order to explore the phenomena of teacher identity and teacher emotion. By examining the narratives of learning support teachers, the purpose of this study was to explore the identities and emotions of teachers rooted in learning support. In addition, this study examined how the identities and emotions of learning support teachers influenced their inclusive pedagogical choices and how their 'career phases' (Day & Gu, 2007) affected teacher identity formation.

1.3 Seeds of motivation: A rationale

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) describes education for children, irrespective of barriers to learning, as a basic human right. Though there have been several studies in the last decade on the value of inclusive pedagogy (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Linklater, 2010; Florian & Spratt, 2013; Guralnick, 2005b;) and the evolution of learning support (DeBettencourt & Nagro, 2018; Deku & Vanderpuye, 2017; Dreyer, 2013; Hart, Drummond, & McIntyre, 2007), numerous renowned studies on teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Day & Kington, 2008; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Zembylas, 2003b) and teacher emotions (Hargreaves, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2016; Lasky & van Veen, 2005; Zembylas, 2003a; Zembylas, 2005), few have married the concepts (Bettini et al., 2017b; Bettini, Wang, Cumming, Kimerling, & Schutz, 2018; Dreyer, 2008; Farmer et al., 2018; Fielding–Barnsley,

2005) to unambiguously unearth the identities and emotions of learning support teachers to improve professional teacher development. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature on inclusive education, teacher identity and teacher emotion, by specifically providing some insight into the identities and emotions of learning support teachers so that professional teacher development programs can be more conscientious and effective in increasing teacher productivity.

The phenomena of teacher identity and teacher emotion in respect of learning support teachers are of personal significance to me. In stating my positionality as a learning support teacher, I have observed that mainstream teachers that I work with have little or no time, knowledge and/or motivation to devise individualized education support plans (IESPs), are also resistant to change, discarding the progressive idea that general classrooms should transform to accept and accommodate the diverse needs of all learners. In my opinion, until such effort is made consistently by the general classroom teacher to sufficiently identify with differentiated education in response to the demand, these classrooms may not yet be deemed 'inclusive classrooms'. In the interim, remedial teachers are stepping in as learning support teachers to ease the burden of general classroom teachers to prescribe IESPs. In the past, a workplace challenge faced by most learning support teachers like myself, is the perception of general classroom teachers that problematic, ill-behaved or poor-achieving learners and those with learning disabilities or special needs will be 'remedied' by learning support teachers. Thus, the burden falls entirely on learning support teachers to provide the resources, adaptation of assessments, counselling, discipline and differentiated teaching practice for those learners.

In my experience, this has caused me to feel less productive, frustrated with the lack of support and understanding from peers and management, overwhelmed by the pressure to 'remedy' the learner/s and an increasing sense of inadequacy as a learning support teacher. Despite these intense emotions I have remained resilient and passionate about teaching learners with barriers to learning, constantly negotiating my shifting identities. This conviction awakened an interest in me, to explore the narratives of identities and emotions of other learning support teachers to determine who they are, what stories they tell and what influences the strategies they employ to be productive in the inclusive classroom. The results will hopefully influence professional teacher development programs to focus on teacher identity and teacher emotion as it is the real life experiences of learning support teachers that informs pedagogy and influences productivity.

1.4 TREE METAPHOR

Motee (2016) adopted the tree metaphor to describe teaching and asserted that the learner is very much akin to a seed inside of which, under the right conditions, a dormant plant starts to germinate thus yielding its unique 'growth potential'. He contends that teachers, like gardeners, are given a huge responsibility to tend to these seeds by providing the appropriate care, knowledge and skills to equip learners for educational success. In my opinion, teachers also relish in watching their students 'blossom' into resourceful individuals. Motee concurs with the theory of multiple intelligences by Gardner (1999), and suggests that learners require varying amounts of input, prescribed by learning support teachers, in an individual education support plan (IESP) in the same way that different seeds require differing and specific conditions to flourish. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) contend that inclusive pedagogy discards the belief that learners display a fixed 'growth potential', in line with Dweck's theory (2015) on a 'growth mindset'. Dweck strongly opposes the idea of fixed abilities and talents, maintaining that learners' potential can grow when they are encouraged to succeed even after facing several setbacks. Hart et al. (2007) agree that each learner's capacity for learning is variable and what teachers elect to do in terms of learning support can effectively change a learner's capacity to grow and develop.

1.5 EXPLORING THE LEARNING SUPPORT ENVIRONMENT

1.5.1 A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON LEARNING SUPPORT

In 1994 nearly a hundred countries including a newly-germinated democratic South Africa were represented when the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) was signed, calling for an international move from segregated education to an ethos of inclusive education. Twenty-five years on, the conversation in inclusive education has a global trend towards accepting *learning support* as an umbrella term to describe the various roles that a teacher must play (Frankl, 2005; Gerschel, 2005; Layton, 2005) to meet the diverse needs of individuals in the inclusive classroom. Additionally, González-Calvo and Arias-Carballal (2017, p.1703) contend that a teacher's 'personal-emotional identity', her own educational experiences and personal circumstances are "intimately linked to the performance of professional identity" and influence pedagogical approaches.

1.5.2 UPROOTING APARTHEID AND THE EROSION OF SEGREGATED EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Following the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, the new government led by ANC stalwart President Nelson Mandela envisioned an inclusive education system for all South Africans. In 2001, South Africa responded to UNESCO's call by formulating a policy framework called Education White Paper 6: Special needs education, which prescribed how school structures would be revised to cater for a diversity of learner needs according to the level of support required. Resonating with the country's constitution in acknowledging diversity, the focus shifted from a medical to a social understanding of disability and White Paper 6 advocates changing the system, not the individual, to maximize access to the education system and strengthen participation of learners who experience barriers to learning, alongside their peers.

Effectively, the policy on inclusive education opened the doors not only for disabled learners but also those who had been discriminated against under apartheid rule. Guided by every learner's fundamental right to participate fully in regular education activities and the school's duty to acknowledge and uphold this right as postulated in Education White Paper 6, the Policy for Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) was adopted in 2014. The Department of Basic Education in South Africa (DoE, 2014, p. 4), in referring to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), asserts that the SIAS policy is the first "to direct how, in terms of Article 24, there will be zero rejection of learners on the basis of their disability."

In her evaluation of the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) model for learning support, Dreyer (2013) asserts that learning support teachers are general classroom teachers who organise and manage inclusive classrooms, and whose role includes not only those outlined in the Norms and Standards for all teachers (DoE, 2000) but also encompass academic remediation, differentiated instruction, adapted assessment, emotional support and physical support relating to assistive devices, when needed. In line with the WCED learning support model; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht and Nel (2016) distinguish between district-based and school-based learning support teachers, citing that the main role of district-based learning support teachers is to mentor school-based learning support teachers and provide insights regarding their learners.

1.6 CRITICAL QUESTIONS

The study intended to address the following research questions:

1. What do the narratives of learning support teachers tell us about their personal and professional identities?

2. How do teacher emotions influence the inclusive teaching practice of learning support teachers?

3. To what extent do career phases influence learning support teachers' personal and professional identities?

1.7 UNEARTHING KEY CONCEPTS

The key concepts underpinning this study, namely, inclusive pedagogy, learning support, teacher identity and teacher emotion, are outlined in this section.

1.7.1 INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

Although UNESCO (2001, p. 34) expounds that "when teachers take on the challenge of making their classrooms and schools more inclusive they become more skilful and better practitioners for the benefit of all pupils, not just those with special needs", I prefer Florian and Linklater's (2010) more comprehensive definition of inclusive pedagogy as

> [e]xtending what is ordinarily available as part of classroom routine, in a way that responds to differences between learners and is an approach that involves the creation of a rich learning environment characterized by lessons and learning opportunities that are sufficiently available to everyone so that all can participate equally in classroom life (p. 70).

1.7.2 LEARNING SUPPORT

According to Walton, Nel, Hugo and Muller (2009), South Africans prefer to use the term 'barriers to learning' to describe why some children are not successful in learning. In an attempt to blend a first world idea of inclusive pedagogy into the South African context through the legal and policy framework of the Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education (DoE, 2001), the implementation of inclusion brought with it a range of difficulties for class teachers. Teachers are expected to modify instruction and assessment to address these 'barriers to learning' (DoE, 2008). Landsberg (2005 p. 67) explains that the role of the general classroom teacher has evolved to encompass a "learner-centred approach", giving rise to the term *learning support*. Seeing that the inclusive education policy of South Africa and the application thereof

fundamentally implies an end to marginalised education, learning support teachers therefore include not only those teachers who are specifically employed to work with learners who have learning challenges but also general classroom teachers who are required to accept and accommodate diverse learners with varying needs into the mainstream classroom (Landsberg, 2005). Learning support may require physical accommodation or adaptation in the learning environment due to physical disability or impairment; socio-emotional support due to the effects of trauma, grief, abject poverty and HIV/AIDS; or remedial intervention and alternative assessment due to perceived learning barriers (Landsberg, 2005; Schoeman, 2012; Stofile & Green, 2007). The participants in this study are learning support teachers.

1.7.3 TEACHER IDENTITY

Korthagen's (2004) metaphor of the implications of teacher identity formation was modelled after an onion with multiple layers proceeding inwards namely; environment, behaviour, competencies, beliefs, identity and mission. He illustrates this in the "onion model" which shows the interdependence of the more observable and measurable outer layers of the 'onion' and the inner more elusive layers. Korthagen thus suggests that aspects of a teacher's identity are complex and deeply interconnected. I prefer Day and Kington's (2008) description of teacher identity as having three mediating influences that interact and fluctuate according to identity-scenarios. The personal dimension is based on a teacher's reality outside of school, the professional dimension is a reflection of teaching ideals and expectations, and the situated dimension is determined by the school context. Learning support teachers steer their identities according to a moral compass and map of roles that they are expected to navigate in interpreting and delivering an inclusive curriculum in varying school contexts (Wong, 2016). The common idea is that identity is constructed over time, changing shape and depth with intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

1.7.4 TEACHER EMOTION

Teacher emotion is the human experience of teachers, characteristic of potential positive and negative feelings, of varying levels, that contribute to the re(construction) of a teacher's identity and, is a stimulus for pedagogical choices in the inclusive classroom. Additionally, Hagenauer, Hascher and Volet (2015) argue that emotional transactions between teachers and learners are deeply connected to teachers' wellbeing and correlate with the quality of their instruction. In relation to inclusive pedagogy, teaching arouses deeply entangled emotional experiences because of the emotional investment of teachers (Zembylas, 2014).

This study intersects the key concepts of inclusive pedagogy, learning support, teacher identity and teacher emotion as it delves into the narratives of learning support teachers to highlight who they are (identity), how they feel (emotion) and what they do (pedagogy).

1.8 METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 AN INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. A paradigm refers to the 'lens' through which a researcher views the world. As a researcher, I immersed myself in the stories of my participants by gaining insights into their identities and emotions as learning support teachers, fuelled by my personal-professional rationale which is described in greater detail in section one of Chapter 2. In doing so, I was able to interpret their narratives and find meaning in their reality. Willis (2007) contends that interpretivists favour qualitative research design that produces descriptive data in the participant's own written or spoken words, and rejects the idea that research in the interpretive paradigm can be objective.

1.8.2 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

I adopted a qualitative research design to explore the narratives of seven learning support teachers. Qualitative research uses words as data, organised and analysed in various ways. By eliciting the stories of my participants, I collected their words as rich descriptions of their lived experiences. Qualitative research is used to refer to both systematic data collection and to a broader framework for conducting research, and usually includes a small number of participants because it is idiographic in nature (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to spoken words, visual data was collected to enhance the narratives of the seven participants.

1.8.3 NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS AN APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

I chose a narrative approach to explore the stories of learning support teachers, elicit emotional responses and gain insight into how they are able to negotiate their personal and professional identities over the span of their professional lives. These narratives are a medium through which the participants' voices are heard and the findings of this research will hopefully inform the field of teacher development in respect of learning support teachers. Narrative inquiry requires active collaboration between the researcher and participants in "re-storying" the participant's narrative account. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pioneered the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology to document the individual stories of teachers while Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano and Morales (2007) describe narrative inquiry as understanding and presenting genuine experiences by eliciting narrative stories from the research participants.

Trahar (2013) adds that narrative inquiry effectively magnifies little realities, reporting on people and events that may otherwise not be documented. This study employed several data generation methods that lent themselves to the narration of deep-rooted stories by the participants and provided access to rich layers of knowledge and insight into the participants' lives as learning support teachers.

1.8.4 SAMPLING

A purposive sample is used in this study, informed by the criteria suggested by Creswell et al. (2007): the participants were accessible, eager to offer information, knowledgeable in their field of expertise, and were able to offer data to assist in answering the research questions. These were learning support teachers in inclusive classroom settings, selected for their ability to shed light on inclusive education and provide information-rich accounts about the development of their personal and professional identities and the emotions they experienced. In addition, they differed in terms of career phase i.e. the number of years that they had each been teaching, to provide valuable data for comparing their experiences using their respective professional life phases. My sample was also convenient because the participants were selected only from schools within the Umgungundlovu educational district in Pietermaritzburg as this was a convenient location for the researcher to conduct the study.

1.8.5 DATA GENERATION METHODS

I selected four methods, each of which assisted me to generate suitable data to contribute to answering all three of my research questions. I took this decision as I wanted to use a creative approach to engage the participants in my study and to triangulate the results for increased credibility.

1.8.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 4), an interview is where "knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee". I used semi-structured interviews using a prepared set of questions as a guide which allowed for flexible discussion with each interviewee.

1.8.5.2 Drawing: The tree of life

The 'Tree of Life' (ToL) is a visual metaphor that represents a person's life as a growing tree. It is a drawing activity that requires no artistic skill but instead allows participants to manifest on paper, perceptions of their own identities intersected with emotion. This activity had visual

and narrative elements as well as an emotional involvement of the participant in the experience, enabling them to speak about their lives in ways that made them stronger (Ncube, 2006). The researcher calls the product of this method of narrative inquiry, an Identi-Tree.

1.8.5.3 Self-boxes as an artistic expression of teacher identity

Janesick (1998), as cited in Leitch (2008, p. 146), describes the self-box as a representation of "a person's innermost self on the inside of the box and the outward self on the outside of the box." Participants in this study were encouraged, to construct a self-box that represented their identity as learning support teachers and, to place five carefully selected objects/pictures within the box that had significant meaning to their role in the inclusive classroom.

1.8.5.4 The use of vignettes as a data instrument

Jeffries and Maeder (2005, p. 20) define vignettes as "incomplete short stories that are written to reflect, in a less complex way, real life situations to encourage discussions and potential solutions to problems where multiple solutions are possible." Richman and Mercer's view of vignettes, as cited in Jeffries and Maeder (2005, p. 20), are described as a "viable alternative to observation" and a "flexible and fertile component of qualitative research" which lends itself to fulfil the aim of detecting subtleties and nuances when researching emotion. I employed the use of vignettes to elicit emotional responses from learning support teachers and determined how their inclusive pedagogy was influenced by these emotions.

1.8.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative research design is an organising activity in which data is reduced into themes through a process of coding and then representing this condensed data in the form of a discussion (Ashraf & Rarieya, 2008; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study I employed Creswell and Poth's (2018) analytical spiral technique in which the researcher, guided by research questions, arrives with raw data and departs with a narrative. The process included organising data into codes which gave rise to emerging themes, interpretation using frameworks and literature, and drawing an account of the findings. Clarke and Braun (2013) contend that data analysis has limited interpretive influence if not positioned within an existing framework that backs up the analytical claims made in the research findings. I therefore used Day and Kington's (2008) framework on teacher identity, Zembylas' (2002) framework on teacher emotion, Parrott's (2001) tree structure for teacher emotion and Day and Gu's (2007) framework on professional life phases to position the themes that arose from my data analysis.

1.8.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I obtained permission to conduct the research study from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Appendix 1) and the UKZN Ethics Committee (Appendix 2). A signed letter of consent was obtained from each participant and each principal of the respective schools (Appendices 3), detailing the purpose of the research and briefly explaining the data generation methods and the involvement of participants. The letters also delineated issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, voluntary participation and withdrawal as well as requested permission to record interviews and store visual media. All data that was recorded in this research process will continue to be stored safely for a period of five years.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1: A view from the treetop has introduced the focus, purpose and rationale of the study and given clarity to the ubiquitous term 'Learning Support'. The tree metaphor and critical research questions were presented. The chapter stated my positionality as a researcher, highlighted key concepts and briefly explained the research process. The chapter concludes with an outline of the chapters in the dissertation.

Chapter 2: The learning support landscape is a literature review that features an international and national perspective on Inclusive Pedagogy and Learning Support. The restructuring of South Africa's inclusive education system is discussed. Two key concepts which underpin this study i.e. teacher identity and teacher emotion are critically evaluated. The chapter also unpacks the role of a learning support teacher and the challenges they face in the inclusive classroom. The chapter concludes with a delineation of the conceptual framework that informs this study.

Chapter 3: Seeing the forest for the trees presents a detailed account of the rationale for using an interpretive paradigm, qualitative research approach and narrative inquiry to explore teacher identity and teacher emotion for this study. The research questions that guided the study, the methods of data generation, sampling and data analysis are discussed. Ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness are outlined. The chapter concludes with a summary on methodology and how the individual value of the research design elements contributed to the 'bigger picture' of the study as a whole.

Chapter 4: Out on a limb is a presentation of the data. The chapter begins with the participants' narratives followed by the principal themes. The Identi-tree model is then presented.

Chapter 5: Take it or leaf it discusses the implications of the research. Key findings are summarised and, the limitations and recommendations for further research are outlined. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the research process

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1 has sown the seeds of this study by presenting an overview. A literature review will be presented in Chapter 2 - The learning support landscape.

CHAPTER 2: THE LEARNING SUPPORT LANDSCAPE – A LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter opens with sketching the landscape of teacher identity and teacher emotion against the background of learning support. Firstly, an outline of inclusive education is drawn using an account of the restructuring and reorganisation of policies and practice followed by a reflection on the reasons for systemically embracing inclusion. Secondly, the role of learning support teachers is discussed. Thirdly, academic debates on the plurality of teacher identity and the complexity of teacher emotion are highlighted. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the conceptual framework.

2.2 LEARNING SUPPORT

In the heart of a seed,
Buried deep, so deep,
A dear little plant
Lay fast asleep!

From "The little plant" by Kate Louise Brown (2018)

2.2.1 BACKGROUND: A TRANSFORMING TERRAIN

I often recollect my own experiences from 1994, as a learner in a South African grade six classroom and contrast it with the educational environment I am now planted in twenty-five years later as a learning support teacher. There are several thorny issues that vividly come to

mind. South Africa inherited a deep-rooted colonial structure of education which, under an apartheid regime, had a political agenda that ceremoniously abused the basic human rights of several of its citizens and remained selective and inflexible in its prescribed curriculum and teaching practice (Jansen, 1990; Stofile & Green, 2007). I had a burning desire to explore learning through art. Although I took great pleasure creatively solving problems and conceptualising ideas in vibrant colours and free-form organic shapes, it was vehemently discouraged by my teachers and parents alike, in the hope that I would refrain from complicating my learning and understanding. Gardner (2011, p.13) describes this phenomenon as differences which "challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning", based on his earlier dogma on Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, n.d.).

I am therefore a product of an indoctrinated educational system that at one time, neither provided for the diversity of learners' race, culture and learning styles nor nurtured an appreciation for it. The immense pressure for academic success placed on my generation by various stakeholders in education, to redress the historical disadvantages of a black society in apartheid South Africa, weighed heavily on me. In my personal opinion, I was able to cope over the years with the demands of a transforming terrain, despite having had my vision of boundless canvases and paint-stained fingers pruned away from the prospects of my blooming success. I often wonder what would have become of myself and some of my peers who in retrospect were similarly struggling, had we benefitted from early intervention, nurturing and support. It was only much later in 2016, following a chance assessment that I learned of my moderate hearing impairment, something that I had lived with undiagnosed and undetected. The Macro Indicator Report (DoE, 2011b) suggests that numerous learners wilt, either dropping out of school or perceiving barriers to learning. Schoeman (2012, p. 2) agrees that learners who experience failure have "learning problems that were not addressed during their years of schooling".

In 1993, the National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC) of the African National Congress (ANC) produced a report called the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI, 1993) which featured an analysis of the ubiquitous socio-political determinants of the then education crisis. Wolhuter (2011) aptly echoes some of these determinants in the socio-political context of education reform in South Africa, pre and post 1994 but fails to mention one issue of cardinal importance i.e. special needs education. Whilst segregated education was identified

in the NEPI report as one disease affecting the education crop, Stofile and Green (2007) acknowledge that the disparity in the operational provision of special needs training was also a formidable pest. Unbeknownst to my younger self, in South Africa's historical year of 1994, a breakthrough policy called the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action was signed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), effectively planting seeds of change that would one day allow me the autonomy, as a learning support teacher, to prevent a comparable injustice in a now inclusive learning environment. Additionally, the transformation of world policies on inclusive education has since encultured a 'growth mindset' and germinated new and diverse ideas in teaching practice.

2.2.2 CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION THROUGH POLICY CHANGE

"Ensuring the availability of well-co-ordinated, highly effective early intervention programs in every community, each representing contemporary principles and practices, is held to be a reasonable goal by policy makers, parents and professionals." (Guralnick, 2005a, p. 4)

2.2.2.1 The Salamanca statement

There is growing consensus worldwide about the rights of children, including the right to be able to learn alongside each other without prejudice. A significant global incentive for educational transformation was delivered in June 1994, by the signing of the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education and the subsequent Framework for Action (UNESCO, 1994) which stimulated the universal impetus towards inclusive education. According to Ainscow and Slee (2018, p. 1), whilst the Salamanca declaration is perchance the most significant international paper in the inclusive education arena, it still "provides a relevant framework for thinking about how to move policy and practice forward in relation to inclusive education". A new focus however has been shifted to the Education 2030 agenda which has been embraced by 184 UNESCO Members to endorse the delivery of a quality education that is both inclusive and equitable. Wertheimer, as cited in Callan (2013, p. 17) warns that "in striving to develop inclusive education, there is a danger of seeing it as an issue for disabled people and their supporters rather than something concerning everyone". The Salamanca Statement ploughed the international field of education making way for inclusive policies and practice, urging the South African government to follow suit. With its ideological roots of 'learning support' in the Salamanca Statement, it took seven years of conceptualisation for the new democratic dispensation of South Africa to sprout an innovative

education plan entitled *Education White Paper 6 - Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (WP6)* (DoE, 2001).

2.2.2.2 WP6 - Building an inclusive education and training system

Post-apartheid South Africa's Education White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), defines the schooling of learners categorised by the amount of support essentially needed to access a quality education. It not only encompasses the efforts of remedial education in mainstream schools but provides direction beyond this, outlining the need and provision for selecting and converting public primary schools into competent 'Full-Service Schools' and 'Inclusive Schools'. Special schools are intended to be utilised as Resource Centres (SSRC) in order to field applications for support from mainstream schools, resulting in significant components of support. It is a bold move, branching away from exclusionary practices such as self-contained classrooms. Thus, as roles of the mainstream teacher evolve, in accordance with global trends in inclusive education, Dreyer (2008, p. 66) contends that "learning support teachers are now expected to play a more proactive role" in instituting an inclusive pedagogical approach in mainstream schools by providing "professional guidance and support for mainstream teachers, enabling them to implement modified programmes in the regular classroom." This idea is congruent with the framework set out in WP6 and the moral responsibility of schools and of teachers described by Hansen (2001).

Learners with sensory, neuorological, and physical disabilities (and those with learning disorders) experience challenges in the classroom related to listening, reading and writing. Perceived challenges may further manifest in behavioural and attention problems which could prevent learners from giving a true and valid reflection of their knowledge and skills in traditional and uniform testing. Gardner (2011, p.12) claims that this is also true for learners with varying "profiles of intelligence" but we're not out of the woods yet: the barriers to learning, if left unaddressed, may well become barriers to authentic assessment. Education White Paper 6 suggests a solution: those learners requiring minor learning support will access support in regular schools whilst learners who require a moderate level will access this learning support in a selected and converted primary school i.e. full-service school. Finally, learners who have major support requirements will obtain this in special schools. A scaffolding of support at multiple levels is at the root of this vision. School-based support teams (SBSTs) and district-based support teams (DBSTs) are mandated to assist with curriculum needs, the adaptation of instructional materials, resources and assessment tools, applications for learner concessions and the development of individualised education plans. Special schools will

primarily serve as a resource centre for teachers to gain insight to educating learners with barriers to learning. Murungi (2015, p. 3171) criticises the model envisaged in White Paper 6, arguing that "although it is geared towards the inclusion of children with a range of special needs in education, it is evidently biased towards children with disabilities". She further claims that although the tardy execution of the model has soiled the initial momentum of education reform, it does have "long-term economic value; that is, that the education of persons with disabilities has the potential to reduce the government's fiscal burden by reducing the number of dependent citizens relative to productive members of society." The DoE (2001, p. 6) particularly asserts in WP6 that it has "a special responsibility … to ensure that all learners, with or without disabilities, pursue their learning potential to the fullest." The paradigm has hence shifted from the deficit model approach to a more understanding one where the social aspect of special needs is recognised. To provide for this paradigm shift, and guided by every learner's ultimate right to an education where he/she is an active participant, and the school's obligation to acknowledge and uphold this right as postulated in WP6, the Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy was adopted in 2014 by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa (DoE, 2014).

2.2.2.3 Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) Policy

Though forward-thinking, the implementation of inclusion in mainstream schools was like knots in the tree trunk, bringing with it a range of difficulties for class teachers. The DoE (2014, p. 1) states that the "purpose of the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) is to provide a policy framework for the standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school." The SIAS policy which coheres with the South African Schools' Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS), provides standard documentation for learner profiling, support needs assessment and referral processes as well as a detailed description on the revised school structures i.e. full service schools, selected inclusive schools and existing special schools to be restructured as resource centres. Additionally, schools are required to constitute a School Based Support Team (SBST) which will develop an Individual Support Plan (ISP) together with the parent, which adequately responds to and caters for the needs of the learner. This SBST will seek assistance from the District Based Support Team (DBST) in issues regarding psycho-social and medico-legal support, educational placement, specialised assistance and applications for assessment concessions. Walton and Lloyd (2012) recommend improving teacher training to cultivate

critical knowledge, competencies and beliefs about disability to promote inclusivity in schools, echoing a need to understand and promote positive teacher identity and teacher emotion. The Department of Education has established Guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (DoE, 2010) as well as Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity (DoE, 2011a) to assist teachers in this regard. The aim is then for DBSTs to uplift SBSTs with such resources.

The global stance on Inclusive Education and its guiding principles as posited in international policy has since permeated our national strategy. While Stofile and Green (2007) assert that the most difficult task for education policymakers post-1994 was to unravel the inequalities of the bitter past and form a unitary system that "gave all learners access to a quality education that embraced diversity in the new South Africa" (p. 53), I believe that changing entrenched viewpoints is possibly more difficult than 'nailing jelly to a tree'. Ntombela (2011, p. 14) concurs that the challenge to "unlearn all the teachings of the deficit paradigm and learn a new one", is a task that will "take years of re-training, dialogue, debates, demonstrations, practice and information sharing at school and district levels. Unfortunately, there are no short cuts".

2.2.3 PARADIGMATIC SHIFTS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF INCLUSION

The core values in the ANC's NEPI report (NEPI, 1993) were unambiguously related to the comprehensive trend in education, aimed at preserving human rights and ensuring social justice. Lomofsky and Lazarus (2001, p. 307) assert that South African leadership was committed to a reparation of educational inequalities "through a democratic, yet cost-effective process". I therefore ascertain that the etymological choices deemed 'politically correct', and adopted by the DoE in the prescribed guidelines for Inclusive Learning Programmes (DoE, 2010) and Responding to Learner Diversity (DoE, 2011a), are a result of taking a leaf out of the global book on inclusive education. In my personal opinion, a summative overhaul of the terminology, mindset and teaching practice in inclusive education is necessary for tangible change to transpire. This opinion is strengthened by the findings of Rissanen, Kuusisto, Tuominen and Tirri (2019), who describe the use of subtle and intelligent cues continuously conveyed through language to gain success in pruning one's viewpoint and influencing levels of motivation. Likewise, Han and Yin (2016) consider that the influence of teacher perspective and motivation is what fertilises the grounds for pedagogical choices.

2.2.3.1 Terminology grows towards inclusion

The NEPI report of the ANC, as early as 1993, focused on social determinants as stimuli in a 'systemic-preventative' approach to inclusive education, in contrast to the former

'individualistic-medical' approach. Likewise, Ramos (2018) and Callan (2013) confirm that a global response to the stimulus of inclusive education is the move away from phrases and terms such as "special needs" and "remedial", based on the medical model of intervention and instead, a growth towards accepting "learning support" as an umbrella term to describe the various roles of a teacher: to provide differentiated instruction, intervention and support to successfully transform the general classroom to an inclusive classroom. It reminds me of the phototropic characteristic of trees, growing towards the sun. According to Dreyer (2013, p.56), academics have branched away from a narrow deficit paradigm by abandoning terms such as backward, retard, mental, remedial, special or "adaptation class teachers". Thus WP6 embodies a change in the direction of educational growth by pruning away terms such as "disability," "learning difficulties" or "learners with special education needs" and cultivating instead an overarching concept of "barriers to learning and development" (EELC, 2013, p. 8). According to Walton et al. (2009, p. 107), 'barriers to learning' is the accepted expression in the context of a South African landscape to reason for the absence of learning success. The DoE (2001, p. 12) suggests that "using 'learning barrier' stretches the concept beyond simple physical disability to include factors like poverty, language, family dynamics, negative attitudes, physical and sexual abuse, stereotyping of differences and an inflexible curriculum". Language is thus indivisibly rooted in mindset and practice.

2.2.3.2 Growth mindset for social inclusion

The WCED learning support model (Dreyer, 2008) advocates for a shift from the old education system of the medical/deficit model to a system of understanding learning barriers in a social model. This paradigm change requires teachers to familiarise themselves with theories, educational practices, and issues relating to diversity, gender and disability for the purpose of professional teacher development. The key objective is for teachers to modify their attitudes and values through opportunities for debate and reflection. Whilst Bettini et al. (2017a, p. 115) describe values in quality special education teaching as "value for people, value for service, and value for relationships", Liddiard et al. (2019) expound that a prejudicial mindset is not innate but is conditioned by witnessing perceived misconceptions of others. Universal impairments are fashioned by oppressive, parasitic structures such as the lack of food and clean water, a politicised labour market, social insecurity, child abuse, abject poverty, corruption and disease i.e. HIV/AIDS. It is reasonable then to conclude that society as a whole must have more open-mindedness to offering learning support at grassroots level, to the people who require it.

Dweck (2015) discusses two mindsets i.e. 'a growth mindset' that describes the notion that one's most rudimentary abilities can be improved through perseverance and industry; and a fixed mindset that describes an inflexible idea that one's intelligence or raw talents are merely fixed traits stimulating a habit of spending time documenting events of display instead of developing them. Dweck (2015, p. 21) further claims that "the interpretation of a growth mindset generates a love of learning and a resilience that is vital for great achievement".
Although the effectiveness of growth mindset theory in academic achievement has been challenged by Sisk, Burgoyne, Sun, Butler and Macnamara (2018) who report a weak relationship, Dweck's theory is enhanced by an empirical study in Singapore by neuroscientist Ng (2018) who demonstrated a positive correlation in individuals having a growth mindset and being intrinsically motivated. Ng (2018, p. 7) contends that tasks should have intrinsic value and the "autonomy or the agency of learning is the key substrate to intrinsic motivation…and the joy of incremental personal growth". Ng (2018) adds that teachers too should develop themselves professionally by embracing a growth mindset and promoting reflective practice to adequately provide for differing learning styles in the classroom and to improve teacher confidence and productivity. Similarly, Korthagen (2014), developed a model to describe a structured process of teacher reflection which includes steps of Action, Looking back, Awareness, Alternatives and Trial (ALACT). He contends that "when teachers are able to progress through the various phases of the model independently, they will have developed *a growth competence"* (Korthagen, 2014, p. 5).

Duckworth (2016) describes a character trait called 'grit' as a blend of hunger (for success) and perseverance, citing that it is characteristic of high achievers. Backed by empirical evidence that 'grit' *can grow*, her theory is in line with Dweck's framework (2015) of a 'growth mindset'. Lechner (2018, p.1) distinguishes between the two:

> The subtle differentiating factor of these two deeply entwined character traits seems to be that resilience is the optimism to continue when times are tough and you've experienced some failures, when others see continuing as futile or impossible. Grit is the drive that keeps you on a difficult task over a sustained period of time.

Ricci (2013, p.10) found that "intelligence is malleable" and that "an effective teacher armed with instructional tools that differentiate, respond to learner's needs and nurture critical thinking processes is a recipe for optimum and inclusive student learning". Her view which

reflects a growth mindset, lends itself well to this study which is rooted in learning support and is relevant within a contemporary South African education climate as well as globally.

Richardson (2002) contends that teacher resilience is developed by the rebounding qualities of positive self-esteem, self-efficacy and having secure, supportive systems in which one can explore and negotiate identity and emotions. Day and Gu (2007) agree, describing resilience as the ability to endure harsh conditions and bounce back. Teachers with a resilient mindset are easily adaptable to change, are inclined to persevere towards reaching their goals, resist the urge to quit the profession when faced with adverse conditions and display emotional regulation. Gilchrist, Bowles and Wetherell (2010, p. 8) agree that, "The flexibility and multiplicity of our identities is due to the fact that different aspects of our identities *intersect*, combining and modifying each other in the process." Whilst research into the field of teacher identity has yielded numerous studies, very few have explored the intersectionality of identity and emotions in learning support teachers in the South African context.

2.2.3.3 Structural adaptations in educational practice

The transformation of the traditional structure of remedial and special education to that of modern 'learning support' as discussed above, brings with it increased potential for fluidity and multiplicity in its application i.e. inclusive instruction seeks to be both flexible and variable in response to individual learner needs. This has led to an on-going evaluation of the success of remedial intervention in its more customary practice i.e. the remedial teacher (usually peripatetic), functioning as external specialist, seeing carefully chosen groups or individual learners, once or twice a week on a 'withdrawal' basis from the general classroom. Thomazet (2008, p. 125), who refers to this strategy as "pull-out programs", advocates that supporters of *full inclusion* distance themselves from "*integration* of children with special needs into mainstream schools with few educational opportunities owing to moments of withdrawal from class". Remedial intervention in the current context is a fractional component of learning support, which aims to help learners that require mild to moderate levels of support in schools, where barriers to learning can be reduced in an inclusive environment, and where the learning potential is improvable (DoE, 2001).

The adaptive or alternative methods of teaching and assessment for learners provided by the learning support teacher minimises the impact of a range of barriers upon the performance of the learner. It also seeks to accommodate the functional differences of some learners and provides the means for them to have shared learning goals, to gain confidence and build

character. Adaptive and alternative methods of teaching and assessment allows a display of competence in knowledge, skills and attitudes and hence, invites learners to meet their peers on a proverbial 'level playing field' (DoE, 2008). Inclusive pedagogy thus caters for varying learning styles and is learner-driven in nature, bearing fruit for teachers who respond to the individual needs of learners.

Practical applications for inclusive education have resulted in several learning support models. Rose and Meyer introduced a framework called the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) nearly three decades ago (Rose & Dalton, 2009), as a popular international learning support model with a core syllabus that "can be made accessible by adopting flexibility in learning outcomes, methods, materials and assessment", thus contextualising universal education as a multiple avenue approach instead of a single solution. Zabala (2005, p. 1) who designed a framework which describes how learning support can be decided upon by considering the Student, Environment, Tasks and Tools (SETT), believes that teachers, as active participants in the learning process, must first do justice to the profession by developing a mutual understanding of the students, environment and tasks before deciding on the appropriate tools/supports "i.e. devices, services, strategies, accommodations, modifications, etc.". Zabala's focus on the learning environment is reminiscent of Wang and Lindvall's Adaptive Learning Environment Model (ALEM) (Wang & Lindvall, 1984), a seminal piece which speaks to the importance of adaptive instruction and modification of the school environment. The STAGES Framework (Pugliese, 2016) is yet another learning support model that gives teachers and therapists a way to organise and synchronise learning for students with intensive language and learning needs. Stages one through three have an observational checklist to record sequential developmental milestones whilst stages four through seven indiscriminately account for recognised standards in cognitive and academic performance. Since 2017, it has a blended learning approach with the availability of STAGES e-books, software, iPad applications, hands-on toolkits and an *intervention curriculum* (Pugliese, 2016). Common to all of the above-mentioned international models is the gamut of support provided to various stakeholders in education. Likewise, in the transformative context of South African Education, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Learning Support Model illustrated by Dreyer (2008, p.94) echoes this continuum of support.

Based on the restructuring of schools envisioned in WP6, the WCED model reflects the need for input from various stakeholders to support the learner and the teacher at all levels.

Consequently, the roots of learning support have deepened: abandoning the stony, problem-focused paradigm and anchoring itself in the fertile view that multiple levels of support for a learner will enable success for both teacher and learner in the modern, blended classroom (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). At the heart of the model, Dreyer (2008) effectively demonstrates the need for narrowing the expertise required in response to the level of support whilst simultaneously highlighting the continuous complementary efforts of professionals, paraprofessionals and the community.

2.2.4 THE GROUNDS FOR INCLUSION

The concept of learning support is attributed to a panoply of factors. While Thomas and Loxley (2001) refer to the "knowledge-roots" of special education, Garcia-Iriarte, McConkey and Gilligan (2016, p.7) describe special needs education as a "road map from charity to human rights". The authors both adopt a set of static commonalities in their descriptions of a journey towards inclusive education. Though these factors are cohesive, they are realistically and repeatedly impacted on by the fluidity of inclusive pedagogy, cultural diversity and situational context (Banks, et al., 2005). Banks et al. (2005, p.5) pinpoint the essential principles or pillars of socially-responsible education programs viz. "unity, diversity; global interconnectedness; human rights; experience and participation". For the purpose of this study, I have interpreted and summarised the findings of the studies above, broadly classifying the grounds for inclusion under the following key determinants: social justice, teacher development and advocacy/empowerment. My understanding is that these factors collectively promote the achievement of learner potential, which may otherwise remain unlocked akin to Brown's (2018) description of a plant laying fast asleep in the heart of a seed.

2.2.4.1 Sowing the seeds of social justice

Bhugra (2016, p.336) defines social justice as the promotion of humanity "which is just and equitable, valuing diversity, providing equal opportunities to all its members, irrespective of their disability, ethnicities, gender, age, sexual orientation or religion, and ensuring fair allocation of resources and support for their human rights." Put simply, education is a human right. By signing the Salamanca Statement, the South African government was obligated to fulfil the social justice mandate of inclusive education, thereby formalising the 'global unity' and 'interconnectedness' envisioned by Banks et al. (2005). WP6 was thus formulated as an axe to fell the hard oak trunk of apartheid and with it, the inequality of its colonial education

system, dispersing seeds of hope into the educational landscape. According to Bhugra (2016), despite having this fundamental right to education, children in need of support from society continue to endure exclusion based on their class, creed or disability.

Rieser (2018, p. 62) encouraged the adoption of an "anti-bias curriculum that challenges traditional gender, sexuality, tribal/cultural, social-class and disability perspectives", that unearths prejudice, challenges it and sows seeds for future generations to assert human rights for all. The Equal Education Law Centre (EELC) of South Africa criticises our national legal framework on inclusive education. In their analysis of the implementation of WP6 goals, EELC (2013) argues that policy statements reflect inconsistent interpretations, eroding the constitutional right to education. Effectively this translates to conflicting ideas about the provision of learning support. Ngwena (2013, p.152) evaluates this failure of our government as segregation perpetuating an "apartheidisation of inclusive education". According to a renowned Turkish proverb as cited by Melville (2020, p. 1), it is yet another case of "the forest shrinking but the trees kept voting for the axe as its handle was made of wood and they thought it was one of them".

Like Bhugra (2016), Thomazet (2008) succinctly utilises a human rights lens to explain the cardinal differences between exclusion, segregation, integration and inclusion. According to Thomazet (2008), children demonstrating distinct differences were traditionally excluded from school. Although specialised establishments progressively catered for these children to offer a place for them to learn; it equated to segregation, demoting them to the margins of society. Later in the 1970s, policy changes urged schools to integrate these learners in the mainstream, therefore compelling children to adapt to the school. He indicates that this integration was limited in instances of self-contained special classes and did not uphold the basic human rights of affected learners, thus spurring the emergence of a new concept called inclusive education. Thomazet (2008, p. 131) describes the move towards inclusion as "ethical progress" which coheres with Bhugra's definition of social justice and begs to reason that every individual in the thicket of an inclusive classroom, not only those with perceivable barriers, deserves fair and equitable access to resources and support.

2.2.4.2 Teacher development

Learning support stems from effectively assisting a learner to gain success in the learning environment and is one strategy that teachers must engage with to embrace diversity.

Facilitating learning support is one of the core responsibilities of all teachers, as enshrined in the Norms and Standards for Educators (DoE, 2000). The policy further describes each role in terms of practical, foundational and reflexive competencies which speak to the need for teachers to have commitment and an open mind, reverberating the ideas of resilience and a growth mindset. Gardner (2011, p. 210) describes progressive education institutions as those sprouting teachers who are "well trained, dedicated and absorbed in their work."

The existing literature on teacher development tends to focus on challenges in conceptualising inclusive education as well as teachers' attitudes to such education. Whilst Bettini et al. (2018, p. 184) report on teachers' stress as a result of the "dissonance between actual experiences and their ideal role"; Comfort, (as cited in Gay, 2002, p. 615), aptly describes some teachers who are resentful of learners with support needs because they "confront themselves on a daily basis with their own perceived failure".

Farrell (2012, p.11) reasons that the identification of learning barriers and those who experience them is a challenge for teachers because of a "lack of agreement on definitions". As a solution to these feelings of inadequacy and stress, Swart and Oswald (2008) suggest that workshops and courses be arranged for teachers to enable them to master their roles in inclusive education. Although this will empower teachers with a 'toolkit' to enhance existing pedagogical content knowledge to cater for diversity in the classroom, they further note that a major obstacle is that teachers remain ill-equipped to identify the barriers to learning. In the context of South African education, every teacher must register with The South African Council for Educators (SACE) in order to practice in the country, and must maintain their accreditation by fulfilling the demands of the Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) management programme. Devised through the collaboration of various stakeholders in education, CPTD ensures that teachers are fit to teach by actively and regularly participating in professional development activities. Swart and Oswald (2008) claim that there is no guarantee however, that the amount of theoretical and practical learning invested in by teachers, would harvest measurable development as effective learning support teachers. DeBettencourt and Nagro (2018, p. 288) state that "the goal of emphasising reflective practice is to develop teachers who are self-aware and make changes to their practice to improve the learning opportunities for their students." The teacher candidates in their study were reported not to have deepened their reflective practices despite ongoing teacher workshops. It will be interesting to see in this study, if other factors such as teacher identity and teacher emotion are

contributors to the cultivation of reflective practice. Parker (2018, p.131) reports that it is the learners who permit teachers to "know themselves and to know the profession"; who require a teacher's commitment "before curriculum and before assumptions of best pedagogic practices" and whom without having an emotional investment in, "no teacher identity can be formed".

2.2.4.3 Advocacy and empowerment

Effectively, advocacy for inclusive education is about respecting and promoting the rights (and needs) of every individual in the blended classroom. Although ambitious, education systems CAN take action to weed out marginalisation, inconsistency, susceptibility and disparity in educational access and involvement. Inclusive education activists agree that in order for teachers to effectively provide adequate learning support in the inclusive classroom, they must themselves be a fertile source of information, skills, experience and have a sound value system that they wish to impart to their learners (Garcia-Iriarte et al., 2016; Ngwena, 2013). This includes an understanding of 'barriers to learning', cultural diversity, learning disability, giftedness and behavioural issues, which contributes to the empowerment of learner and teacher alike. Benjamin (2002) in Barnes (2011, p.11) claims that any institution that embraces diversity, "celebrates the plurality of its community", thus benefitting, including and empowering all.

2.3 LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

2.3.1 DEFINING 'LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS'

Remedial teaching, though a sapling in auxiliary services at its inception, has developed and evolved rapidly in the last three decades. Global discussions in inclusive education varies and the term opted for by South Africa, described in WCED (2002), as cited in Dreyer (2008) is 'learning support teacher'. In Australia, Fielding-Barnsley (2005) agrees that 'learning support teacher' is the most widely accepted term used in inclusive classrooms. The Department of Education in South Africa (DOE) (1997, p. vii), in agreement with Landsberg's (2005) view on learning support teachers, states that learning support teachers "includes educators formerly referred to as 'remedial', 'special classes or 'special needs' teachers within a medical model approach" as well as practising mainstream teachers who must now include all learners requiring mild to moderate levels of learning support in the general classroom.

2.3.2 STUDIES IN THE FIELD PERTAINING TO LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

2.3.2.1 The role of learning support teachers

Carrington and Elkins (2002, p. 52) describe the role of the learning support teachers as an "organizational inquirer", with whom to discuss various concerns such as existing practice, learner performance and differentiation. In addition to the seven prescribed roles of a teacher (DoE, 2000), numerous efforts were undertaken to clarify these and the related responsibilities of learning support teachers (Frankl, 2005; Gerschel, 2005; Layton, 2005). A study by Bettini et al. (2018, p. 187) recognises the 'ideal core roles' of learning support teachers as those efforts promoting behavioural and academic growth of learners but also documents "extra and emergent responsibilities" as part of a perceived reality only experienced by learning support teachers. They explain that actual roles of learning support teachers include personal sacrifice, administration and supervision unrelated to core roles, prescription and implementation of individualised education support plans (IESP) and training of paraprofessionals. Hooijer (2016, p. 21) defines an individual education support plan as a confidential "document drawn up in the form of a plan for an individual child or group of children in need of support due to learning and/or behavioural difficulties".

2.3.2.2 The attributes of successful learning support teachers

Fielding-Barnsley (2005) discusses personal traits, communication, knowledge and experience, and organisational skills as descriptors for attributes of successful learning support teachers. Mohamed (2018) claims that learning support teachers display positive attitudes to using technology in the inclusive classroom regardless of learner disability. Successful learning support teachers have 'emotional competence', understand the 'moral purpose of teaching' and are culturally responsive 'agents of change' who empower learners with a "sense of interdependence and feelings of community" (Fullan, 1993; Gay, 2002 p. 622; Saarni, 1999). Lestari and Sawitri (2017) found that successful learning support teachers demonstrated very high emotional intelligence which positively correlated with effective work engagement, and hence recommended that schools should provide teachers with sufficient "emotional intelligence training and create a supportive environment" for teachers (p.3481). Whilst Medoff (2010) claims that learning support teachers are amongst the most inherently resilient in the education profession as they deal with vulnerable children on a daily basis, Ricci (2013, p. 7), provides a framework for teachers to adopt a "differentiated, responsive instruction model" for dealing with vulnerable children and asserts that teachers should create frequent opportunities for renewal to avoid burnout. Medoff (2010) describes the inclusive classroom as a 'training ground' for resilience, both for learners and their support teachers.

2.3.2.3 Challenges faced by learning support teachers in the inclusive classroom

"When teachers take on the challenge of making their classrooms and schools more inclusive they become more skilful and better practitioners. This means that all pupils benefit, not just those with 'special needs'." *UNESCO (2001, p.34)*

As a challenge to emotional well-being, learning support teachers must be intrinsically motivated to survive in self-contained inclusive classrooms: their efforts are not always acknowledged, and their emotions are not always validated as a result of special needs learners being unable to display socially appropriate behaviour or demonstrate gratitude in the same way that mainstream learners may often respond to their class teachers. Learning support teachers, specifically those at the start of their professional lives, may experience challenging classrooms as well as a concealed battle to discover a sense of purpose and identity, alluding to Korthagen's (2004) innermost layers of the 'onion model' i.e. mission and identity. Resulting from these multiple issues, learning support teachers cultivate a focus and desire 'to belong', rationalise the duties and purpose associated with learning support and collaborate with other teachers who identify with what drives them and distresses them (Parkison, 2008).

Callan (2013) identifies the challenges faced by special needs teachers as: lack of essential resources such as technology and assistive devices, lack of time to plan for and accommodate diversity, lack of space for some learners to express kinaesthetic needs, the difficulty in planning curriculum differentiation and, lack of support and unity from outside agencies such as complementary support service providers such as speech therapy. Similarly, Donohue and Bornman (2014, p. 9) argue:

> [a]dded to a lack of funding, schools currently lack teachers who have the capacity and knowledge to instruct a diverse body of learners in a single inclusive classroom without considerably increasing their workload.

According to Catapano (2018), learning support teachers require suitable training "to maximise the potential of the setup" because even when inclusive principles are implemented well, blended classrooms are challenging to manage effectively. Mulholland and O'Connor (2016) reported that despite an existing tripartite, collaborative practice amongst class teachers '(CTs)', learning support teachers '(LSTs)' and resource teachers '(RTs)' at various primary schools in Ireland, professional relationships were strained.

Ramos (2018) summarises the challenges faced by learning support teachers in special needs inclusive classrooms by linking them to teacher identity, teacher emotion and inclusive pedagogical knowledge. Walton et al. (2009) argue that learning support teachers are burdened by the heavy boughs of accommodating learners who require support, in physical spaces that are not suited for access via wheelchairs and other assistive devices. In addition, the cost and fragility of such assistive devices for mobility, communication and learning in the inclusive classroom may mitigate their use. Engelbrecht, Oswald and Forlin (2006, p. 125) identified a "lack of a shared inclusive school philosophy in school communities", large classes and disciplinary problems to be stressful to learning support teachers. Ansley, Meyers, McPhee and Varjas (2018) claim that teachers' occupational stress is not only a threat to personal wellness but also influences job performance and commitment. They suggest that better self-care, increased administrative and collegial support as well as improved working conditions will reduce occupational stress, increase work engagement and promote commitment of teachers.

2.4 TEACHER IDENTITY

2.4.1 DEFINING TEACHER IDENTITY

Gee (2001, p. 99) distinguishes between a 'core identity' and 'multiple identities' of a person, suggesting that identity may be observed as: "a *nature-identity* "that reflects one's natural state, "*institution-identity*" resulting from relations of politics and power, "*discourse*-identity" which is determined by engaging with others to seek out their valuation of one's self and "*affinity–identity*" perceived by one's interrelation with external groups. He focuses on the multifaceted and transformative nature of identity. Similarly, Gilchrist et al. (2010) in Bankole (2013, p. 29) opine that identity "can be fluid, situated, and multidimensional", and encompasses the communication and negotiation between a person's sense of self and his social system. It thus involves transactions between the conscious individual and the social structure. Bankole adds that "the identity of a particular person changes when he or she is confronted with a different situation: people navigate their identities considering the roles they are expected to play" (p.19). The transactional experiences between the self and the social environment therefore gives rise to and continuously develops a person's identity.

Wong (2016, p. 16) extends Gilchrist et al.'s (2010) view on a sense of self, and claims that "a person's identity is what provides the person with a sense of continuity, a sense of coherence and a sense of self. Drawing together one's different life experiences helps to shape and give meaning to life, and this is called the Theory of Narrative Identity." Alluding to the age-old

debate of nature versus nurture, a person's identity grows and transforms in the face of different conditions. Individuals construct their identities guided by a moral compass and a map of roles that they are expected to traverse, echoing Bankole's description of a search for identity. The common idea is that, like the Chapman Baobab (Patrut et al., 2019) which is often called the 'Tree of Life', identity grows over time, branching out into interconnected dimensions and, changing shape and depth with intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

2.4.2 STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF TEACHER IDENTITY

While seminal works in the field of teacher identity such as Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), Kelchtermans (2009) and, Day and Gu (2007) provide landmarks in the trail of literature; critical reviews of Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005) and, van Lankveld, Schoonenboom, Volman, Croiset and Beishuizen (2017) offer knowledge and perspective. Several studies have been recorded on the branches of identity, the factors affecting identity formation and the relationship between teacher identity, professional agency and career phase.

2.4.2.1 Branches of identity

2.4.2.1.1 Personal identity

While Rodgers and Scott (2008) theorise that a teacher's identity evolves through her perception of socio-cultural, emotional and political stimuli, interrelations with peers and learners, and the reconstruction of meaning from narratives; Leitch (2008, p. 146) adds that "good teaching and good practice come from a teacher's identity, not technique." The self-conception that teachers develop over the course of their lives are closely connected to aspects such as nationality, gender, race, perceived class and positions of power, executive function, time management, core values, beliefs, culture, prejudices, education, self-reflection and emotion. A portion of this personal identity is demonstrated outwardly and observed by others through demeanour, conduct, physical appearance, rapport with others and a sense of humour; whilst other elements of the personal identity remains hidden to prevent feelings of guilt or shame (Bankole, 2013; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; González-Calvo & Arias-Carballal, 2017; Hart et al., 2007).

Leitch (2008, p. 157), in her discourse on self-boxes/memory boxes for conceptualising teacher identity, claims that the "creation of self-boxes, as visual three-dimensional representations of self and identity, is illustrative of one way in which teacher self-study can draw upon arts-based

methods". Learning support teachers in my study created self-boxes to help narrate their identities. Pillay and Pithouse-Morgan (2016) contend that aesthetic memory-work is significant to connecting with and understanding the teacher-self seeing that objects, in arts-based educational research, are imbued with meanings that reflect aspects of a teacher's personal and/or professional identity (Pillay, Pithouse-Morgan and Naicker, 2017).

2.4.2.1.2 Professional identity

The professional identity of teachers is a gradual amalgamation of socialisation processes, the working climate, the presence, frequency or absence of professional development and the quality of bonds formed within the school community (Day & Kington, 2008; González-Calvo & Arias-Carballal, 2017). The process of professional identity creation takes place throughout a career, in pre-service training and early periods of working where identities are still unstable. A teacher's practice can be an active construction of the teacher's identity, but also one of an 'imposed identity' conditioned by the socio-cultural beliefs of teachers, hence the need for professional agency in the early career stages of teachers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013). In contrast, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) specifically highlight their agreement with Sachs' definition (as cited in Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178) of how teacher professional identity is negotiated through making sense of lived experiences and is therefore neither fixed nor imposed: "Teachers construct their own ideas of 'how to be', 'how to act' and 'how to understand' their work and their place in society." Naidoo and Rule (2016) found that teachers established themselves as either compassionate, supportive or knowledgeable professionals. While Naidoo & Rule (2016) suggest that these subject positions influence a teacher's practice, Baxen (2010) contends that not only are subject positions constituted through power relations but they are also the basis of teacher identity formation.

2.4.2.1.3 <u>A note on political identity:</u> A deep-rooted reactive structure

Jansen's (2001, p. 242) conception of teacher identity includes three categories: "a professional identity, an emotional identity and a political identity". He defines the 'political identity' of a teacher as "the ways in which teachers understand and act on their value commitments, personal backgrounds and professional interests in the context of change demand." His focus on teachers as 'political actors'- particularly in countries such as South Africa with a shady political past- begs the question: How do teachers identify with, and then respond to, political stimuli such as educational policy and curricular agenda? Whilst Jansen's socio-cultural perspective of teacher political identity speaks only to professional agency in respect of historical and political contexts, Zembylas and Chubbuck (2018, p.187) provide a contrasting

lens: insight to the critical re (construction) of teacher identity by "understanding the intersection of teacher identity with teacher beliefs and, 'politics' in the workplace" which is attributed to power relations and contextual factors. Zembylas and Chubbuck's description of 'politics'- as the effect of power relations in "an individual or a social process"- resonates with Rodgers and Scott's (2008) earlier classification of political stimuli, as a factor that critically influences identity formation. Likewise, Naidoo and Rule (2016, p. 234) who argue that "teachers' emotions and identities underpin their teaching of HIV/AIDS", further claim that teachers' subject positions are interwoven with teacher emotions and power relations.

2.4.2.2 Factors influencing identity formation

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, p. 180) describe the complex factors that influence the self-identity as:

> [t]he interplay of emotion as a part of the self and identity, the narrative and discourse aspects of the self and the shaping of identity, the role of reflection in understanding the self and identity, and the connection between identity and agency.

Morrison (2013, p.97) describes three "trajectories" that impact identity development in the early professional life phase of teachers as "emergent, distressed or tenuous identities". He found that these "trajectories" were indicative of a teacher's self-evaluation of lived experiences as well as an explanation of how others perceived them. Wilmot and Wood (2012) contend that experiential learning and critical reflectivity significantly contributes to a teacher's acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes in HIV/AIDS education.

2.4.2.3 The relationship between identity, agency and teacher career phase

Just as Vähäsantanen (2015) theorised that it is a teacher's professional agency that shapes, negotiates and reconstructs professional identity, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016, p.326) emphasise "identity-agency involves personal responsiveness to the environment based on meaningful experiences, the values of the individual, the possibility to enrich participation through the investments of others and the development of self through invested effort in this" and hence echoes Jansen's (2001) socio-cultural perspective on teacher political identity. Therefore, professional agency refers to the belief that teachers are professional people with the authority to act, to influence and to make important decisions taking a firm stance if needed, concerning their professional work engagement and identities. Zembylas and Chubbuck (2018) distinguish between agency (inherent in the teacher) and structure (contextual factors) in the formation of teacher identity over the course of professional life.

Day and Gu (2007, p.438) assert that teachers' engage in work over six career phases in their professional lifetime, further claiming that the unique experiences gained within each of these professional life phases builds a professional identity. They failed however to acknowledge that teachers may encounter (as is often the case with learning support teachers) the same set of learners over two or more of these professional life phases and this may have a distinguishable impact on teacher emotion, agency and well-being due to existing emotional bonds with learners, negativity towards curriculum, fatigue, resilience and motivation. Pillen et al. (2013) further explain that the process of identity creation takes place consistently throughout a career with newly qualified teachers being the most vulnerable. Teacher identity is thus a complex reflection of the teacher self - as a person, as a professional and as a decision maker - which changes dynamically throughout a teacher's professional life, fuelled by intrinsic and/or extrinsic influences.

2.5 FOR THE LOVE OF TEACHING!

2.5.1 DEFINING TEACHER EMOTION

Zembylas (2003b, p.231) argues that "emotions are voiced and are a powerful lens into the meaning of identity", through which we observe how the self-concept and identity of a teacher is grafted within socio-political and cultural contexts. This description justifies the common view that an awareness of the interconnectedness of one's feelings, instinctive emotive response and conscientious judgement shapes the realities of teachers (Lasky & van Veen, 2005; Schutz, Hong, Cross, & Osbon, 2006), eliciting teacher emotions that Taxer and Frenzel (2015, p. 86) refer to as being "genuinely expressed, faked or hidden". Supporting this view, Anttila, Pyhältö, Soini and Pietarinen (2016) assert that teachers experience a 'spectrum' of positive and negative emotions in early professional life that affects motivation and learning. Schutz et al. (2006, p. 344) refer to teacher emotion as a social construction and a "person-environment transaction", claiming that emotions are not just internalised by the teacher but also relate to others in the school context. Lasky and van Veen (2005, p. 896) concur that teacher emotions are "both a biological and a social construction, mediated by social structures, cultural tools, and identity". Cognition therefore, is interwoven with feelings and conscious decisions and shape the lives of teachers.

2.5.2 STUDIES IN THE FIELD OF TEACHER EMOTION

Whilst Chen (2016) conducted a large-scale empirical study on teachers in China, to formulate a 'Teacher Emotion Inventory' inspired by Parrott's (2001) 'Tree Structure of Human Emotion', Frenzel et al. (2016) developed a cross-language measurement tool in Germany called 'Teacher Emotion Scales (TES)' reporting common core emotions experienced by teachers. Chen (2016) found "joy, love, sadness, anger and fear" dominating his survey study whereas Frenzel et al. documented "enjoyment, anger and anxiety" using their self-report instrument. Parrott's tree structure, adopted by Chen (2016) as a framework to analyse teacher emotion, classifies human experience into primary, secondary and tertiary emotions with primary emotions being listed as love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness and fear. Chen (2016, p.72) notes that 'love' referred to "teachers' happiness because of the nature of the teaching job such as respect from others, stability, reasonableness of wage, and witness of children's development".

In contrast to the studies mentioned above, each averaging more than a thousand participants in their respective population samples, I am drawn to the longitudinal research undertaken by Zembylas (2002, 2005) on one science teacher, because of his vivid description of teacher emotion as a 'construct', and its ability to help decode teacher identity which resonates with the narrative quality of my study. Zembylas' genealogies of teacher emotions framework (2002) is used in this study to analyse the data in order to address Question Two. While he reflects on how teacher emotions will assist us to interpret teacher identity, he does not offer information on the role of learning support teachers' emotions in the formation of a resilient identity, nor does Zembylas discuss how the emotional responses of learning support teachers differ when interacting with peers and with learners. Using the conceptual framework of Zembylas (2005) on teacher emotion, this study provides insight regarding the role of learning support teachers' emotions in the formation of a resilient identity and the influence of this identity on a teacher's inclusive pedagogical choices using narrative ontology.

According to Hagenauer and Volet (2014, p. 241), the 'appropriateness' of teachers' "emotional experiences and expression is strongly context-dependent based on underlying institutional and cultural norms, values and practices", which resonates with Zembylas (2002) who argues that teacher emotion can have individual, social and socio-political contexts. Additionally, Hargreaves' study on the emotional geographies of teacher emotions, which he used to determine 'emotional distances' between teachers and others, also speaks to this study because teaching is described by Zembylas (2014) as an emotional *entanglement* with

pedagogy. Naidoo and Rule (2016, p. 239) contend that "teachers' emotionalities are intrinsic to their teaching praxis, even if their emotional stance involves distancing or denial of emotion". Pillay et al. (2017) echo this notion of teaching practice being embedded in teacher emotion in their findings on object inquiry in educational research. They found that everyday objects in the lives of teachers are symbols that often represent a teacher's memories, emotional experiences and significant metaphors for their perceived realities. Participants in this study represented aspects of their teacher selves through the use of objects contained within a self-box.

According to Botha and Rens (2018), beginner teachers in South Africa experience a critical dissonance between theory (pre-service training) and practice (classroom) which they refer to as 'reality shock'. Teacher emotion resulting from reality shock thus encourages the construction and reconstruction of teacher identity, a key concept underpinning this study. The nature of teacher emotion is complex. The following section unpacks aspects of emotional intelligence, emotional investment and emotional competence of teachers.

2.5.3 THE NATURE OF TEACHER EMOTIONS

2.5.3.1 Emotional intelligence

Lestari and Sawitri (2017, p.3480) explain emotional intelligence as "the ability to recognise, manage and cleverly use emotions, and understand the feelings of others so (teachers) can face problems, getting the expected performance and achieve interpersonal relationships". They found that 90% of the special needs teachers in their study had very high work engagement and, that this positively correlated with more than 85% of participants scoring very high emotional intelligence on the universal Emotional Intelligence (EI) scale.

2.5.3.2 An emotional investment in teaching

As a result of an emotional investment Day, Kington, Stobart and Sammons (2006, p. 612) contend that teachers unavoidably experience negative emotions too, "when control of long-held principles and practices is challenged, or when trust and respect from parents, the public and their students is eroded". Similarly, Hargreaves (2001) refers to 'emotional geographies' which help to identify and understand the *emotional bonds* that surface when teachers interact with other stakeholders in education. Teachers must therefore negotiate emotional boundaries in a process of emotional regulation, which either strengthens or weakens these emotional bonds. Hargreaves (2001, p.1062) maintains that, "We can feel distant from people who are

right next to us yet close to loved ones who are miles away". According to Hargreaves (2001) weak emotional bonds inhibits emotional understanding which is precursor to superior teaching and learning, and causes teachers to consider feelings as intrusions in the learning environment. 'Emotional geographies' are defined by the socio-cultural, moral, professional, physical and political distances from others, which teachers experience daily (Hargreaves, 2001).

Gay (2002, p.614) argues that:

> [t]he physical features, psycho-emotional tone and the quality of interactions among students and, between students and teachers have a tremendous impact on how or whether learning occurs. Classroom climates that are cold, hostile, isolative, and stressful are not conducive to the best learning for ethnically different students, who perform much better in emotionally warm, caring, and supportive classroom climates.

Kelchtermans (2017, p. 15) posits that teacher emotions are "rooted in the moral commitment as well as the political issues of power and influence of teaching and being a teacher". He echoes the sentiments of Fullan (1993) who describes teaching as having a 'moral purpose'. While Hagenauer and Volet, (2014, p. 248) found that teaching was experienced emotionally by teachers owing to "the intrinsic value of teaching as a profession that fulfils an important function in society" and therefore has a moral dimension, Farouk (2012), observed that teachers experience bouts of a moral emotion called 'guilt' in relation to their learners, in the belief that they can do more to educate and care for them but lack the time and resources to do so. Some teachers in his study felt guilt for not completing administrative duties and believed their colleagues were hence inconvenienced. Ritchie and Wilson (2000, p. 85) reveal that mutually beneficial professional relationships are those that validate each other's efforts, are warm and loving, strengthens a sense of belonging and sets the tone for a "social atmosphere of trust and risk-taking, giving and receiving". Caring and loving relationships with learners, classified under the primary emotion of 'love' according to Parrott (2001), and understanding of socio-economic contexts promote choices to include and accommodate learners with specific socio-emotional needs.

2.5.3.3 The emotional competence of teachers

Saarni (1999, p. 5) defines 'emotional competence' as the awareness and abilities that a teacher has gained through self-concept, pedagogical knowledge and experience to function effectively in different emotional situations which resonates with Zembylas (2005) who posits that teachers enact their emotions. The concept of a 'tree of life' (Denborough, 2008; Ncube, 2006) makes a strong association with the notion of 'emotional competence' as described by Saarni

(1999). The 'living tree' or 'tree of life' is a drawing exercise initially developed to enable the emotional aspect of working with Southern African children inflicted by HIV/Aids, built on an idea of using a drawing of a tree as a visual metaphor to narrate one's life story. It is used worldwide and in various contexts with people of all ages who are encouraged to think of and draw a tree including the ground it grows in, its roots, trunk, leaves, branches, fruit, etc., imagining that the constituent parts represent aspects of their lives (Denborough, 2008; Ncube, 2006). As an arts-based form of narrative inquiry, the construction process of the tree metaphor allows the participant and the researcher to visually experience meaning together. Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith and Campbell (2011, p. 19) describe drawings as a projective arts-based research technique used to visually "explore conscious and unconscious issues and experiences". The 'Tree of Life' activity is successful in narrative inquiry to elicit emotional involvement, reveal emotional competence and to determine representations of identity in participants. The Tree of Life exercise is adopted in this study to engage learning support teachers on aspects of emotion and self-identity and hence produce data of visual and verbal responses to answer the research questions, illustrating their identities as an *Identi-tree.*

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.6.1 DAY AND KINGTON'S FRAMEWORK ON THE FLUCTUATING DIMENSIONS OF TEACHER IDENTITY

Based on the findings of the VITAE research project by Day and Gu (2007), Day and Kington's (2008) extension of the understanding of teacher identity has relevance to this study. Three dimensions of identity-scenarios (Day & Kington, 2008, p. 3) i.e. professional, situated and personal were reported to fluctuate in complexity: ranging from the least complex (scenario 1) where the three dimensions of teachers' identities were *in balance*, with gentle fluctuations that were able to be managed – to the most complex (scenario 4), with extreme fluctuations in all three dimensions able/not able to be managed depending upon the strength of support from internal and/or external factors. They illustrated the *fluctuating dimensions of teacher identity scenarios* in Figure 1, as overlapping spheres that move when they interact with each other and external 'structures' of

influence. Zembylas and Chubbuck (2018) describe these 'structures' as the contextual factors in the formation of teacher identity over time and that which influences teacher emotion.

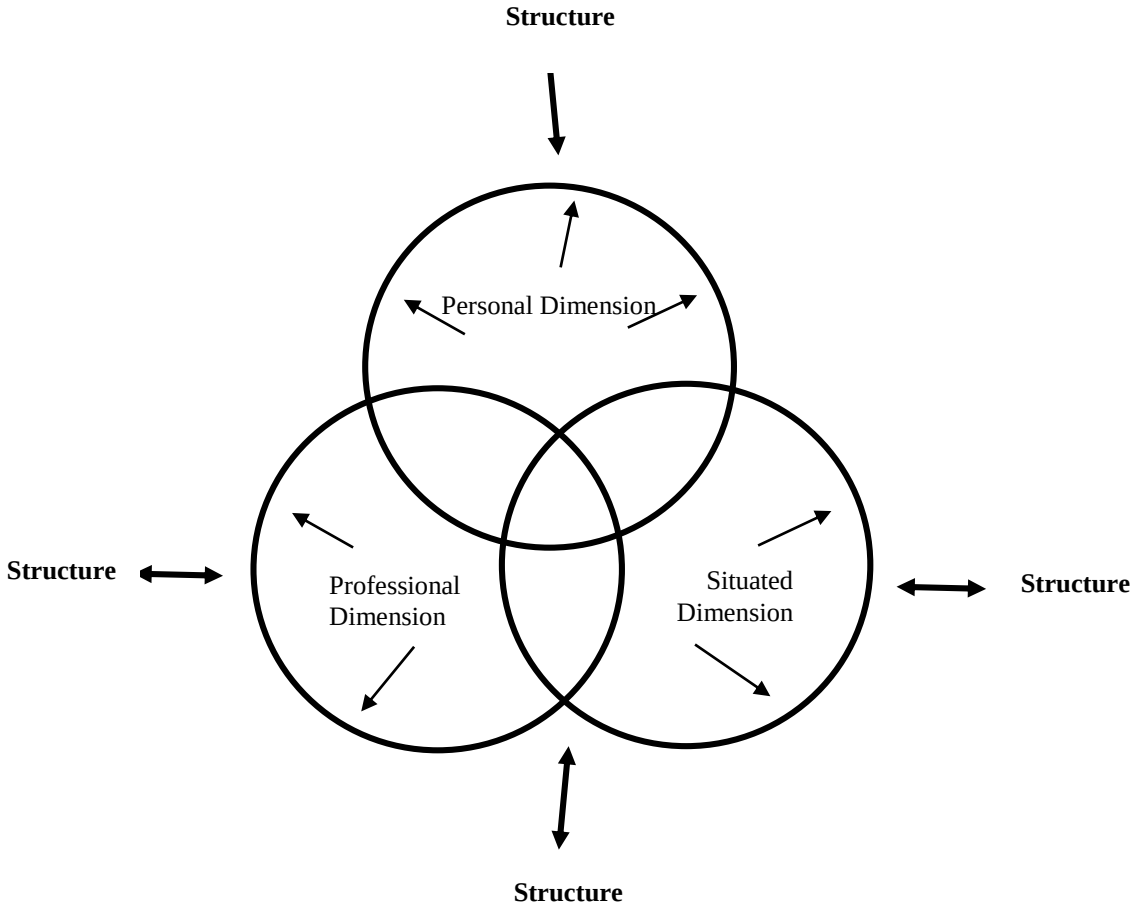

Figure 1. The fluctuating dimensions of teacher identity scenarios (Day & Kington, 2008, p. 3). An illustration of Scenario 1 where the dimensions are in relative balance.

2.6.2 ZEMBYLAS' GENEALOGIES OF TEACHER EMOTION

According to Zembylas (2005, p. 468) the:

> [g]eneral interest in the role of emotions in teaching has increased due to a result of paying attention to the way teachers perceive, interpret and evaluate their relationship with the teaching environment—i.e. people, events and objects.

Zembylas (2005, p.467) maintains that these "values, beliefs *and emotions* come into play as teachers make decisions, act and reflect on the different purposes, methods and meanings of teaching". Emotions can therefore provide insight around how the self-concept of a teacher is influenced, constructed and reconstructed in various contexts, giving rise to the idea that

identity and emotions are interconnected, shaped by perception, reasoning and choices. Zembylas (2002) describes the genealogies of teacher emotion in three components: 'individual reality' which is the intrapersonal level of emotion and refers to the history of how teacher emotions are constructed, 'social interaction' which is the interpersonal level of emotion and refers to how emotions are used by teachers to interact with learners and peers (he describes this level of emotion as being connected to beliefs, knowledge, value system and identity) and a 'socio-political context' that Zembylas (2002, p. 84) calls the "inter-group" level of emotion and refers to "how teacher emotion is relational, historical and social." According to Zembylas (2003a, p. 104), an exploration of teacher emotion promises a new direction in research on teaching, ultimately for the "improvement of instruction and student learning" which speaks to the purpose of this study.

Using the conceptual framework of Zembylas (2005) on the genealogies of teacher emotion, this study provides insights into the role of learning support teachers' emotions in the formation of a resilient identity and the influence of this identity on a teacher's inclusive pedagogical choices using narrative ontology, in the hope that teacher development programs will be effectively improved.

2.6.3 PARROTT'S TREE STRUCTURE OF HUMAN EMOTION

Parrott (2001) theorised a tree-like structure of emotion that lists over 100 emotions categorised in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary emotion.

Parrott described all human emotion as being rooted in one of the six primary emotions namely: love, joy, surprise, anger, sadness and fear that relate to the *depth* of emotions whilst the secondary and tertiary branches of the tree structure defines the *breadth* of emotions. This categorisation assisted me in the coding of data related to emotion as well as understanding the nature of teacher emotions associated with varying emotional bonds.

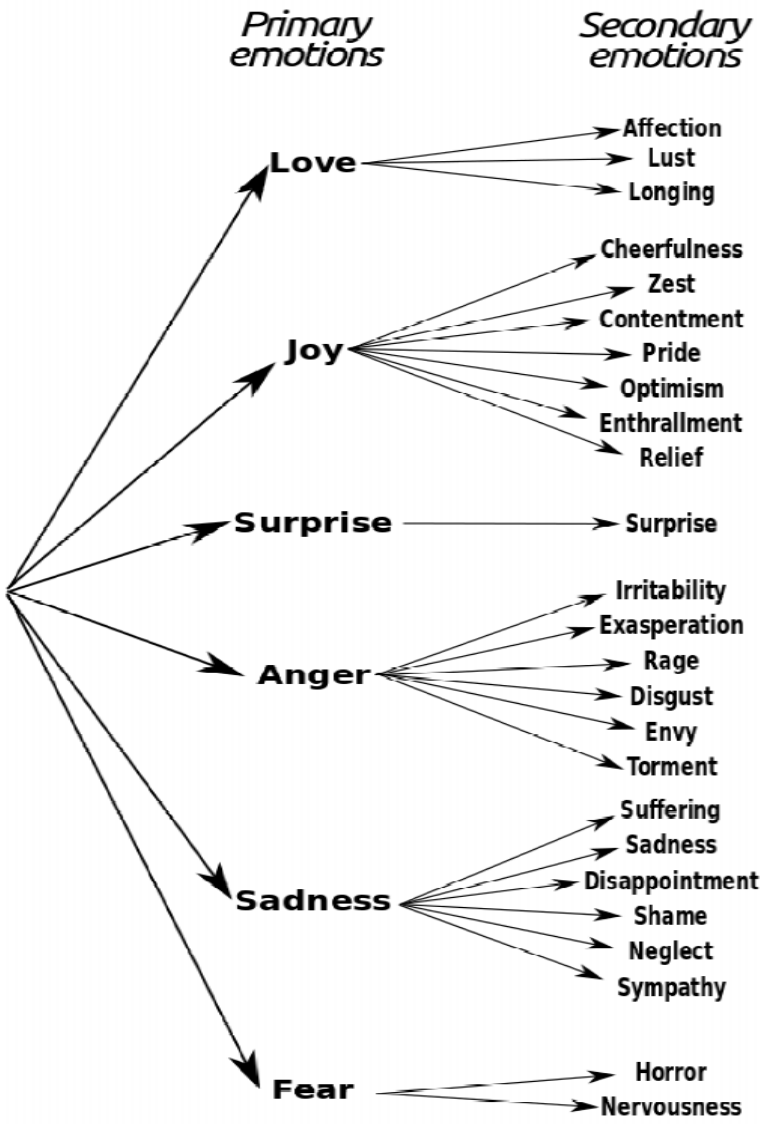

Figure 2. The first two branches of Parrott's (2001) emotion classification
Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/First-two-layers-of-Parrotts-emotion-classification_fig3_258240889

2.6.4 DAY AND GU'S FRAMEWORK ON PROFESSIONAL LIFE PHASES

Day and Gu (2007) assert that teachers' careers, much like the life stages of a tree, have a lifespan that endures six professional life phases, categorised by years of teaching experience. They further argue that the experiences gained within each of these professional life phases inform the development of a professional identity. Henry (2016, p. 3) concurs that the processes of negotiating and reconciling one's personal and professional identities, while discovering "what it means to be a teacher" are valid conflicts that may have long term effects in one's teaching career. Incidentally, Hoskins (2019) describes six life stages of a tree as sprout, seedling, sapling, mature tree, ancient tree and snag, which can be symbolically representative of the professional life stages of teachers.

The following six professional life phases of teachers was identified by Day and Gu (2007, pp. 432- 438):

> (1) Professional Life Phase One (0–3 years), *'commitment, support and challenge*'. Novice teachers entering the profession with a love of teaching.
>
> (2) Professional Life Phase Two (4–7 years), *establishing 'identity and efficacy in classroom'*. Teachers' efficacy and effectiveness is attributed to their positive career expectancies or promotion.
>
> (3) Professional Life Phase Three (8–15 years), *'managing changes in role and identity: growing tensions and transitions'*. Known as the mid-career phase, teachers in this cohort experience tensions relating to professional advancement.
>
> (4) Professional Life Phase Four (16–23 years), facing *'challenges to motivation and commitment'* Teachers experience career advancement and experience increased motivation or increased workload but careers have stagnated therefore leading to demotivation.
>
> (5) Professional Life Phase Five (24–30 years), *encountering 'challenges to sustaining motivation'* Teachers with leadership roles who have additional expected trajectories for advancement and anticipate being inspected for evaluation. There are also teachers with no (further) expectations because they are tired, feeling trapped, and are looking to retire, albeit with declining motivation.
>
> (6) Professional Life Phase Six (31+ years), *'sustaining/declining motivation, ability to cope with change, looking to retire'.* Teachers either maintain commitment or are feeling trapped and looking for a way out. For teachers in the final phase of their professional lives, in-school support had a significant role to play in helping promote their sense of resilience, agency and well-being and sustain their commitment and effectiveness.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

I have sketched an outline of the policies, paradigm and practice of learning support against a landscape of the reasons for inclusive education. An account of the restructuring and reorganisation of inclusive education was given, outlining the relevant policies and practice. An overview of the grounds for inclusive education was drawn and reinforced by the critique of several models for learning support. Lastly, a dialogue between the concepts of teacher identity and teacher emotion highlighted a symbiotic relationship and resulted in the conceptualisation of who learning support teachers may really be.

Chapter 3 delineates my positionality and the methodology that I have chosen for my study.

CHAPTER 3: SEEING THE FOREST FOR THE TREES - RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a critical review of studies within the fields of learning support, teacher identity and teacher emotion, painted a picture of the literary context of this study. This chapter examines the research design and methodology. Whilst an interpretive paradigm is adopted as a lens through which to observe the world, the methodological choices for this qualitative study are justified by keeping the research questions in sight. An outline of narrative inquiry follows, offering insights into the use of a tree metaphor and the positionality of the researcher. Next, the data generation instruments, research context, purposive sampling and data analysis are discussed. The ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness are then presented, bringing the design of the whole study into view.

3.2 AN INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

This study is located in the interpretive paradigm. A paradigm is described by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), as cited in Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 326), as a "basic set of beliefs that guide action" and a "net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises". Creswell and Poth call this an 'interpretive framework' that is subjected to the philosophical assumptions of the researcher when undertaking a study. The phenomena being studied are teacher identity and teacher emotion and how these reflect the lived realities of learning support teachers. Other local and international studies situated in the interpretive paradigm that were successful in conceptualising teacher identity (Baxen, 2010; Day & Kington, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2009; Pillen, Beijaard, & den Brok, 2013); and teacher emotion (Botha & Rens, 2018; Naidoo & Rule, 2016; Zembylas, 2002) encouraged me to position myself in the interpretive paradigm for the purpose of this study. Maree (2007) remarks that interpretivists make meaning of the phenomena through the participants' eyes. Consistent with Maree's (2007) view, Willis (2007) adds that interpretivists favour a qualitative research design that yields descriptive and authentic data in actual words narrated by the participants, thus preventing the telling of a story from an astigmatic view of reality. Rossman and Rallis (2017, p. 34) call this "descriptive interpretivism". As a researcher, I planted myself in the lives of my participants to absorb their stories and gain insight into their identities and emotions as learning support teachers. The participants' narratives were interpreted to effectively find meaning in their reality. Driven by an interpretive paradigm, I formulated my guiding research questions. The interpretive paradigm is coherent with the

research questions and the research design of this study. A glimpse at my role as a researcher situated in the interpretive paradigm and the related concerns of positionality and reflexivity are included later in this chapter.

3.3 A QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 43) describe qualitative research as a process: "flowing from philosophical assumptions, to interpretive lens, and on to the procedures involved in studying social or human problems". Qualitative research is thus used to refer to both systematic data collection and to a broader framework for conducting research. While Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 126) describe the structure of a research design as a plan for making decisions, Clark and Braun (2013) assert that qualitative research is rich, stimulating, and thought-provoking in many ways, capturing words as data and the complexities and paradoxes characteristic of the real world. I chose a research design for my study that was naturalistic and lent itself well to the interpretive paradigm. I planned to create descriptive narratives of learning support teachers and the emotions they experienced in teaching learners in an inclusive classroom, thus a qualitative methodological approach was fit for this purpose. By eliciting the stories of my purposive sample of participants, through exploratory semi-structured interviews, I collected their words as data: a rich representation of reality. Additionally, each of the participants responded to vignettes, drew an Identi-tree and constructed a symbolic self-box to assist in the telling of their individual stories.

Though Merriam (2009) maintains that qualitative researchers emphasise how people understand and make sense of the experiences they have in their lives, Ashraf and Rarieya (2008) contend that qualitative narrative inquiry involves "reflective conversations, which involve verbally sharing, discussing, questioning and reasoning surrounding their experiences and events". The narratives of participants were co-created through active collaboration to ensure credibility of this study.

3.4 NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry has a central idea that enables real people to be highlighted in the context of real lives, through the telling of their stories. The data gained from the use of several instruments provided access to rich layers of knowledge and insight into the participants' lives as learning support teachers. Beattie (2000, p. 5) adds that one philosophical assumption of narrative inquiry is that "knowledge-making is recognised as an active creative, interpretive

process, in which the telling and retelling of one's story provides a framework" for the conceptualisation of the self. For the participants in this study, it meant that the researcher interpreted and made sense of the narratives that helped shape and reshape the different aspects of identity as learning support teachers, richly explored their stories to elicit authentic emotional responses and gained insight into how they were able to negotiate their personal identity and professional agency over the span of their professional lives.

Creswell and Poth (2018) describe narrative research as the solution if the purpose of the research problem is to voice a story. I decided on data instruments that would allow me to accumulate data that would help me answer the research questions, which according to Rossman and Rallis (2017, p. 4) is "not reality itself but rather representations of reality". In a naturalistic setting, the participants were given opportunities for self-reflection as a result of the use of self-boxes, Tree of Life drawings and vignettes to capture descriptive, expressive and rich data in the participants' own words and constructed artefacts. Self-reflection through narrative inquiry provided insights into the learning support teachers' respective life stories therefore giving me a window through which I observed 'the who?', 'the why?' and 'the how?', in a South African educational context. According to Jensen (2006, p. 39), researchers develop a deeper understanding of education in practice "through accessing the thoughts and perceptions of teachers, taken at their word, because those words are seen to represent their thinking." Narratives of teachers are thus a means for the external world to peer into the educators' internal world.

While Creswell et al. (2007) describe narrative research as understanding and presenting genuine experiences by eliciting narrative stories from the research participants, Fowler (2006) distinguishes between the story and the narrative in narrative research. According to Fowler (2006) narratives are powerful stories that are meant to encompass the reality of the teller and the context of the story, and has the ability to engage minds in the construction of meaning. Researchers employing a socio-linguistic approach such as narrative research can therefore unlock data that informs a deeper understanding of the participants' context-specific lives thus I chose narrative inquiry as a method of collecting rich narrative data for it fits with the purpose of unearthing the experiences and the emotions of learning support teachers in the South African education landscape.

3.4.1 THE STRENGTHS OF NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 68-69) discussed the nature of narrative inquiry as follows:

- Narrative stories focus on the experiences of an individual thus highlighting his/her identity. The purpose of this study was to explore the narratives of learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities and their teacher emotions.
- Narrative stories are collected through numerous methods of data generation. In this study, participants contributed narratives using four data generation instruments namely semi-structured interviews, self-boxes, tree-of-life drawings and written responses to vignettes.
- Narrative stories are shaped chronologically. Participants shared stories of their past, present and future. This was relevant as I looked at the influence of professional life phases of participants on their personal and professional teacher identities, in order to answer Research Question 3.
- Narrative stories may contain turning points, specific tensions or consequences. I interpreted the subtleties and nuances of the participants' emotionally charged stories to provide additional data.

To summarise, the following strengths of narrative inquiry in education were highlighted: teachers are natural narrators of their personal stories, their stories are infused with rich and thick descriptions which provide comprehensive data and, this data can reveal multifarious meaning within a socio-cultural context.

3.4.2 CONCERNS IN NARRATIVE INQUIRY

While Willis (2007) and, Rossman and Rallis (2017) argue that narrative inquiry is biased and non-factual, objecting to the value of subjectivity in narrative research, Geertz (1995), as cited in Phillion and He (2010, p. 249) addresses this concern and claims that narrative research is "the way we make meaning as we reflect on the past, form accounts of change over time and place, and weave fact and interpretation to craft coherent accounts of complex experiences." Fowler (2006, p.15) contends that there is an underside to teaching, soiled with "*counternarratives*" which teachers within the reading community may find "difficult to accept or know, and which they may prefer to leave untold".

In a process of questioning the nature of narrative inquiry, which she calls "narrative theorising", Kim (2008, p. 253) is concerned with narrative inquiry being narcissistic in nature, lacks narratology and whether it relates to a question of art or research. Through active collaboration with participants and purposeful reflexivity throughout the research process, the

researcher was able to reduce the possibility of the study projecting a narcissistic nature. Echoing Kim's question of "art or research?" Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith and Campbell (2011, p. 3) delve further by asking whether narrative inquiry is "arts-based or arts-informed research". This study uses drawings and self-boxes, along with semi-structured interviews and vignettes, as arts-based research. Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 19) add that hand-made visual media are embedded with meaning and "make parts of the self and/or levels of development *visible*".

Narrative inquiry, according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), is also not practical for studies that have a large number of participants because the researcher has to gather extensive data about each participant in order to contextualise the individual. This study has a sample of seven learning support teachers. Data generation and data analysis, using the conceptual framework to interpret and make sense of the data, was done methodically and meticulously to ensure that the narratives of each participant took the shape of their lived realities.

3.5 AT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Through this study the narratives of learning support teachers illuminate aspects of their personal and professional identities, explores how teacher emotions influence the inclusive teaching practice of learning support teachers, and determines the extent to which career phases influence learning support teacher's personal and professional identities. In so doing, the study aims to help alleviate the paucity of literature on learning support teachers' identities and emotions for the purpose of improving professional teacher development.

3.5.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the narratives of learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities in the field of inclusive education?

2. How do teacher emotions influence the inclusive teaching practice of learning support teachers and thus their teacher identity in the field of inclusive education?

3. To what extent do career phases influence learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities in the field of inclusive education?

3.5.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

The study is based in Pietermaritzburg, the capital city of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

The educational district in which the study is located, is Umgungundlovu and all the participants in this study live and teach in Pietermaritzburg. The participants in the study include four learning support teachers from a semi-urban full-service school, two learning support teachers from two urban special schools and one learning support teacher from a semi-urban mainstream school within Umgungundlovu district. Umgungundlovu district of education is one of four districts that fall under the Pietermaritzburg service centre.

The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government (DoE, 2018, p. 18) contends that "capacity building and training was conducted … with 34 learner support educators who work with the full-service schools" in the province of KwaZulu- Natal in 2017. The report also indicates a startling 22% of special schools serving as resource centres, well below the expectation as envisioned in WP6. Full service schools in Pietermaritzburg have no permanently appointed learning support teachers. In the interim, post level one (PL1) teachers have been assuming the role of learning support teachers to meet the growing curricular needs of the school. The participants in this study are learning support teachers

3.6 TREE METAPHOR AND THE POSITIONALITY OF THE RESEARCHER

Qualitative design is undoubtedly subjected to the perspectives of the researcher and one way of circumventing bias is to make one's cultural, social and political position clear. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 173), researchers must consider their participants as the most significant audience as they have "a duty of care to compose a text that does not rupture life stories that sustain them", and additionally, researchers have their own story to tell within the field of narrative inquiry to a greater audience and to "the conversation of a scholarly discourse". Though I had a responsibility to my participants to re-story their narratives without disrupting the reality of their experiences, I had to also acknowledge the possible influence of bias. It is likely that the participants may not have initially felt free to describe *all* their personal and professional experiences considering they were selected from a population of learning support teachers, in which relationships between and among individuals (including myself) were already formed. My aim was not to produce value-free knowledge that could be generalised to all people and socio-cultural contexts. Instead, it is my view that although I could not detach myself entirely from the study, I made every attempt to report the participants' stories as accurately and meaningfully as possible. Although the research questions gave me

an idea of what I, as the researcher, wanted to know about my participants, I had to step away from my own position as a learning support practitioner. According to Willis (2007, p. 110), "interpretivists eschew the idea that objective research on human behaviour is possible". This effectively meant that during the semi-structured interview process, I did not use my own knowledge and skills, my own values towards learning support nor my own emotions relating to a largely negative personal teaching environment to steer the participants' responses. At times I was tempted to agree with and empathise with Mrs Acacia and Mrs Rooibos in particular who reported on their personal conflicts with management, or with Mrs Oak who felt that the Department of Education offered meagre support in terms of teachers' professional development. Instead, I probed them about their perspective on possible solutions so as to enrich the recommendations of this study. Through the process of member checking, I ensured that the narratives reported authentically on the participants' experiences to prevent bias.

I was introduced to the Tree of Life activity in a professional development workshop for teachers hosted in 2017 by a group of Masters students from the UKZN Psychology department. In my own experience at this workshop, I engaged wholly in the activity and became very emotional when asked to draw the roots of the tree. I had to access deep recessed emotions about my late father and other very personal memories in order to fulfil the task. The creative process also gave me insight to the subconscious dreams and aspirations I had for myself, one of which was to study for a Master's Degree in Inclusive Education. The support I felt from the facilitator and my peer group made me feel that my thoughts and emotions were valid. I also felt pride when I looked at the finished product displayed on the wall along with the others and could confidently narrate the various aspects of my drawing. It was an enriching and memorable experience that gave me an empowering sense of individuality as well as a feeling of belonging to a group. Thus in this study, I was acutely aware that although the drawing activity of an Identi-tree may elicit similar emotional responses from my participants, it would also be empowering for teachers. I therefore adapted some questions and eliminated others from the original prompts which may have triggered any trauma and made the contact information for the Child and Family Centre (UKZN Psychology Department) available to participants should they have wanted to seek further counselling outside of the group's support. Ahead of the group session, participants were briefed about the activity, its history and purpose and reassured regarding voluntary participation and withdrawal.

Rossman and Rallis (2017, p. 34) agree that interpretivism typically has "an interest in subjective worldviews". Contrary to the opinions of Willis (2007) and Rossman and Rallis (2017), Punch and Oancea (2014, p. 20) state that researchers should be "philosophically mindful" as they *cannot see the forest for the trees* if they are not richly engaged in a study rather than being influenced by "static 'frameworks' underpinning this or that paradigmatic position". Although I adopted paradigmatic roots early in the study, I remained philosophically mindful about the study's findings and the subsequent reflexivity of interpreting the data, influenced in part by my own personal, professional and situated identities.

Consistent with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) view on the use of metaphors, I found the use of a tree metaphor liberating in my search for writing form. Although Lakoff and Johnson (1980), as cited in Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 163) warn that "metaphors break down at some point in their application", I found that the tree metaphor cohesively evolved during the research process, giving life and meaning to the participants' stories and shaping a virtual reality of their multiple identities. Jensen (2006, p. 38) succinctly describes this cohesion by claiming that "metaphors enable the connection of information about a familiar concept to another familiar concept, leading to a new understanding where the process of comparison between the two concepts acts as generators for intended meaning." I found that the use of a tree metaphor in this study was relevant and enabled the interconnectedness of teacher identity and teacher emotion rooted in learning support, to lead the process of understanding and interpretation of my participants' stories. In my opinion, at the core of the inclusive classroom is a complex root system of the learning support teacher's philosophical assumptions and values about teaching and learning which are drawn upon to sprout one's instinctive teaching and classroom management styles, a perspective on education and its challenges, and a degree of agency. It reminds me of Bettini et al.'s (2017a, p. 119) description of "enculturation" as the operationalising of core values for people, service and relationships. Hidden beneath the ground, the roots anchor the tree in a critical foundation of reasoning for all decision making. The entrenchment in a core value system, allows for flexibility in adverse conditions, where the trunk and branches may bend but will not easily be broken. Above the ground, a tree's trunk, branches and crown are visible. Likewise, there are aspects of teacher identity and teacher emotion that are either visible or remain hidden despite their interconnectedness. Ultimately, teachers want to stand strong in the classroom and give life to their learners by helping to unlock learning potential and going out on a limb for their learners to climb the branches of perceived learning barriers. In reality, some learners may only temporarily seek the shade, protection or structure, or may only lean against the trunk of the tree before moving

on and the tree itself is exposed to the elements and possible storms. Fowler (2006) refers to these storms as 'teaching difficulties' which give rise to the construction of stories related to increasing frustration, and the subsequent need for ongoing further professional development which results in teachers finding themselves in graduate programs, much like I did. Fowler (2006, p. 27) adds succinctly that "researchers do have a right, freedom, and responsibility to study what calls them". Stories rooted in learning support call me and I do it **for the love of teaching.**

3.7 METHODS OF DATA GENERATION

A variety of data generation instruments were used to collect 'rich and thick descriptions' that represented the identities and emotions of seven learning support teachers. I selected four methods of data generation, each of which contributed data to address all three of my research questions. I took this decision as I wanted to use a creative approach to engage with the participants in my study. Learning support teachers in this study participated in semi-structured interviews, vignettes, self-box constructions and drawings of an *Identi-tree*. Additionally, the value of triangulation using multiple methods of data generation, increased the credibility of my study.

3.7.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

*"The research interview is based on the conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation; it is an inter-view, where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and interviewee. It is literally an **inter view**, and inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest."*

- Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 2)

Research interviews can be conducted in three ways: a structured interview in which the interviewer has a conversation with a strictly defined set of questions, a semi-structured interview that allows for developing ideas that arise from a prepared set of questions, and an unstructured interview in which the interviewer has not prepared any questions to guide the process. As the researcher defines and designs the structure and purpose of the interview, he/she applies a locus of control and the interview is not an exchange between equal halves. Semi-structured interviews were used as a data generation instrument in this study. Using a prepared set of questions as a guide, I allowed for the possibility of discussion with the interviewee with the intention of obtaining meaningful descriptions about the lives of my

participants. I did not necessarily ask all the questions nor did I present them in a particular order as I was directed by each conversation as it happened. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 99) note that "the open structure of research interviewing is an asset as well as a problem" because there is an absence of recorded standard procedure for conducting an interview. This means that although qualitative interviews may be criticised for the lack of prescribed rules, it brings with it an abundance of opportunity for the interviewer to draw on knowledge, technique and intuition.

The data generated from the semi-structured interviews assisted me to address all my research questions. I used 'speech-to-text' technology to save time in transcribing the semi-structured interviews and the participants' narrative verbal responses to vignettes. The semi-structured interviews were scheduled for 45 minutes each, conducted in the learning support teachers' own context which are special/ inclusive/full service schools. A schedule of the semi-structured interview questions is included in Appendix 4.

3.7.2 THE TREE OF LIFE: 'IDENTI-TREE'

"Learn character from trees, values from roots, and change from leaves."
Hameed (n.d.)

Hansen (2001, p. 43) attributes the reasons for a teacher's various choices in the classroom to a "working image of an educated, growing person" where growth can imply pruning the self as much as cultivating new ideas, perspectives, skills and knowledge. Similarly, the 'Tree of Life' (Denborough, 2008; Ncube, 2006) is a visual metaphor underpinned by narrative therapy, which represents a person as a growing tree. Mitchell et al. (2011) emphasise that the researcher invites participants to draw and reassures them that the focus is on a metaphoric or symbolic drawing's content and not on its artistic quality. The Tree of Life is used worldwide in narrative therapy, in various contexts with people of all ages who are encouraged to think of and draw a tree including the ground it grows in, its roots, trunk, leaves, branches, fruit, etc., imagining that the constituent parts represent aspects of their lives (Denborough, 2008; German, 2013; Ncube, 2006). The idea of a tree as a metaphor for teacher identity echoes Hameed (n.d.), who begs for one's character to be drawn from the trunk of a tree, their core values from the roots of a tree and the perceived changes over time to be drawn from the leaves of a tree. The activity has visual and narrative elements as well as an emotional involvement of the participants in the experience, enabling them to voice their life stories in

ways that make them feel empowered (Ncube, 2006). Lock (2016, p. 3) reports that the Tree of Life activity has distinct characteristics of social construction and "sequential diversity (the ability to discuss the past, present or future)". Hence, I believe this activity was worthwhile as an individual and social narrative, to explore the identities and emotions of individual learning support teachers as well as the emergent experience of the group.

I adapted the Tree of Life drawing activity to fit with the purpose of this study, calling it an *Identi-tree* and used the tree as a metaphor for teacher identity. At a group session, the researcher acting as a facilitator in the activity, narrated a series of basic instructions together with their intended meanings adapted by German (2013) from Ncube (2006), to prompt participants in the construction of their drawings. By drawing their *Identi-tree*, participants were encouraged, using the "draw-and-talk" technique (Mitchell et al., 2011, p.20), to tell a tale about their 'roots' (family history and core value system), their 'trunk' (unique skills, characteristics and abilities), their 'branches' (aspirations for the self), and the influential people in their life stories represented by fruit, leaves and animals. Although each drawing and its respective narrative was distinctive, the researcher came to the realisation that a community of learning support teachers had been formed. When the trees were placed side by side, they formed a 'forest of life'. The participants discussed some of the 'storms' that may have threatened the successful growth of their *Identi-tree*, how they responded to these storms, protected themselves, and helped each other in the learning support community. The "draw-and-talk" technique allowed participants to unearth the meaning rooted in their drawings.

Although the data collected from the *Identi-tree* was meant to assist me in addressing the first research question on teacher identity, there was a significant amount of data collected on teacher emotion which assisted me to address the second research question as well. Tidwell and Manke (2009), as cited in Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 43) concur: "developing and sharing metaphoric representations of their professional practice afforded them new insights into the relationships and emotions that are an integral and influential part of their professional lives and work". Visual data such as photographs of constructed artefacts, and participants' actual drawings were collected with the permission of participants, as observational records and have been included in the introductory narratives of each participant in Chapter 4. A sample of the narrative prompts for the Tree of Life drawing activity is included in Appendix 5. The reflexive process of drawing was in itself a journey of self-discovery from roots to crown: where participants were guided through illustrating their teacher emotions that shaped their identity.

Identifying common themes in the visual data and redrawing them into a single tree helped me to analyse and visually interpret the distinctive characteristics of a learning support teacher. A model of the Identi-tree, an artistic expression of the researcher's inductive and deductive analysis describing the identities and emotions of learning support teachers in this study, is included as Appendix 6.

3.7.3 THE SELF-BOX

In this study, the construction of a self-box mediated the narratives of identity and emotion of learning support teachers and unearthed the substantial and profound "layers of meaning not readily represented by using language alone" (Leitch, 2008, p.147). This echoes Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 19) in their description of hand-made visual media as being embedded with meaning and making "parts of the self and/or levels of development *visible*". Leitch's description of self-box making as an inquiry into the conceptualisations of the teacher self resonates with Day and Kington's (2008) framework on teacher identity which describes three fluctuating dimensions of identity formation as individual, social and socio-political relationships with the self. According to Leitch (2008, p.1), "concepts of the unitary self, the decentred self and the relationship between inner and outer experience are challenged and illustrated through two interlapping stories made manifest through the creation of self-boxes."

McGuire (2013, p. 30) contends that a self-box may be a "direct or implied representation of self" and acts as an "emotional vessel" (p. 40) to contain aspects of the self. Chu (2010, p. 4) reported positively using self-boxes as cultural art therapy for Rwandan genocide survivors and argues that the "metaphor of a box acted as a catalyst for expression, healing and reconnection with the self". Similarly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 114) mention a concept called "memory boxes" that are unique collections of individual's novelties, photos and other paraphernalia that "trigger memories of important times, people and events" which in turn, elicit largely positive emotions. Leitch (2008, p.2) contends that "the creative process of self-box making captures an epiphanic moment," while Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 135) identify 'epiphanies' as one of the concepts characteristic to narrative inquiry. In addition to reflections of one's identity, Kaufman (1996, p. 247) identified that "art in boxes" are meaningful to its creator "both artistically and emotionally". McGuire (2013, p. 1), argues that "every box has a story to tell" and that the self-box is both "functionally simplistic yet richly symbolic" with the capacity to bridge past and future, and "delineate between public and private emotions "(p. 14). In agreement with Kaufman (1996), McGuire (2013, p. 19) describes

self-box making as an emotional and sensory experience in which thoughts and emotions are the "text" to be explored.

Participants in this study were each encouraged to construct a self-box that represented their self-perception of identity as a learning support teacher. Janesick (1998), as cited in Leitch (2008, p. 146), describes the self-box as a representation of "a person's innermost self on the inside of the box and the outward self on the outside of the box." Drawing on Janesick (1998), participants were tasked with decorating a common shoebox and transforming it to visually represent their teacher identities. Participants were free to choose any medium and embellishments that they deemed fit for the purpose of this task. Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 23) highlight that "participants need a choice of culturally and contextually congruent" artistic media when producing art-based research. The researcher further requested each participant to place five carefully selected objects/pictures within the box that had significant meaning to their role in the inclusive classroom. Farrell-Kirk (2001, p. 89) contends that "placing something in a box can not only signify the inherent value of the thing, but can actually imbue a mundane object with newfound importance". Where effectively the primary construction and creative processes came to rest, a secondary process of self-narration began. Leitch (2008, p. 152) describes this as a 'dialogic interanimation' in which the self-box performs a discursive function, "both at individual and collective levels, a resource which scaffolds the development of the teachers' self-narratives over time."

I found that participants were richly engaged in, and deeply connected to this task with some participants nostalgically expressing the wish to keep their self-box. Photographs of the self-boxes were taken as visual data, and the narratives of participants were recorded and transcribed, which provided narratives of learning support teacher identities, emotions and inclusive pedagogical choices. The data collected from self-boxes assisted me with addressing all my research questions. It was a reflective process: where looking back on the path already taken gave participants insight to the formation of their teacher identity.

3.7.4 VIGNETTES

Wilks (2004, p. 80) describes vignettes as "simulations of real events depicting hypothetical situations". I adopted Jeffries and Maeder's (2005, p. 20) definition of vignettes as "incomplete short stories that are written to reflect, in a less complex way, real life situations to encourage

discussions and potential solutions to problems where multiple solutions are possible" which I believe fits with the purpose of my study. While Wilks (2004) suggests that the elicitation of emotional responses to vignettes are dilemmatic in nature and provide a key to the conceptual world of respondents, Buzzelli and Johnston (2001, p. 876) report that "teaching itself involves moral action" driven by concepts of teacher identity, teacher emotion and professional agency. The use of vignettes therefore, to collect data relating to the main concepts of this study, complemented the other data generation methods.

There are five criteria to follow in constructing effective vignettes for measuring teacher development i.e. it should be a narrative story, roughly 50-200 words, simplifying a real-life situation of significance to the participants, is intended for critical thought and allows for various unique verbal, written or emotional solutions and responses (Jeffries & Maeder, 2005). For the purpose of this study, I used two vignettes adapted from Whole Child (2010) that met these criteria. Wilks (2004) argues that one of the main concerns regarding the use of vignettes is its validity in genuinely depicting real situations albeit hypothetically and its significance to the research participants. The vignettes used in this study were adapted from real life stories published by Whole Child (2010), relating to their actual work in matching families with licensed professionals, interns and paraprofessionals who specialise in learning support (a concept that is meaningful to the participants).

I employed the use of vignettes to elicit emotional responses from learning support teachers and to determine how their inclusive teaching praxis is influenced by these emotions, to collect data for the second research question. I used thematic data analysis to code and interpret the unique responses from participants, and themes relating to teacher identity and career phases also emerged, therefore providing further data to help address research questions 1 and 3 as well. The two adapted vignettes used in this study are included in Appendix 7.

3.8 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING

Purposive sampling is a sampling method often used for qualitative studies. In this study, the seven participants were selected for their ability to shed light on inclusive education and provide information-rich accounts about the development of their personal and professional teacher identities. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recommend that an essential feature of participant selection is the rapport between researcher and participant. In this study, relationships had already initially been formed because all participants, along with myself as the researcher attend the same trainings and cohort sessions and are part of a community of

practice: teachers who utilise specific social media groups to build rapport with each other, share thoughts and communicate ideas for the inclusive classroom. My sample is also convenient because the participants were learning support teachers selected only from schools within the Umgungundlovu educational district in Pietermaritzburg as this was a convenient location for the researcher to conduct the study.

Once I obtained permission to conduct research and ethical clearance, I invited the participants to an informal briefing at which they were informed of the study's purpose and its design elements. In order to recruit participants, I clarified aspects relating to informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and withdrawal; prompting them to indicate in writing if they would be interested in contributing to the study. I selected seven positive responses as participants of the study, because they met the two requirements: they were learning support teachers and they were based in Pietermaritzburg. Additionally, these teachers were of different career ages. In keeping with the tree metaphor, pseudonyms that represented iconic South African trees were assigned to participants and their schools. Biographical data and informed consent were obtained in writing and questions pertaining to the study were addressed. I include a profile of the participants in the following table:

Table 1: Biological profile of this study's participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	Highest Level of Education	Number of years teaching (range)	Post Level*
Mrs. Acacia	F	51-60	Honours Degree	24 -30 years	2
Miss Aloe	F	21-30	Honours Degree	0-3 years	1
Miss Baobab	F	31-40	Bachelor Degree	8-15 years	1
Mrs. Fynbos	F	21-30	Honours Degree	4-7 years	1
Mrs. Oak	F	21-30	Honours Degree	0-3 years	1
Mrs. Pine	F	>61	Teaching Diploma	>31 years	3
Mrs. Rooibos	F	51-60	Post Graduate Certificate	16 – 23 years	1

**Post level refers to the level of management in which the teacher is appointed at the school, as follows:*
1 = Teacher, 2= Departmental Head, 3= Deputy Principal, 4= Principal

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative research is an organising activity in which data is reduced into core ideas called themes, by means of coding - and then representing this condensed data in the form of a discussion (Ashraf & Rarieya, 2008; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Creswell & Poth,

2018). Whilst Clarke and Braun (2013) discuss three forms or frameworks for analysing data namely; searching for patterns, looking at interaction and looking at stories; Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 185) believe that the data analysis process of qualitative researchers conform to a 'general contour'. They represent this contour in the image of a spiral, describing the analytical process as a circular movement called "a data analysis spiral", in which the researcher "enters with text and/or audio-visual materials and exits with a narrative".

Thematic data analysis was used in this research study. Thematic content analysis for qualitative research is a technique used to identify, penetrate and report on repeated patterns that emerge from the data. These repeated patterns form themes that provide meaning. Seeing that qualitative research entails using words as data, writing is a crucial activity of thematic analysis. I employed the 'data analysis spiral' technique of Creswell and Poth (2018) to engage with the data. Creswell and Poth's (2018, p. 216) template for coding a narrative study was useful to organise my data. I managed the data into practical units and organised them into categories with common features, words or descriptions. Then I read through the data in these categories and identified emergent ideas, making notes for reflective thinking and classifying codes into themes. This then gave me an opportunity to interpret the data making sense of trends and patterns using both inductive and deductive reasoning. I used Day and Kington's (2008) framework on teacher identity, Zembylas' (2002) framework on teacher emotion, Parrott's (2001) tree structure for teacher emotion and Day and Gu's (2007) framework on professional life phases to analyse the themes. Finally, I created a point of view and reported findings that were valid and trustworthy by revisiting the literature.

3.10 ETHICAL ISSUES

Seeing that the identities and emotions of people were involved in this study, it brought unique ethical problems into perspective. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 116) postulate that although "challenges to a person's established self-image and the provocation of strong feelings" are essential to therapeutic interview research studies relating to emotion, "inciting such intensive emotional reactions only for research interests would be unethical". German (2013) maintains that the use of drawing to collect data is inclusive and non-threatening. Likewise, vignettes are non-personal and thus less intimidating (Wilks, 2004). Given that the purpose of this study was to unearth crucial data relating to teacher identities and teacher emotion, I selected data instruments that allowed the participants to speak about their emotions in a healthy way,

reducing the possibility of provoking and inciting intense emotional reactions and the subsequent need for emotional therapy. The following ethical issues were addressed:

3.10.1 GAINING ACCESS

I negotiated access to the participants by writing to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZNDoE) with an elucidation of the research problem and the practical design of the study. To gain access to teachers after I obtained consent from the KZNDoE, I wrote to the principals of schools where participant learning support teachers are based, to inform them of my intention to conduct my research and a summary of the purpose and design of my study. Following the granting of such permission and the subsequent confirmation of ethical clearance received from the university, I then liaised with my participants to compile a data generation schedule. My application for ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Ethics Committee included a recruitment strategy and a copy of the data instruments and related prompts.

3.10.2 INFORMED CONSENT

Participants who were selected attended an initial briefing to fully understand the topic, purpose and data generation methods. Their concerns were addressed and they were each given a letter detailing the purpose and research aims. The letter also provided insight into what would be required from them as participants and informed them of proposed dates of meetings and expected duration of sessions. I then requested their written consent for participation. Seven participants granted their informed consent.

3.10.3 ANONYMITY

Guaranteeing the anonymity of the participants is of utmost importance. Each of the participants were given a pseudonym to protect their true identity. Actual names were changed to names of trees and only the pseudonyms are referred to in transcripts, data collection, analysis and reporting. Likewise, pseudonyms were used for the names of the participants' schools. I obtained permission from the participants to photograph the process and product of their constructions. Suitable measures were taken to ensure the anonymity of participants in visual media. Photographs were taken of clearly-labelled drawings and self-boxes alone without the presence of the participants.

3.10.4 CONFIDENTIALITY

All the information generated by engaging with participants during the study was closely guarded during my research. None of the information was shared with a third party, the

practice of which may have compromised the participants in their personal or professional life. All data was treated with the respect that it deserved and will continue to be protected as such in a safe place for at least five years hereafter.

3.10.5 VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

In letters given to participants to gain informed consent, the participants were also made aware that they were participating freely and voluntarily. They therefore had no obligation and were entitled to withdraw from the research study, without prejudice, if they no longer felt comfortable to continue. This was done so that participants fully engaged voluntarily in the research.

3.11 TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), as cited in Cohen et al. (2011, p.180), "trustworthiness in qualitative research is determined by four criteria indicators - credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability". Credibility alludes to the truthful nature of the study's findings. Transferability relates to the possibility of other researchers being able to replicate the study. Dependability refers to the soundness and reliability of the research design processes pertaining to the generation and analysis of data and the generation of theory arising from these processes. Confirmability is the degree to which the data supports the findings of the study. Transferability, dependability and confirmability were addressed in this study by using a complementary range of data generation techniques as described earlier in this chapter. I gathered information from multiple data instruments to form a chain of evidence which was used in correlating verbal accounts with analysis of the study. Firstly, to ensure credibility, the researcher collaborated with participants through cross referencing for congruence, validation and approval. Secondly, an extensive record of processes was kept in order for other researchers to reproduce these processes to determine the level of dependability. Thirdly, the coherence reported in the study's findings between the interconnected concepts of teacher identity, teacher emotion and career phase, is supported by the data gathered using all four different data instruments. This ensures the study's confirmability.

3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the bigger picture in terms of the research design and methodological choices of this study being 'fit for purpose'. It examined all the branches of the research design.

Viewed through an interpretive lens, the use of narrative inquiry and a tree metaphor were justified. A glimpse at my positionality as a researcher, an overview of the procedures for data generation and a focus on thematic data analysis was presented. Finally, the ethical considerations relating to this study were addressed, bringing the whole study into view and setting the tone for the next chapter.

In Chapter 4: out on a limb, the analysis and interpretation of the data are deliberated. Principal themes are highlighted and a reflection on the research process and key findings concludes the chapter.

CHAPTER 4: OUT ON A LIMB - A PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.

Verse taken from "Stopping by woods on snowy evening" (Frost, 2019)

Having unpacked the methodological choices for this study in the previous chapter, this chapter presents the qualitative data relating to teacher identity and teacher emotions, collected from the seven participants. The chapter embarks on a journey through *the woods*, to tell a rich narrative of each participant, constructed and developed from their responses to the four data instruments. The narratives are *lovely, dark and deep*, emphasising the participants' individual life-stories, similarities and differences in relation to their personal and professional teacher identities and the teacher emotions experienced as learning support teachers in the South African context. The narratives are followed by a presentation of the themes arising from thematic analysis of the data. This study aimed to address the following three research questions:

1. What are the narratives of learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities in the field of inclusive education?

2. How do teacher emotions influence the inclusive teaching practice of learning support teachers and thus their teacher identity in the field of inclusive education?

3. To what extent do career phases influence learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities in the field of inclusive education?

Using the research questions as a guiding structure to navigate *through the woods*, the original data was transcribed and coded to highlight common ideas, perceived experiences and patterns in the participants' responses. Thus, the researcher had *miles to go* to construct meaning of the participants' views on teacher identity and teacher emotion. The identification of high frequency codes assisted in the processing of data. The data used to address Research Questions 1 and 2 was analysed inductively whilst the data used to address Research Question 3 was analysed deductively using the conceptual framework of Day and Gu (2007) on professional life phases. The researcher endeavours to 'go out on a limb' *to keep promises* made to the participants: to present their individual realities and a collective voice through authentic narratives of teacher identity and teacher emotion rooted in learning support. The chapter concludes with the researcher's visual interpretation of the data, presented in the Identi-tree model.

4.2 NARRATIVES OF PARTICIPANTS

> *Teachers teach in the way they do, not just because of the skills they have or have not learned. The ways they teach are also rooted in their backgrounds, their biographies, and so in the kinds of teachers they have become. Their careers – their hopes and dreams, their opportunities and aspirations, or the frustrations of these things – are also important for teachers' commitment, enthusiasm and morale. So too are relationships with their colleagues – either as supportive communities who work together in pursuit of common goals and continuous improvement, or as individuals working in isolation, with the insecurities that sometimes brings.*
>
> *(Hargreaves, 1999, p. vii)*

A narrative of each participant is presented below. The narratives include biographical information of the learning support teachers, their respective educational qualifications and their views on teacher identity. Additionally, the researcher probed each learning support teacher's emotions and the perceived influences they have on personal and professional teacher identities. Pseudonyms were assigned to the participants and their schools for ethical purposes, to encourage freedom of expression and to ensure anonymity. All the participants are female.

4.2.1 MRS. ACACIA: THE COMPASSIONATE DIVA

Mrs. Acacia was born in Durban but currently lives and works in Pietermaritzburg. She is married with two children and three grandchildren. She has a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree and 29 years of teaching experience in both private and public schools. According to Mrs. Acacia, she always wanted to become a teacher and described herself as someone who is deeply spiritual though not overly religious, a critical thinker, a compassionate teacher and a loyal friend. Her sense of humour came across when I asked her to define 'teacher identity': *"I think it's the factors that make up who you are. Many of our learners don't believe that their teacher has a life outside of the classroom."*

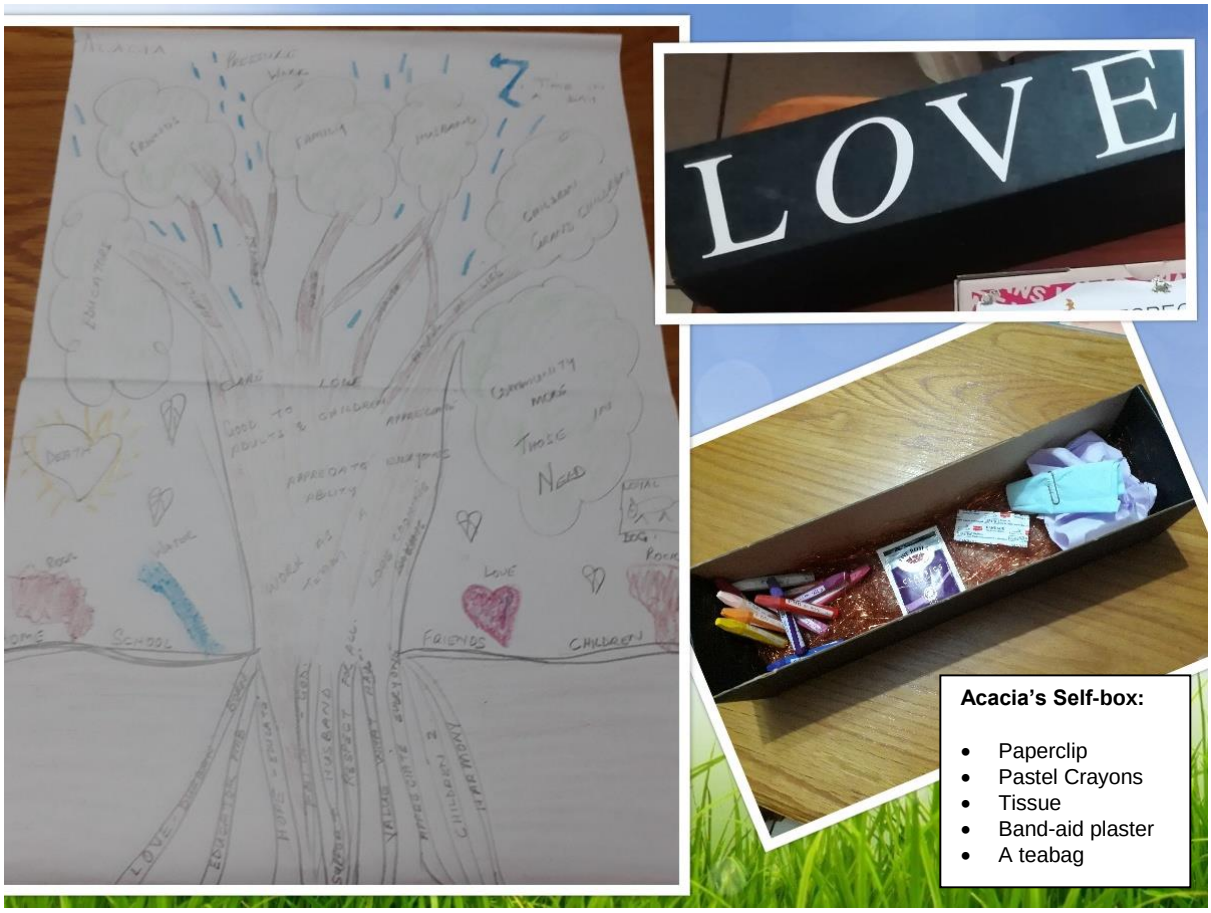

Figure 3: A collage of Mrs. Acacia's visual artefacts

She was recently promoted to departmental head in the foundation phase (Grades R-3) of Yellowwood Primary, an urban full service school where she has served as a teacher for over 15 years. She teaches Grade 3 English and Afrikaans and offers general supervision and direction to nine teachers in her department. She is undecided about whether Yellowwood Primary is satisfactorily adept to cater for learners requiring various levels of support and she expressed mixed feelings about the recent promotion. Regarding her general beliefs about teaching, Mrs. Acacia believes that she has a moral responsibilty. As a learning support teacher, she expressed her feelings and deep concerns about vulnerable learners. In her opinion, many learners attend school to receive a hot meal through the national school nutrition programme (NSNP) and to receive love from their teachers, two basic needs that are not being met at home. One way she has managed to cope with the numerous challenges she faces daily, is to literally slow down and enjoy a cup of tea. To me, this revelation demonstrated her daily attempt at emotional regulation as well as her asserting a professional identity.

4.2.2 MISS ALOE: THE HOPEFUL TRAVELLER

Figure 4: A collage of Miss Aloe's visual artefacts

Miss Aloe is unmarried and resides in Pietermaritzburg. Her parents and a sister played an intergral part in her life. She has a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree and two years of teaching experience at a private school. She currently teaches at an all girls' mainstream public school called Bottlebrush Primary as a remedial teacher who works with learners on a 'withdrawal basis'. In my interview with her, Miss Aloe described herself as "*a warm and friendly person who endeavours to approach life with positivity."* These characteristics are emphasised by some of her choices in the self-box craft i.e. A 'well-done' stamp and a smiley-face toy: "*The 'well-done' stamp shows that I'm an advocate for positive reinforcement.. The smiley-face toy is a source of comfort for children who are having a bad day.* Additionally, her Identi-tree drawing shows a prominent sun, drawn in the likeness of the iconic 'laughing emoji', captioned with *"Laughter makes the storms go away. Haha!"* This was unusual because the majority of participants, when asked to draw the 'storms' that threatened the living tree, naturally drew negative elements such as lightning, rain and clouds instead.

Miss Aloe described 'teacher identity' as *"how a teacher fits into the school environment and identifies their roles and contributions"* and feels that her role as a remedial teacher is generally

well supported by her colleagues at Bottlebrush Primary. The ground depicted in her Identi-tree drawing is relatively smooth, green and grassy. When I probed her about the large rock hidden beneath the ground amongst the roots in her drawing, she explained that she had a rocky start to life: *"I had open-heart surgery when I was six months old, without which I would have died before my third birthday so now I always try to make the most of life."* She explained that though she doesn't actually remember, the knowledge of having had such an experience has shaped her identity. She added that the animals in her picture represent different aspects of herself: *"the cat has nine lives, the chameleon adapts readily to change and the bee is the traveller."* She described herself as a 'traveller' in both a literal and figurative sense in her self-box craft. Additionally, she included quotes and pictures from children's fiction such as Harry Potter and Dr. Seuss explaining that the use of fantasy stories in her lessons, helped her to take learners on an exciting journey, providing escapism and instilling a sense of courage to face the unknown.

Miss Aloe highlighted that because of her youth she felt undermined by some authoritarian leaders who did not value her fresh approach and new ideas. This heightened her fear of failure. The idea of hope came across in both her Identi-tree drawing as well as the self-box craft. In her drawing, she drew lots of rain, which she labeled "Hope" in two different parts: around the crown of her tree as well as close to the ground, seeping into the soil and feeding the roots. In her self-box, Miss Aloe placed a rubber duck which she said alluded to an article on 'The Rubber Duck Philosophy' which she read in her early days as an intern. She explained: *"Be like a rubber duck – always wear a smile. If things drag you down, bounce back to the top. Don't let what's happening on the outside affect how you feel on the inside, face forward with courage and hope."*

4.2.3 MISS BAOBAB: THE SENTIMENTAL SHOPAHOLIC

Miss Baobab lives and works in Pietermaritzburg. She is unmarried and resides with her parents and a younger sister, an occupational therapist. She expressed that she had a special bond with her sister and that this relationship was more meaningful now that they consulted each other's professional knowledge to be more effective in their respective jobs. Miss Baobab has a Bachelor of Education degree and nine years of teaching experience, at Yellowwood Primary. Miss Baobab expressed nostalgia about her difficult journey in her self-box craft by using a picture of a ladder, and in her Identi-tree drawing she reminisced about this long journey by

depicting a slow-to-progress snail on a huge boulder and a centipede who like her *"has to take a hundred steps before moving forward!"*

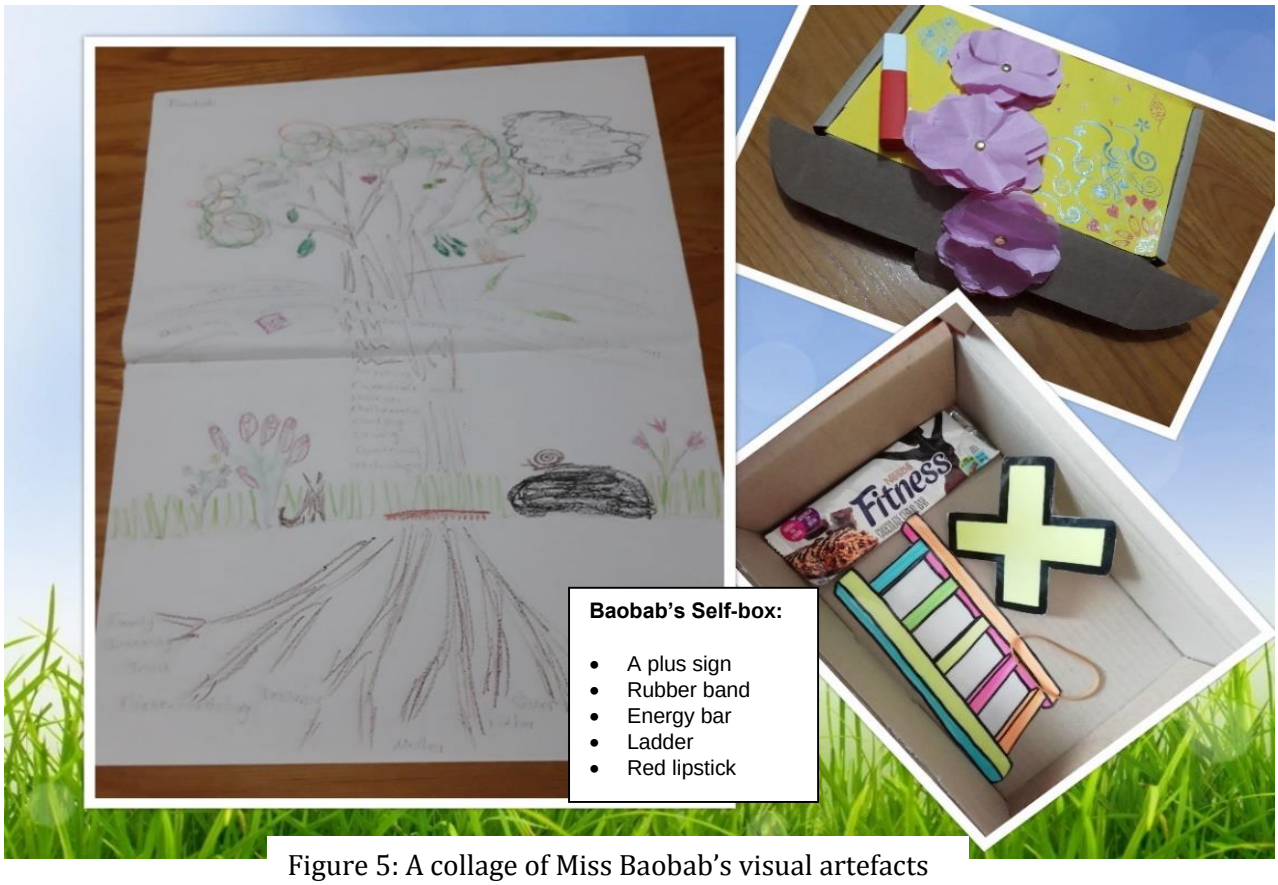

Figure 5: A collage of Miss Baobab's visual artefacts

For Miss Baobab, teacher identity represented *"a teacher's individuality: the teaching style, teaching methods, areas of weaknesses and strengths that a teacher has."* She described herself as a fun-loving, open-minded and optimistic individual. Miss Baobab illustrated this aspect of her identity in her self-box by using the symbol of a plus sign. In her Identi-tree drawing she listed among others, *"concentrate on the positives"* and *"mathematics"* in her trunk of skills. She also admitted to having specific areas of weakness: *"I'm a certified shopaholic, I don't trust people easily, I'm still trying to 'up my game' in learning support and, I battle with time management."* Regarding time, she confessed: *"I once had the general belief that a teacher's work ends at 14h30! I now know that our job is multifaceted and requires extensive planning…and shopping!"*

Miss Baobab described her experience of learners being victimised and insulted by educators as *"heart-breaking and upsetting".* She expressed her disappointment at fellow educators but said she was reluctant to confront them. *"I am fearful sometimes of allowing myself to become too emotionally invested in a learner. At times even well-meaning teachers are criticised for*

creating personal relationships and defending a learner can be misunderstood as inappropriate or unprofessional." Instead of confronting the teacher, she said: *"I would remind my learners of how important they are, empower them and build their self confidence in the hope that they themselves would stand up to such bullying and report the educator! A child's voice is a hundred times louder than my own."*

4.2.4 MRS. FYNBOS: THE TRANQUIL FREE SPIRIT

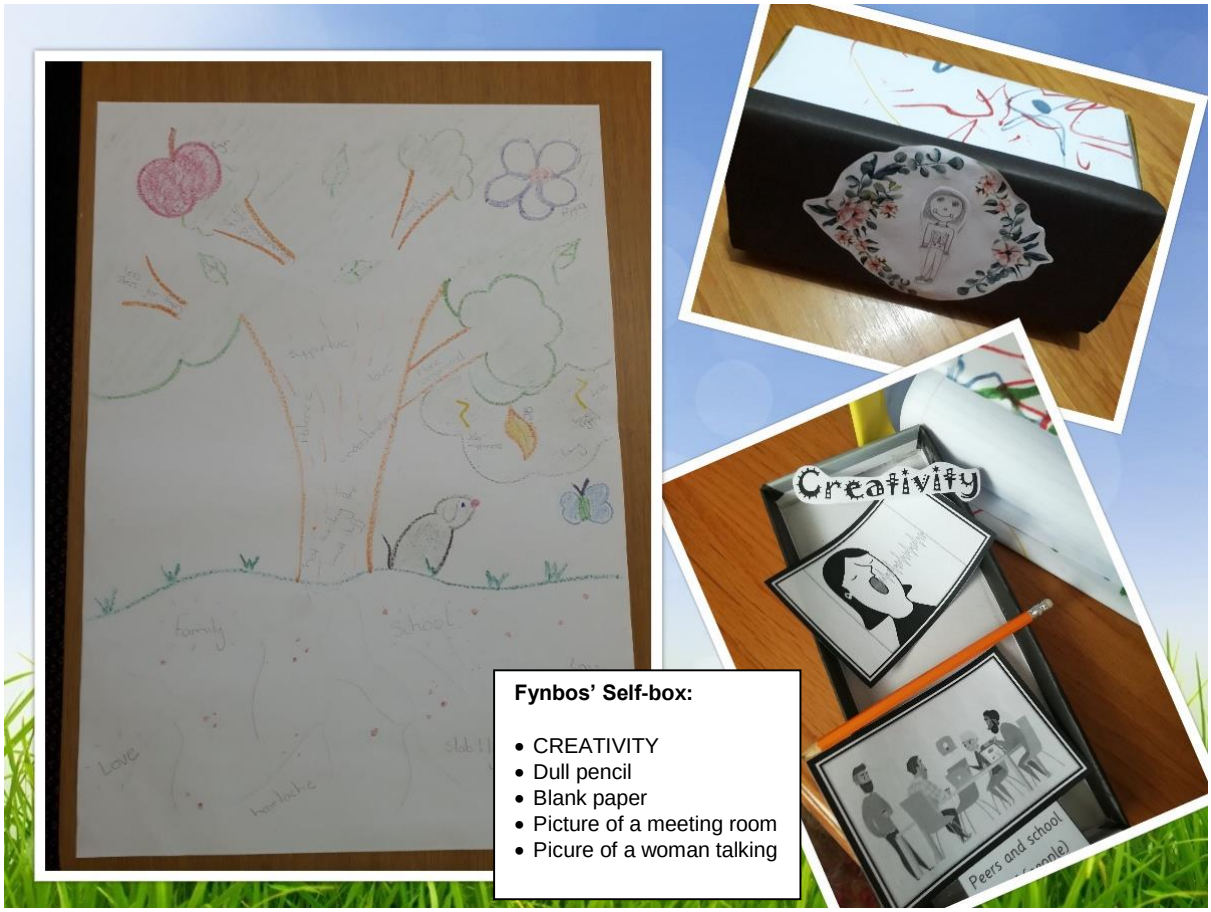

Figure 6: A collage of Mrs. Fynbos' visual artefacts

Mrs. Fynbos lives and works in Pietermaritzburg. She is married and has a one year old daughter. She has a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree and five years of teaching experience at a public school. She serves Elm Senior Primary School as a learning support teacher in a multi-level classroom catering for learners with special education needs (LSEN). Mrs. Fynbos also spent three years employed as a teaching intern at both a private and a public school while she was completing her post-graduate degree, specialising in inclusive education.

She believed that it was the concrete learning experience in the classroom as an intern that steered her towards learning support: *"There are many learners that have barriers to learning and you realise you have to be a 'free spirit' and change or adapt to the learners you have at that time, and this can change from year to year."* Mrs. Fynbos described her multi-level classroom as a challenging but inclusive environment. According to her, she has to *"tailor the curriculum"* by using small groups and customising an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each of the numerous learners in her class, aged between 10 and 14. Whilst this is an ideal approach in her opinion, for teaching learners on various grade levels in different learning areas, the number of learners in her class (24) and the lack of assistance makes it exceedingly difficult to keep up with administration..

Mrs. Fynbos attributes much of her teacher identity to her newfound role of being a mother. She echoed these sentiments in her Identi-tree drawing by including her baby as a very large flower in the crown of her tree. She further explained that although she is motivated to be a learning support teacher and loves her job, *"home life (having a one year old) gets in the way"* of being able to fully invest the emotional energy that she believes her learners need. Mrs. Fynbos claimed that, as a teacher she had a superpower: *"being extra calm",* which she uses as a personal coping mechanism as well as to model appropriate behaviour for the learners. Whilst in her Identi-tree drawing she described one of her core skills in her treetrunk as *"not sweating the small stuff"*, she also drew a butterfly to represent her 'free spirit' and tranquil nature: *"No matter the elements that threaten the life of a caterpillar, it will gradually encase itself in a pupa, quietly going about its business without disrupting anything around it and change dramatically, emerging as an unassuming butterfly: free to explore the world, having reached its potential."* Likewise, this calm nature was illustrated profoundly in her self-box task where she included a blank sheet of paper: *"Each day is a blank slate to try again, even in areas where I have failed multiple times. Keep calm and press on.* She explained that she actively regulates her emotions in order to maintain this tranquility through small acts of decompression.

4.2.5 MRS. OAK: THE MODEST 'PEOPLE'S PERSON'

Mrs. Oak was born in the Southern Midlands region of KwaZulu- Natal, approximately 100 km outisde of Pietermaritzburg. She grew up on a farm in a rural area and was sent to a private all girls' boarding school in Pietermaritzburg where she found some difficulty learning. The

rustic charm of farm life certainly made an impression on her and she illustrated this in both her self-box and in the roots of her Identi-tree drawing. She is married and resides on a farm 40km from Pietermaritzburg and enjoys the long drives to and from work. Mrs. Oak was expecting her first child when the data collection of this study began and later gave birth to a baby girl therefore the responses for her interview were recorded telephonically while she was on maternity leave. I was able to seek clarity on some of her ideas via email.

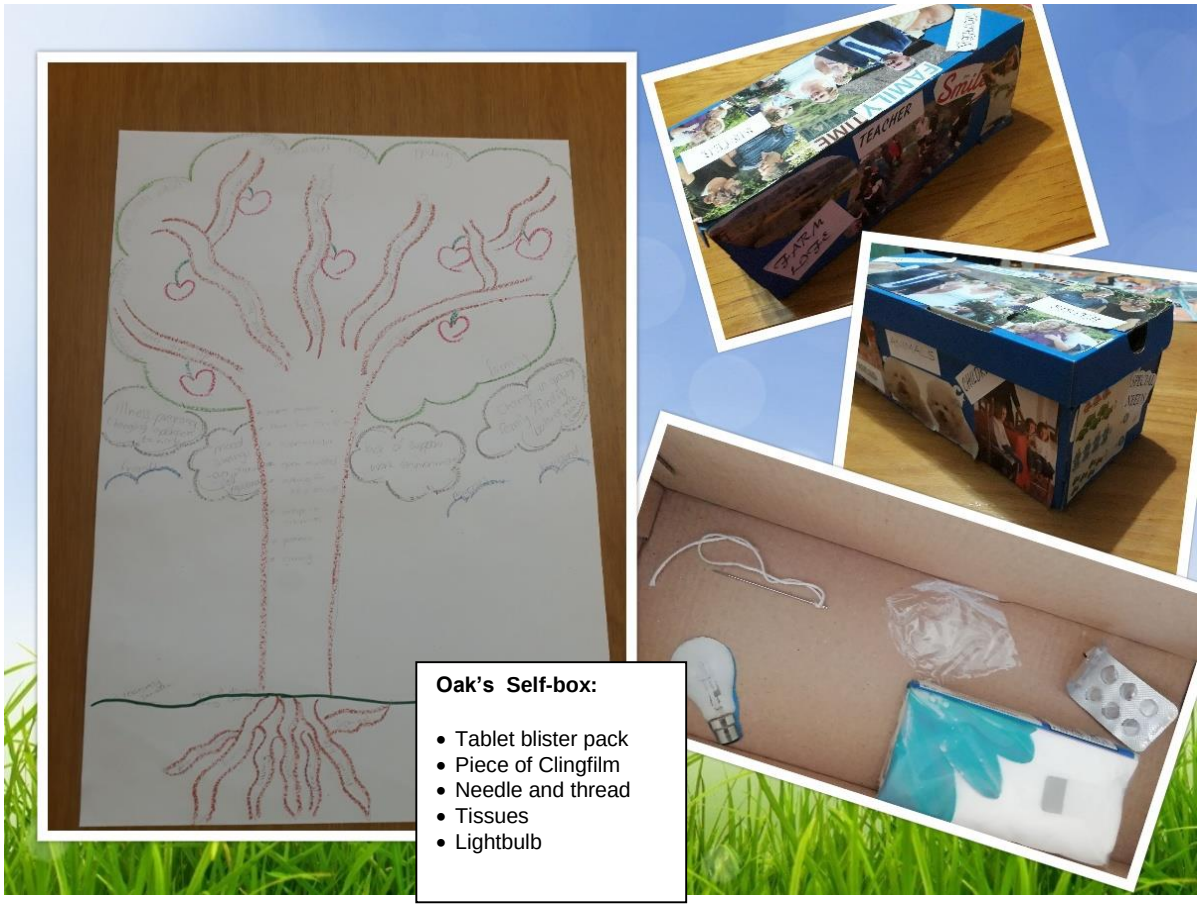

Figure 7: A collage of Mrs Oak's visual artefacts

She has a Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree and two years of teaching experience in a special school. She expressed ambivalence about currently serving Fever Tree Special School as a teacher in the 'Learners with Severe to Profound Intellectual Disability (LSPID)' unit which has eight learners, three of whom have their own personal assistants provided by their respective parents to help attend to feeding, diapering and mobility needs. Mrs. Oak described her personal experience of learning difficulties in the classroom as a central influencing factor in the development of her teacher identity. She also described her need to interact with people as significant: *"When you grow up in a small town, you become conditioned to share with*

neighbours and to interact meaningfully with shop owners and labourers." These thoughts were reverberated in Mrs. Oak's Identi-tree drawing where she listed firstly *"people's person"* and secondly *"love for children"* as her most important strengths in the trunk of her tree; as well as in her self-box: *"It's important to me for people to be happy. I am sad when there is a feeling of disconnection."* In her Identi-tree drawing, Mrs. Oak illustrated a storm cloud that she felt affected her emotional wellbeing, labeling the dark grey cloud as *"mood swings, overstimulation and (problems with) emotional regulation",* alluding to her ongoing struggle with petit mal epilepsy, the treatment thereof and the side effects of her medication; yet she remains modest about her achievements as a learning support teacher in a challenging environment.

4.2.6 MRS. PINE: THE DOTING 'WISE OWL'

Figure 8: A collage of Mrs. Pine's visual artefacts

Mrs. Pine lives and works in Pietermaritzburg. During the apartheid era in South Africa she married her husband of over 40 years, who is also a teacher, to secure a permanent post in Pietermaritzburg under the then-called 'House of Delegates'. They have two children and five

grandchildren together. Mrs. Pine related several stories about her family and highlighted how she thoroughly enjoys being a grandmother. She noted that her own grandparents were very influential in the formation of her value system and illustrated this in her Identi-tree drawing where she labeled some of the roots *"family values", "religion", "grandparents"* and *"family".* She has a Teaching Diploma and more than 31 years of teaching experience in the public and private sector. At the time of data collection, Mrs. Pine was serving her last few months before retirement as Deputy Principal at Yellowwood Primary. Whilst in her interview with me she said: *"At retirement, I feel it's time for me to serve my own family now and also take better care of myself"* , she also expressed her concerns about the imminent departure from the profession in her Identi-tree drawing: rain, lightning and storm clouds depict her *"fear of loneliness, old age, illness and unsolved problems"*. Mrs. Pine acknowledged the wisdom she gained during the span of her illustrious professional life. In narrating her self box, she stated: *"Be as wise as an owl. - My family, friends, colleagues and management members have helped to 'make' me who I am. I'm wise enough to know that it has shaped the way I relate to others. I know that if I 'go out on a limb' for my learners to achieve, they too will grow up knowing that someone loved them enough to be emotionally invested in them."* Correspondingly, in her Identi-tree drawing she profoundly illustrated herself as an owl perched on a limb of the tree, gazing upon a stormcloud labeled *"unsolved problems"* and bearing the word *"wisdom"* in place of a bird's beak. Finally, she cemented this analogy in her interview when she explained what she had learnt about being a learning support teacher: *"Children are not just vessels to be filled but real life challenges who need love firstly before u can make a difference. You have to keep them under your wing until they have gained confidence to fly."*

Mrs. Pine described her understanding of teacher identity as follows: *"I believe that teacher identity is fluid because aspects of identity like knowledge, perspective and emotions are constantly changing over time in different contexts. A teacher should be kind, loving, organised and dedicated to give knowledge to those she teaches. As a teacher I am merely an instrument to be used at the child's disposal in order to decode the world. It's my mission to see a learner grow and flourish."* In the trunk of her Identi-tree, Mrs. Pine reflected similar thoughts by listing some of her personal strengths as being *"organised, responsible, caring and loving"*and reiterated this in her description of herself as a*"methodical and generally meticulous"*person.

4.2.7 MRS. ROOIBOS: THE OPTIMISTIC DRAGON-SLAYER

Figure 9: A collage of Mrs Rooibos' visual artefacts

Mrs. Rooibos was born in Stanger in KwaZulu-Natal. She has lived and worked in Simonstown, in the Western Cape Province for most of her career owing to her husband's work with the South African Navy. They have two children together. Mrs. Rooibos and her family recently relocated back to Pietermaritzburg following her husband's retirement from the Navy and admits that although she has her roots in KwaZulu-Natal, it was a "*culture shock*" to be shipped off to Yellowwood Primary after spending many years in Simonstown. Whilst her Identi-tree drawing shows the ground as dark, rocky and broken on one side, the grass is evidently greener on the other side alluding to a positive and hopeful outlook about the move. She also included the words 'love', 'prayer' and 'perseverance' amongst the roots of her tree drawing, indicating what she will draw on to help her cope.

Mrs. Rooibos has a post-graduate certificate in education and a total of 17 years of teaching experience in public schools. She describes herself as *"a compassionate, considerate and empathetic teacher who is open-minded about new ideas and optimistic about learner*

achievement". According to Mrs. Rooibos, she became a teacher because of an aspect of social justice: *"My own conviction to be righteous is a reflection of my religious belief that 'work is love in action'. I get the opportunity to serve the community not just by being a teacher, but also to give towards those most needy in society. In my religion we call this Seva, for which one does not seek fame and fortune."* Mrs. Rooibos made several references to values-based instruction and holistic learning in the roots, trunk and branches of her Identi-tree. She explained that although she has taught only in public schools, *"my approach to teaching is largely influenced by the Steiner-Waldorf model of values-based education because my children attended a Waldorf private school in Simonstown."*

Mrs. Rooibos expressed feelings of ambivalence, excitement and anxiety about teaching on her first day and added that her first year of teaching also revealed her best and worst moments in the profession. Though the latter incident has since made Mrs. Rooibos more cautious and deliberately more diplomatic in her interaction with parents and colleagues, it has not guarded her against common social ills. She described her feelings of *"fury and exasperation"* as a result of bringing personal effects such as books and teaching aids into the classroom for the benefit of the learners only to have them destroyed or defaced. Mrs. Rooibos reinforced this perception in her drawing by showing threats to her Identi-tree as inclement weather labelled with the words "Frustration – Classroom discipline". Additionally, her self-box was entirely covered in cartoon images of cross-eyed women with angry faces, pulling their hair out; and words in large font: *"DISRESPECT (lack of discipline, no parental involvement, untidy books)"* and *"FRUSTRATION (lack of resources, no teamwork, insufficient support for struggling learners)".* In her interview, Mrs. Rooibos attributed her teacher emotions of *"frustration and exhaustion"* to constant disruptions of lessons due to ill behaviour, a heavy workload, lack of support and resources, increased administrative duties and reduced collegiality: *"I think every teacher and manager needs sound human relation skills as part of ongoing professional teacher development to deal with conflict and effectively put out workplace fires."* Mrs. Rooibos admits that she believes in 'fighting fire with fire' as a coping mechanism to promote self regulation: *"I included a fire-breathing dragon to metaphorically represent strength, power, wisdom, luck and magic which are the characteristics I inherently need to push forward in the line of fire. The dragon also symbolises the challenges I face personally and professionally and the need for me to slay the dragon in order to move forward."*

4.3 AN INTRODUCTION TO EMERGING THEMES ADDRESSING QUESTION ONE

What do the narratives of learning support teachers reveal about their personal and professional teacher identities?

I collected data from seven participants using four data instruments. While the semi-structured interviews and the participants' responses to two vignettes were transcribed, the descriptions of the participants in relation to their *Identi-tree* drawings and self-boxes were recorded as an expressive metaphoric representation of themselves. I identified common trends in the data, and then sorted these into professional, situated and personal dimensions of teaching according to Day and Kington's (2008) framework that explains how teacher identity manifests in different relationships with the self. The narratives of the participants revealed the following three themes that address the first research question: the personal and professional identities of learning support teachers are interconnected, learning support teachers' identities are shaped by critical influences and learning support teachers have a personal drive that motivates them. The results of this study showed that most of the data was congruent with Day and Kington's framework which describes the professional, situational and personal dimensions of teacher identity. Additionally, the data exposed a hidden dimension to the identities of learning support teachers.

4.3.1 INTERCONNECTED PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES

"I feel that my personal life creates my professional life. One cannot exist without the other."

– Mrs. Oak

Whilst Miss Baobab understood teacher identity as *"a teacher's individuality"* (a personal dimension), she also made mention of professional experiences during a teacher's career (a professional dimension) and *"the situation that a teacher has been placed in"* relating to factors that influenced her own choices in the classroom (a situated dimension). She further described *"areas of weaknesses and strengths that a teacher has both personally and professionally"* as a reflection of her teacher identity thus echoing the opinion of González-Calvo and Arias-Carballal (2017, p.1703) that the 'personal-emotional identity', educational experiences and personal circumstances of teachers are "**intimately linked** to the performance of their professional identity" and influence their pedagogical approaches. When participants were tasked with drawing the branches for their respective Identi-trees, they were asked to illustrate their hopes, dreams and aspirations. Markedly, they expressed both personal and professional aspirations which were visually interconnected in the branches of their trees. While Mrs. Pine noted "travel", "charity" and "assisting children to improve reading" and Mrs.

Rooibos noted "career", "health" and "more fun through teaching Waldorf", Mrs. Baobab drew icons of a heart and money in her branches. Hargreaves (1999) asserts that teachers' hopes and dreams influence their level of commitment and their self-esteem.

Mrs. Acacia stated: *"my role at home and my role as a teacher may be different but* ***invariably held together*** *by my sense of self."* This argument coheres with Gilchrist et al. (2010) who contend that identity is negotiated between a person's sense of self and his social system and Palmer (2007) who credits worthwhile teaching to those who teach from 'undivided selves'. Wong's (2016) theory of narrative identity also outlines a sense of self together with the sense of coherence and sense of continuity in describing phenomena that arise from a person's complex identity. Mrs. Rooibos reported that she had an acute sense of continuity: *"it takes a while to unpack the classroom experiences and change roles. Some things continue to run in my mind long after the work day is over. I guess* ***I have to learn how to separate work and home life but they have such a huge influence on each other it's hard to do so****."* Gilchrist et al. (2010) highlighted the nature of identity as having the potential to be fluid, situated, and multidimensional relating to the conscious negotiation of roles. Likewise, Fowler (2006, p. 17) suggested that learning support teachers face an identity crisis relating to their personal and professional roles because they find themselves "straddling fault lines at the borders of self and system". Mrs. Oak explained the choices for her self-box: *"****I feel that my personal life creates my professional life: one cannot exist without the other****. As a teacher I carry the same characteristics as I do as a person."* According to Baxen's (2010) view, a strong subject position such as Mrs. Oak's would be the impetus for her understanding of teacher identity. The photos used to decorate the outside of her self-box spoke to different roles: words indicating mother, sister, family time, friend, children, animals, teacher, loving, farm life, smile and special needs. This resonates with Bankole's (2013, p.19) description of a person's 'navigation' of identities "considering the roles they are expected to play" when faced with variable situations. In Mrs. Acacia's experience of teaching young learners, some grappled with the notion of their teachers having multiple roles outside the classroom: *"they cringe when they see us in the shopping mall or they think it's funny to find us at the pool. Hey, we have lives too.* ***We're not just teachers! We're wives, mums, grandmothers and community helpers too."***

Miss Aloe acknowledged the mediating influence of a personal dimension in her identity on the professional and situated dimensions of her teacher identity: *"As a teacher, I am flexible,*

adaptable, dependable and have a strong work ethic. ***All of these things however have been influenced by my personal experiences and I am no different in my personal life than I am in my professional role as a teacher****"*. Mrs. Fynbos who is a young mother, admitted: *"****I tend to use 'my teacher voice' at home as often as I use my 'mom voice' at school,****"* and Mrs. Oak felt that although her work as a learning support teacher was rewarding, she found it stressful and once needed to retreat from her professional role: *"lifting and carrying of learners made me physically burnt out. I recently had a baby and had to go on early maternity leave due to the physical demands of the job. I felt as if* ***my professional role was imposing on my personal role*** *and that was extremely stressful."* Day and Kington (2008) highlight a strong interaction between the influences of professional, situated and personal identities experienced by teachers within different 'identity scenarios'.

Day and Kington (2008), contend that teachers who display emotional regulation, experience less complex identity scenarios where the three dimensions of teachers' identities are *in balance*. While Mrs. Oak reported experiencing extreme fluctuations in her 'identity scenario', the common desire to be *in balance* was observable in the data of all participants. Mrs. Oak's Identi-tree revealed the following stormy challenges: **"finding a balance (wife/mom/teacher)", "self-regulation" and "overstimulation"** which echoed the extreme fluctuations in her identity scenario**.** Likewise, Mrs. Rooibos labelled a dark grey cloud threatening her Identi-tree: "**balance – home and school, KZN"** referring to the challenges she has experienced in dealing with resettlement. Both Mrs. Fynbos and Miss Baobab recognised the idea of "**stability**": Whilst Mrs. Fynbos acknowledged stability in the roots of her tree, Miss Baobab was hopeful to achieve stability which she drew in the branches of her Identi-tree. Miss Aloe said, *"Teacher identity to me is how a teacher fits into the school environment, and identifies her roles and contributions as a professional and within the community.* ***It's a balancing act.****"* Additionally, the branches of her Identi-tree bear a drawing of a cell phone in a net, with a warning: "Digital world- don't get caught in the trap!" as well as "Slow down, appreciate nature," gently reminding herself to find the balance in a technologically driven age. Significantly, none of the participants drew an even, stable ground to metaphorically represent their present lives and emotions.

While Pillen et al. (2013) postulated that the creation of a teacher's identity is a process, one which occurs consistently throughout a career, Gee (2001) recognised the multi-faceted nature of a 'core identity' that transforms over time. In agreement with these views, Mrs. Fynbos

succinctly described teacher identity as *"**it's more than just my personality, it's my constituent parts, like the sum of my experiences, emotions and values in my personal life and in my work environment as a teacher**."* The results here thus collectively show that learning support teachers demonstrated a sense of self, an awareness of the three dimensions of identity and an understanding that their personal and professional teacher identities are interrelated. Learning support teachers use a 'growth mindset' when adopting inclusive pedagogy. At the 'root' of the classroom lies an instructor's teaching philosophy which provides the basis for how one views one's students and the classroom management style one implements.

Learning support teachers understand and are responsive to the dynamic and transformative nature of their role as agents of change. By embracing change, they commit to managing a fruitful inclusive classroom utilising physical, social and emotional resources. Congruent with these findings, the literature shows that the intersection of socio-emotional subjectivities in the inclusive classroom and the teacher's mindset play an integral part of identity formation and conservation (Baxen, 2010; Bettini et al., 2017b; Dreyer, 2008; Florian & Linklater, 2010), and influence a teacher's practice (Naidoo & Rule, 2016).

4.3.2 THE IDENTITIES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS ARE SHAPED BY CRITICAL INFLUENCES

Day and Kington (2008, p. 20) suggest that there are three mediating influences that are responsible for the transformative process of teacher identity: "resilience and school socio-economic contexts, in-school and personal support, and professional life phase" which resonates with the idea of "structures" that substantially interplay with the three dimensions of teacher identity (Day & Gu, 2007). Participants reported 'wow moments', personal experiences, significant relationships and professional life phases as critical influences within their own 'teacher identity scenarios'.

4.3.2.1 'Wow moments'

Mrs. Acacia said,

> *I have taken a front row seat to watch **life-changing moments** in the education of a child. These **critical moments** are becoming more frequent now that we have more clarity in terms of early identification and intervention. My first day in the classroom, in retrospect, was an absolute joy because I like to remember the last moment of that day when the children hugged me to say goodbye, excitedly pushing handwritten notes, drawings and sweets into my hands. It was an act of love I will never forget and it made me believe that what I was drawn to do, felt right in my bones. It was also the **best experience in my career**.*

According to Hargreaves' (2001) emotional geographies, Mrs. Acacia experienced not only physical closeness with her learners but also moral closeness as a result of their unexpected positive feedback and. Mrs. Acacia claims that, as a result of this vivid and profound memory of her first day, she is continually renewed as it gives her the emotional strength she needs to cope with conflict in the workplace. Mrs. Acacia's emotional experience contrasts with that of Mrs. Pine who also recalled her first day as a teacher, with contempt: *"My first memory as a teacher was a* ***wow moment*** *when I was in front of 45 first graders who depended on me to educate them and to be a mother to them - all my training went out the window and reality set in."* Botha and Rens (2018) refer to this critical gap between theory and practice, experienced by novice teachers in South Africa, as 'reality shock'. Though Mrs. Pine's experience was a 'textbook example', she and other participants in this study expressed continued 'reality shock' at various stages of their careers when grappling with the critical dissonance between the educational ideals of WP6 and their perceived realities in the learning support environment.

Both Miss Aloe and Miss Baobab described the best moment of their careers as memories that unearthed feelings of love, care and self-worth hence validating their 'sense of self'. Miss Baobab said: *"A learner who was ridiculed and mocked by peers admitted that because of the motivational words from me that he put his head down and worked hard to achieve.* ***That moment pulled on my heart strings****!"* and Miss Aloe recalled an epiphany: *"I was working with an autistic Grade 2 learner who, at the end of a very challenging year together, gave me a hug with my Christmas present. This learner suffered from sensory defensiveness and had poor social skills.* ***This expression of affection was so unexpected*** *but made all the work we had done together so worthwhile. It was one of the* ***most rewarding moments*** *I've ever experienced as a teacher!"* Miss Aloe's sudden and unexpected and memorable experience was a moment of insight and revelation classified by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 135) as 'epiphanies' which are characteristic to narrative inquiry. Conflictingly, Mrs. Rooibos recounted an epiphanic moment that elicits feelings of anger and resentment, one she would like to forget*: "I was called a racist by a parent who was trying to defend his child's misdemeanour. South Africa is still infected with racial unrest even though it may be well-hidden.* ***All I could think of was Wow!*** *As a teacher I try to define the individuals in my class by their social and academic strengths and weaknesses and not by their colour, ethnicity or disability which has no influence on my relationship with each of them."* Leitch (2008, p.146) described the self-box as a valuable instrument to help teachers describe their teacher identity and also claimed that "the creative process of self-box making captures an **epiphanic**

moment." Pillay and Pithouse-Morgan (2016) attribute this capturing of a teacher's memory to the value of aesthetic memory-work in educational research. Like the findings of Pillay et al. (2017) on object inquiry, Mrs. Rooibos included an object in her self-box that represented this memory and had this to say about it: *"The picture of the rainbow shows inclusivity of diverse learners and their cultures in the classroom which is a representation of South Africa's identity as a rainbow nation."* The rainbow is thus symbolic of Mrs. Rooibos' wow moment that negatively reinforced her strong advocacy for inclusive education which shapes her teacher identity. The results here show that wow moments which may be positive or negative, are infused with teacher emotions and critically influence the identity of learning support teachers, thus echoing the findings of Wilmot and Wood (2012) who claim that experiential learning is a large determinant in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

4.3.2.2 Personal experiences

Learning support teachers have personal experiences that critically impact on the three dimensions of their teacher identities. The results show that what learning support teachers personally experienced within the **professional dimension** of teacher identity reflected what they inherently held as educational ideals (guiding principles for their choices in the classroom) and their own understanding of 'a good learning support teacher'. Though Mrs. Acacia said that she always wanted to become a teacher, Miss Aloe disclosed that she worked in the hospitality industry before venturing into education and added: *"It was not my initial intention to be a learning support teacher. I took the opportunity and found a new passion."* They both however have strikingly similar viewpoints about what 'a good learning support teacher' should be. Mrs. Acacia said: *"someone who is **confident** in their ability to **effectively provide support** in the classroom which may be emotional, physical, psycho-social and/or knowledge-based learning support, built over time through **continuous personal and professional development"*** and Mrs. Aloe said: *"A good learning support teacher should be **confident**, compassionate and organised, but also have the vision to see the bigger picture of the learner's overall educational needs and contribute to a learner's **support team".*** Participants also conveyed various positive affirmations pertaining to their teaching skills when prompted to draw the trunks of their Identi-trees.

Miss Baobab and Mrs. Oak reported personal experiences at school, located in the **situated dimension** of teacher identity, which fashioned the way they interact with learners. Mrs. Oak noted that the local conditions of her school gave rise to learner vulnerability in terms of food security, HIV/Aids and abject poverty. She chose a tissue as one of the items in her self-box,

to describe her personal experience: *"We all have a breaking point, but when we gather together and lean on each other, we can stand firmer and more resilient."* Mrs. Oak added that working as a learning support teacher shaped her into *"a much stronger person"* and affected the way she views the learners. According to Mrs. Oak, her personal experiences in the classroom have shaped her views on learning support: *"One has to be kind, caring, compassionate, understanding, PATIENT, willing to learn and be flexible.* ***Not just anybody can be a learning support teacher!****"* Several participants mentioned situational threats to their Identi-tree, illustrated by storm clouds and relating to contextual factors such as learner discipline, leadership and support. Both Miss Baobab and Mrs. Rooibos described "classroom discipline" and "insufficient resources", Mrs. Pine listed "challenges" and "unsolved problems", Miss Aloe stated "authoritarian leaders" and Mrs. Acacia identified "work pressure" and "time in a day" as components of a situational structure that critically influence their teacher identities.

Day and Kington (2008) view the **personal dimension** of teacher identity as factors outside the school that influence the choices that teachers make in the classroom. The personal life experiences of learning support teachers and their various roles within the family and community outside the school influenced the choices they made in the classroom, seeing that the results suggest an interrelation between personal and professional teacher identities. Miss Aloe, who had a life-saving surgery during infancy, recognised "growing up on a farm" as part of a strong foundation of roots in her Identi-tree and identified "teaching about the environment" as a strength in the trunk of her Identi-tree, suggesting that her personal background shapes the way she teaches. Mrs. Baobab, who mentions 'driving' and 'mathematics' as skills, in the trunk of her Identi-tree, described her personal love for cars and speed as an inspiration to pursue mathematics. Mrs. Fynbos and Mrs. Oak both expressed that personal experiences in their own education influenced their teacher identity. Mrs. Fynbos recalled*, "My motivation to be a teacher came from both my brother and stepbrother who both found learning difficult."* and Mrs. Oak revealed that her decision to become a teacher and her advocacy for learning support was based on a deeply personal experience, which she captured in her self-box with the inclusion of a used 'tablet blister pack':

> *I was diagnosed with petit mal epilepsy at a young age.* ***My personal experience influences my outlook on special needs education****. There are so many learners out there who need a teacher like me who identifies with their challenges and has the*

conviction to help them, knowing that love, patience and careful attention will unlock potential even if they may not be able to do certain things YET.

4.3.2.3 Significant interpersonal relationships

The results of this study show that learning support teachers acknowledged the critical influence of significant relationships on their teacher identities. Mindful of the seminal work by MacLure (1993) who described identity formation as a result of "discursive practices and interactions" and, Rodgers and Scott (2008, p. 733) who added that "identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emotions"; I noted that Mrs. Fynbos recognised the significance of relationships she had formed in the workplace. She said, *"Often it's just a quick chat with a trusted colleague or friend that helps me to reset and focus*", and included a picture of people in a meeting room captioned 'Peers and school itself' in her self-box and explained: *"They help me to fulfil my role as a teacher. Healthy relationships, team teaching, professional development and mentoring are part of an inclusive learning environment."* She also included a second picture in her self-box of a talking woman and described what I believe resonates with Gee's idea of a *discourse identity* (Gee, 2001):

> *We need to give instructions, verbalise play, give directive prompts, offer praise, deliver lessons, remind learners about rules, mediate conflict and find our own voice in the world all in the search for meaningful relationships.*

Several interpersonal relationships were identified and located within the participants' professional, situated and/or personal dimensions of teacher identity. Most frequently, family members and religious groups were illustrated in the root system of the participants' respective Identi-tree as foundational influencers of a 'core identity'. The lush green leaves and healthy fruit (symbolic of important people in one's life) that adorned the crowns of the Identi-trees were commonly identified as colleagues, friends, family members and spouses while fallen leaves depicted loved ones who had passed away. Mrs. Pine recognised a departed pet and Mrs. Oak declared past relationships as significant. When prompted to represent important people as metaphorical animals who may appear in a storm, Mrs. Acacia, Mrs. Fynbos, Mrs. Pine and Mrs. Rooibos drew **loyal dogs**; Miss Baobab, Mrs. Rooibos and Mrs. Pine depicted **wise owls**; Miss Aloe and Mrs. Pine drew **comforting cats** and Mrs. Oak drew **altruistic birds** that collectively indicates the multiplicity of the significant relationships in their lives**.** Conspicuously, none of the participants acknowledged having significant relationships with their learners even though each of their narratives were dominated by 'wow moments' and personal experiences involving their learners. The glaring omission of learners in the Identi-

trees of learning support teachers may be a demonstration of emotional intelligence and professional distance. Lestari and Sawitri (2017, p.3480) contend that emotionally intelligent teachers have the "the ability to recognize, manage and cleverly use emotions" to achieve classic interpersonal relationships. In his discussion on emotional geographies in teaching, Hargreaves (2001, p.1069) cites "classical professionalism" as an educational ideal to which teachers aspire, in maintaining a *professional distance* from learners and their parents. Mrs. Baobab confirmed that she maintained a professional distance from her learners and resonates with Naidoo and Rule (2016, p. 239) who posit that teaching practice is largely influenced by the emotional stance of teachers even when it involves "distancing or denial of emotion".

Mrs. Rooibos and Miss Aloe credited their mentors for having a substantial positive impression on the **professional dimension** of their teacher identities. Mrs. Rooibos maintained that her self-box was inspired by her mentors and family. Miss Aloe said, *"During my time as an intern and as a learning support teacher, I had two mentor teachers and an incredibly helpful HOD who guided and supported me,"* but identified having a negative relationship with *"authoritarian leaders who do not see value in my ideas, undermining my input because of my youth."* Similarly, Mrs. Acacia reported a negative relationship that considerably influences the professional dimension of her teacher identity:

> *[w]hen communication lines break down because of personality clashes and individuals who are meant to be in leadership positions make decisions to fuel their own agendas it causes unnecessary embarrassment and negativity. There were days that I didn't feel like coming to school because of these abusive acts of power.*

Day and Gu (2007) argue that teachers desire encouragement and organisational support to satisfy the professional dimension of identity without which, they fail to achieve their professional mandate. Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) contend that teachers who seek to distance themselves from mentors do so to reframe their own teacher identity, and hence echoes Hargreaves' theory of emotional geographies relating to *political distance*, where teachers experience power plays at work.

According to Day and Kington (2008), the **situated dimension** of teacher identity is inclined to respond to relationships with the self and others in the context of the school. Mrs. Pine reported having significant relationships at work. Ritchie and Wilson (2000, p. 85) agree with this view, claiming that mutually beneficial professional relationships are those that validate

each other's efforts, are warm and loving, strengthens a sense of belonging and sets the tone for a "social atmosphere of trust and risk-taking, giving and receiving". Mrs. Pine said:

> ***My family, friends, colleagues and management members have helped me 'make' who I am.*** *I would not have become who I am without them. They have even burnt the midnight oil with me.* ***I feel that it has shaped the way I relate to others.***

Echoing Gee's (2001) view on an *affinity-identity*, Miss Aloe mentioned that she felt a sense of belonging at work because she was a valuable part of a team. She expressed this view by narrating her choice of a 'glue gun' in her self-box:

> *This is not only a practical piece of equipment for teaching, but it also represents my philosophy of learning support being a team effort - it's not just about the teacher but includes a team working together: educational specialists, and the parents - it's important that we all stick together and contribute positively in order to encourage the learner's full potential.* ***Team work makes the dream work!***

Similarly, Mrs. Oak recognised the value of paraprofessionals in teamwork despite her school being understaffed:

> *We are a school of 220 learners with 1 occupational therapist who tries to see children in groups and does class therapy. We are in desperate need to fill the vacant posts of a speech therapist and a physiotherapist which would make the job easier. I am lucky enough to work in a wonderful environment where we* ***fully support each other.***

Mrs. Rooibos, Miss Aloe and Mrs. Fynbos acknowledged relationships with their friends and family members as strong contributors to the **personal dimension** of their teacher identity. Mrs. Rooibos expressed that her family had been *"truly supportive and understanding"* through her journey of becoming a teacher: *"My family has endured my stress and frustration as a result of me not connecting with school management."* Miss Aloe revealed: *"I enjoy an active social life, but I also enjoy the peace and solitude afforded to me by living alone. I come from a loving, stable family."* Mrs. Oak, who highlighted "change in a growing family- the need for finding balance between wife, mom and teacher roles" in her Identi-tree, reverberated Mrs. Fynbos who emphasised a significant relationship that effected a change in family and social roles. Mrs. Fynbos decorated her self-box with scribbles made by her daughter:

So much of me is about my new baby. It is her scribbles that I've used to line the inside of the box and then cover the outside. This means that my daughter who began inside of me, is now shaping who I am as seen by the outside world. It's my transition from wife to wife and mother. This maternal instinct now greatly influences my choices in the classroom and how I see the children.

According to Hargreaves (2001, p. 1069), who views teaching as traditionally "an occupation with a feminine caring ethic", teachers experience dilemmas in negotiating professional distance and conceal their true emotions in complex teacher identity scenarios through a concept called 'masking'.

4.3.2.4 Professional life phase

Learning support teachers in this study demonstrated that the number of years they spent in the teaching profession had an acute effect on their teacher identities and professional agency. Those teachers in their early careers often doubted their abilities, were more yielding to authority and relied heavily on mentorship; and were more likely to experience 'reality shock' (Botha & Rens, 2018). Following years of experience, participants in their latter professional career described a strong sense of professional agency, an inclination to challenge authority and a greater dependence on the self even though they continued to experience a critical gap between the expectations and lived reality of teaching. Zembylas and Chubbuck (2018) explain this reconstruction of teacher identity as a reactive response to the intersection of teacher identity, beliefs and power relations in the workplace. Vähäsantanen (2015) contends that professional agency shapes, negotiates and reconstructs professional identity. In the same vein, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) highlight that personal responsiveness to meaningful experiences in the environment over time, develops identity-agency. The results of this study thus shows the strong correlative relationship between teacher identity, professional agency and career life phase.

4.3.3 LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS ARE PERSONALLY-DRIVEN AND RESILIENT

The influence of the fluctuating dimensions of teacher identity is distributed throughout the storied lives of the learning support teachers in this study, who report multiple identities in response to demanding role scenarios in school, home and the community. Bettini et al. (2018) contend that a perceived reality experienced only by learning support teachers, stems from the

demands of extra and emergent responsibilities which encompass, in addition to the ideal core roles of teachers, a number of compromising and conflicting teacher identity scenarios. Similarly, the results of this study show that the dissonance felt by learning support teachers required a personal drive to endure. The participants in this study described 'a moral purpose', 'spirituality' and 'mission' as propellers of their personal drive and described the quality of *resilience* as a distinguishing characteristic to their feelings of success.

4.3.3.1 "Like morally, I know I'm doing the right thing"

Mrs. Fynbos' and Mrs. Oak's conviction that all children have a right to sound education is an example of moral purpose in the **professional dimension** of teacher identity, which came to light in their narrative and emotional responses to two vignettes. Kelchtermans (2017, p. 15) described teacher emotion as being "rooted in moral commitment" extending Fullan's (1993) view of teaching as having a moral purpose.

Mrs. Fynbos said:

> *As a teacher **I have to ensure that he is able to learn** a way of communicating that is acceptable in the special needs community so that he can interact more effectively with others,"* and Mrs. Oak said, *". **He needs high levels of support and with that comes the expectation that I will meet his needs...** there are not many people out there prepared to do that.*

Miss Aloe and Mrs. Pine admitted that they feel personally driven by upholding educational values in the classroom. According to Hargreaves (1998), teaching is an emotional practice and teachers negotiate a *moral distance* in the **situated dimension** of teacher identity when interacting with their learners. They may also experience bouts of a moral emotion called guilt (Farouk, 2012) when they lack time and resources to achieve their educational goals. Miss Aloe said that working with learners who require support made her more aware and compassionate towards the lives of others:

> *There is a **drive and motivation that inspires me to work harder for these learners** because the experience I have had with them has shown that these learners are capable, unique individuals who can accomplish many things when they have the right support.*

Hargreaves (2001, p. 1067) claims that teachers who experience "moral closeness with and support from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators" are more inclined to feel a "reinforced sense of purpose" and "positive, energizing emotions". Mrs. Pine who identified "character" and "offering to children" as strengths in her Identi-tree, said that she felt guilty when she was absent from school: *"**I like that some learners choose me to be their 'safe'***

***person**. I felt like I could do more justice in the classroom, and empower the learners in more ways."*

Several learning support teachers expressed the opinion that they were personally driven because their work encompassed an element of social justice. Bhugra (2016, p.336) defines social justice as the promotion of humanity. The participants' humanitarian beliefs convey a moral purpose located in the **personal dimension** of teacher identity. Mrs. Rooibos shared that she needed to prove that all learners can achieve irrespective of circumstances: *"It's amazing to see how a child can flourish when someone just believes in him." I believe that **I chose learning support because it includes an aspect of social justice."*** While Mrs. Acacia believes that, *"teaching has a **moral responsibility**, bringing children up to be enlightened to enjoy the beauty of the world around them and inside them"*, Mrs. Oak believes:

> *A teacher that sees each child as an individual and looks past their needs for high levels of support to achieve basic units of work, **draws on a core value system.** It takes a great amount of **something special within one's personality.***

Mrs. Pine illustrated "family values", Miss Aloe "sound human values" and Miss Baobab "integrity" in the root system of their respective Identi-tree which visually represents their morality. Miss Baobab said:

> *It's my duty to teach but **as a learning support teacher, I feel that I have a sense of purpose like morally, I know I'm doing the right thing** even beyond the classroom. I'm preparing kids to cope in a demanding society. **That drives me.***

4.3.3.2 "Learning support makes me feel closer to God"

Learning support teachers described spirituality as a personal factor of their teacher identity. Symbols and words related to spirituality were interspersed throughout the visual data as, foundational influences in the roots of the Identi-tree: "religion" (Mrs. Pine), "Prayer and Hare Krishna Movement" (Mrs. Rooibos), "spirituality" (Miss Baobab), "church" (Miss Aloe) and "faith – God" (Mrs. Acacia); and as a daily guiding presence in the branches of the Identi-tree: "God" (Mrs. Pine), "spiritual faith" (Mrs. Rooibos), "faith" (Mrs. Baobab) and a symbol of a cross (Miss Aloe). Mrs. Rooibos contended that her spirituality influenced the **professional dimension** of her teacher identity: *"...**my religious belief that work is love in action**."* Mrs.

Acacia disclosed that she experienced spirituality in her daily life and it thus influenced the **situated dimension** of her teacher identity:

> ***I am a spiritual being having a human experience*** *and not a human being having a spiritual experience. Offering* ***learning support*** *might allow me to have a human connection with another person but it also* ***makes me feel closer to God.***

Miss Aloe is personally driven by the idea of hope. Although she identified valid threats that weather her Identi-tree, Miss Aloe visually represented God as rain that *"gently seeps into and quenches the ground".* She explained how her spiritual awareness influences the **personal dimension** of her teacher identity: *"Not all storms are out to destroy us. Some are there to clear the way forward, cleanse us and renew us.* ***We must have faith in a greater design."***

4.3.3.3 "My mission is to switch the lights on"

Learning support teachers reported that they were driven by a personal mission that included: a sense of vocation relating to the professional dimension of teacher identity, a deep commitment to the learners relating to the situated dimension of teacher identity, and a degree of sacrifice relating to the personal dimension of teacher identity. Gardner (2011, p. 210) attributes the efforts of teachers who are "well trained, dedicated and absorbed in their work" to the inevitable progress of an institution.

Mrs. Acacia who had always wanted to be a teacher recalled an epiphanic moment that validated her vocation on her first day of teaching: *"It was an act of love I will never forget and it made me believe that* ***what I was drawn to do, felt right in my bones****"*. Mrs. Pine said, *"As a teacher,* ***it's my mission to see a learner grow and flourish."***

Miss Aloe and Mrs. Oak both describe their commitment to providing learners with the best possible educational experience, as a personal mission. Miss Aloe said, *"****I feel it is my mission to connect with every child"*** and Mrs. Oak said she always puts the learners' needs first and used a 'light bulb' in her self-box to illuminate this belief:

> *For most typical learners, the figurative lightbulb switches on instantly when they are taught. For special needs, it may take a while or a different method of wiring, or a change in the fitting, or the globe before the light comes on. I'm reminded that I need*

to be creative in my approach and try different things. ***My mission is to switch the lights on****.*

Mrs. Rooibos and Mrs. Fynbos similarly expressed that although learning support called for a degree of personal sacrifice, they had overall rewarding experiences as a teacher that continued to drive them. Mrs. Rooibos believed that learning support tested her patience, brought out flexibility in thinking, and creativity in re-teaching if need be. She included a candle in her self-box and mentioned:

> *A good teacher is like a candle; it consumes itself to light the way for others. Perhaps I can emulate and model right conduct, symbolising my teacher commitment in showing learners the possibility of a brighter future.*

Mrs. Fynbos conveyed a bittersweet warning about the inclusive classroom:

> *You might lose yourself in there. Those little faces are going to steal away a small piece of you over time but then at the end of the school year, they're going to leave behind a little piece of themselves for you to keep too.*

4.3.3.4 "You have to be someone with a thick skin."

Learning support teachers reported that although they were personally driven, it was a quality of resilience that enabled them to feel successful. While Day and Gu (2007) describe the concept of *resilience* as the ability to endure harsh conditions and bounce back, likewise Richardson (2002) refers to teacher resilience as a rebounding quality of teacher identity. The results have shown that participants most commonly revealed 'professional agency' in the professional dimension of teacher identity, 'growth mindset' in response to the situated dimension of teacher identity, and 'grit' in relation to the personal dimension of teacher identity when referring to the concept of resilience.

Professional agency, which continually reconstructs teacher identity over the span of a professional life, refers to a teacher's personal responsiveness to the environment based on knowledge, skills, experience and values (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016; Vähäsantanen, 2015). Mrs. Acacia experienced challenges using technology in her planning and teaching:

> *Learning support is transforming all the time. Us old school teachers with donkey's years of experience still feel like newbies when the youngsters come in with all this technobabble.*

Mrs. Fynbos, who wrote ‘Don't sweat the small stuff!’ and 'tolerance' in the trunk of her Identi-tree, articulated her idea of a resilient teacher as one who demonstrated professional agency:

> *To be a learning support teacher you need to have a patient, caring, and kind personality. **You have to be someone with a thick skin**, who can deal with the pressures of management, parents and challenges in the classroom, deal with failure and try teaching the same thing in multiple ways until the learner achieves.*

Miss Aloe however expressed dissent in response to perceived challenges: *“As a remedial teacher, I can't remedy the situation. I can only offer support as best as I can”.* Mrs. Rooibos claimed that self-initiated professional development heightened her professional agency and made her more resilient to the challenges she faced:

> *There's never an end to learning varied strategies and new trends in learning support. The lack of resources, teaching aids and the time constraints considering large class sizes pose a huge challenge to the achievement of specific goals.*

Participants also highlighted professional aspirations in the branches of their Identi-trees: “Further my studies” (Miss Aloe), “career” (Mrs. Rooibos) and “more organised” (both Mrs. Fynbos and Miss Baobab).

Resilient learning support teachers sport a growth mindset in their willingness to improve on areas of weakness and are motivated to persevere in teaching learners requiring support. Ng (2018) established a positive correlation in individuals having a growth mindset and being intrinsically motivated, and Dweck (2015) asserts that a growth mindset engenders a love of learning and a resilience that enhances teacher-student relationships. Mrs. Oak, who labelled the branches of her Identi-tree “Never give up” and “Be the best I can be”, had this to say about working with learners requiring support:

> *Every now and then, I see a fractional improvement, a little more retention, a heightened sense of interest and a small step towards the goals we have set. The sum of these tiny victories makes for a giant leap forward in self-confidence and motivation.*

Miss Aloe highlighted the concept of resilience and having a growth mindset, in her choice of ‘a dry-erase board marker’ in her self-box: *“This represents the fact that very few things in life are permanent. Mistakes are proof that you're trying, that there's always a chance to try again and improve yourself”.*

Learning support teachers in this study demonstrated a determination to succeed under challenging circumstances which is congruent with Lechner's (2018) description of grit as a personal drive that sustains an individual through trying times and Duckworth's (2016) idea that grit is a combination of hunger and persistence. Mrs. Fynbos included a blank piece of paper in her self-box, as a visual metaphor to describe her resilience:

> *There is a need to adjust and adapt my approach in teaching even if it means I have to ditch the standard pen and paper based tests in favour of more concrete methods to assess a learner.*

Mrs. Rooibos, who mentions "perseverance" in the roots of her Identi-tree also likened the challenges she experienced personally and professionally to a dragon, which she *"needed to slay in order to move forward"*. Mrs. Acacia explained the 'teabag' in her self-box as a metaphor for female grit. She said, *"A woman is like a teabag: you never know how strong she is until you put her in hot water. We face numerous challenges as teachers."* She also included a Band-Aid (Elastoplast) to describe how personalities sometimes clash:

> *The Band-Aid is to mend hurt feelings. There has been conflict in my life both at home and at school. The band aid is symbolic of learning from our mistakes, healing and forgiveness. It makes us stronger. Just dust yourself off and try again.*

Both Mrs. Pine and Miss Baobab included an 'elastic band' in their self-boxes to figuratively represent the *"ability to bounce back from adversity".* Miss Baobab noted "resilience" in the roots of her Identi-tree, and explained her choice of an elastic band: *"This object represents resilience and my ability to overcome adversity by springing back into action. The rubber band also symbolises something that holds two things together, allowing them to move apart but remain connected".*

4.3.4 LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS' HIDDEN DIMENSION OF TEACHER IDENTITY

Day and Kington's (2008) framework on teacher identity describes how the professional, situated and personal dimensions of teacher identity interact with agency and structure in the process of identity creation. The descriptive data collected from learning support teachers in this study, was analysed using inductive reasoning and presented using Day and Kington's

(2008) framework. There were some codes however (secret, hidden, only for me, shame, pretence, guilt, reluctant to admit, deeply personal challenges, not ventured, sceptic, hidden emotions, dark, sealed, deceit, rejection of role, desire to leave the profession) that neither fit comfortably amongst the emerging themes presented above, nor related entirely within the three dimensions of teacher identity as described by Day and Kington (2008). Rodgers and Scott (2008, p. 736) assert that there is a need to tell stories in a way that makes sense of the "shifting, multiple, constructed, contradictory, confusing, cubistic" nature of identity.

Upon closer reflection of studies on teacher identity (Day, Kington et al., 2006; MacLure, 1993; Rodgers & Scott, 2008), I was able to interpret this obscure group of data as a 'counternarrative' (Fowler, 2006) which I will refer to as a '**hidden dimension'** of teacher identity, to represent that which participants either consciously or subconsciously desired to remain buried, beneath the ground.

Mrs. Acacia described how her teacher identity had been spoiled over time:

> *[t]he political climate of South Africa influenced how we as teachers chose to teach, what we were allowed to teach and to whom. There was so much more opportunity for me as an individual than there is now.*

MacLure (1993, p. 317) identified *spoiled identities* of teachers who felt "a deep sense of alienation from the values and practices of their institution" sometimes as a result of their "dissatisfactions of the present" compared with how the profession had once been. Miss Baobab described feeling alienated in her school, *"You might even feel like you don't belong here"*.

MacLure (1993, p. 318) also recognised teachers' *subversive identities* as those who "seemed happy to embrace the role of teacher but wanted to shrug off the identity", who may deny vocation or insist that their 'real' lives exist elsewhere and, who may feel less committed to the profession. Day, Kington et al. (2006) who extend MacLure's view, and describe teachers who are less secure in their identities as having *fragmented selves.* Mrs. Fynbos admitted that she reconsidered her career after assuming a new role, *"I've also considered being a full time mom several times"* and Miss Aloe relented: *"Sometimes I wish I could pack my bags and start over in another profession",* an idea strengthened by the way she narrated the hidden decorations inside of her self-box, "*My passion for writing and the hopes I have to turn it into a career"*. I am reminded of Farrell-Kirk's (2001, p. 90) description of the self-box as "protector of secrets,

precious memories, and emotionally valuable material". When I asked Mrs. Acacia to disclose what she would have told her younger teacher self, she revealed a fragmented perspective, *"Run, damn it run! It's going to be difficult. It's going to be an emotional rollercoaster. You're going to question your decision to become a teacher but it's going to be so worth it".* In response to the vignettes she concurred:

> *I wonder if any other teacher may admit that they do not like 'problematic children' in their classes. I want to run for the hills when I receive an admission form with a learner profile that has 20 pages of assessments, discipline records and multiple school placements.*

According to Rodgers and Scott (2008, p.736), "identities appear to be like a deck of cards spread out on a table top; any one might be turned up at any time, depending upon the who, what, and where of circumstance." In the construction of self-boxes and Identi-trees, some learning support teachers in this study held their cards close to their chests, reinforcing the view that visual media allows only parts of the self to be made visible, and is embedded with profound layers of meaning (Leitch, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2011). Like Korthagen (2004) who used a metaphor of an onion to describe the interdependence of the more observable and measurable outer layers of identity with the inner more mysterious layers of identity, the self-box and Identi-tree were used in this study as metaphors for teacher identity rooted in learning support. Miss Aloe alluded to having tattoos that are *"well-hidden and entirely for me"* in the decorative inside of her self-box, while Miss Baobab opted to embellish the outside of her box with a tube of bright red lipstick, explaining disjointedly that it was her *"secret weapon for dealing with a sad day."* Miss Baobab ventured further to illuminate why she chose an atypical box and did not decorate the inside at all:

> *Like me, it's unexpected, not easily and conventionally opened. At the outset, it appears that there is no way in as if the box is sealed. There are certain things I keep very private.*

Miss Baobab illustrated a mysterious fox as a supportive animal in times of need and strikingly, both Miss Aloe and Miss Baobab drew large dark rocks at the base of their respective Identi-trees, for which neither offered an explanation. Mrs. Fynbos said that she felt emotional and exposed in the process of constructing the Identi-tree: *"Drawing the root system was difficult for me emotionally. When you usually draw pictures of trees, you don't draw the roots because they are hidden under the ground. Figuratively, I had to think about the aspects of my identity*

that are deep-rooted like loss and heartache." Conversely, Mrs. Oak who defined herself as "an open book" and candidly disclosed details of her personal challenges in the interview, also openly identified "mood swings", "overstimulation" and "illness" as threats to her Identi-tree, and included a 'piece of cling film' in her self-box which she described as follows:

> *A teacher should be transparent. What you see is what you get. The cling film also represents seeing the world through a clear lens, that I should not be fooled by a rose-tinted view of the world.*

The results here show that in addition to the professional, situated and personal dimensions of teacher identity, a fourth dimension exists but remains hidden. The hidden dimension of teacher identity fluctuates in depth and is influenced by a teacher's emotions and a core identity. These findings can be supported by Bankole (2013), Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) and, González-Calvo and Arias-Carballal (2017) who collectively describe elements of identity that remain concealed to prevent feelings of guilt, fear, loss, distrust or shame.

4.4 An introduction to emerging themes addressing Question Two

The participants in this study expressed complex emotions when recounting their experiences as learning support teachers. The processes and products of constructing an Identi-tree and a self-box to represent their teacher identities, also unfolded teacher emotions that were deeply embedded in the participants' stories. Both positive and negative emotions were recorded and patterns in the data emerged as a result of inductive analysis. These were condensed into themes, presented here using the framework of Zembylas (2002) which describes the genealogies of teacher emotion in relation to the self (individual reality), others (social interaction), and school culture in general (socio-political reality). These themes address the second research question which asks how teacher emotions influence the teaching practice of learning support teachers.

The narratives of the participants revealed that they are emotionally invested in their work. The emotional investment of learning support teachers positively influences professional agency or, negatively disempowers them. Additionally, the data showed that learning support teachers negotiated emotional boundaries and this resulted in *emotional bonds* and reflective practice, which affected their productivity. The perceived emotions of participants are presented in a table in Appendix 10, using Zembylas' (2002) genealogies of teacher emotion and cross-referenced with Parrott's (2001) 'Tree Structure of Human Emotion', as an organising principle

to demonstrate the research direction. According to Zembylas (2002) it is crucial to remember that the three facets of teacher emotion, within different contexts, are interconnected in multiple ways and should therefore be considered cohesively.

4.4.1 LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS ARE EMOTIONALLY INVESTED IN THEIR TEACHING PRACTICE

4.4.1.1 Emotional investment has a positive influence on professional agency

Zembylas (2005, p.467) maintains that "values, beliefs *and emotions* come into play as teachers make decisions, act and reflect on the different purposes, methods and meanings of teaching" and later confirmed the "complex entanglement between emotion and pedagogy" (Zembylas, 2014, p. 2). Miss Aloe and Mrs. Acacia discussed how their teacher emotions were constructed and reconstructed in the classroom over time, speaking to the **individual reality** of teacher emotion. Miss Aloe included a 'Well Done! Stamp' in her self-box and said:

> *I am an advocate of **positive reinforcement.** This stamp has long since dried out, but the philosophy remains the same - to inspire and motivate children through **positivity and encouragement.** I am reliable and **because I care so much** I try to go above and beyond what is expected of me on a daily basis.*

Miss Aloe additionally mentioned "pastoral care" as a skill, in the trunk of her Identi-tree, which according to Naidoo and Rule (2016), is a subjectivity as a compassionate teacher. and drew a laughing sun to combat the effects of the perceived storms. She said, *"Laughter makes the storms go away. Generally, I approach my days with **positivity and enthusiasm,** and this helps me to adapt to changes when needs be and stay **productive and happy**"*. Mrs. Acacia described how the negative emotions she experienced over time as a learning support teacher gave her a heightened sensitivity towards the learners:

> *I am **saddened** by the sheer poverty that I witness on a daily basis. It's near impossible to overlook a child who is obviously **neglected.** The cultural diversity and the plethora of learning issues, socio-economic issues and health **issues that I have had to deal with emotionally** and professionally from learners makes me **feel satisfied** that I am capable enough to teach those who have severe learning barriers.*

Hargreaves (2001, p. 1064) describes Mrs. Acacia's view as a socio-culturally distanced one in terms of the emotional geographies of teacher-parent relations, characterised by feelings of provoked "incredulity, hopelessness and even disgust". This contrasts with "hope", "love" and "appreciate everyone's ability" in Mrs. Acacia's Identi-tree. Naidoo & Rule (2016) explains this as overlapping subject positions where a teacher identifies herself as compassionate, supportive *and* knowledgeable.

Several participants described the **social interaction** of teacher emotions in terms of mutually beneficial relationships of care and love, with their learners. Mrs. Rooibos included a child's drawing of a red apple in her self-box as a universal symbol for teaching. She said:

> *Learners often bring a drawing, a story, a treasure found on the playground. They innocently offer me their snacks and stationery too. The drawing of an apple symbolises* ***their love and appreciation for my teaching and caring for them****. Small gestures but overflowing with* ***love.***

Hargreaves (2001) describes this overwhelming feeling of appreciation as moral closeness, where moral distance is narrowed making room for emotional understanding. Similarly, Mrs. Pine reported that learners responded more positively to her when they understood her emotional investment in teaching them. She said, "***I know that if I go 'out on a limb' for my learners to achieve, they too will grow up knowing that someone loved them enough to be emotionally invested in them."*** Mrs. Pine's view resonates with Korthagen (2004, p. 82), who recognises a paradigmatic shift in the role of teachers "from someone transferring knowledge to someone guiding students", and Parker (2018, p.131), who reports that it is the learners who permit teachers to "know themselves and to know the profession"; and whom without having an emotional investment in, "no teacher identity can be formed". Miss Baobab noted that learners too, experience mutually beneficial relationships with their peers:

> *Learners who come from abusive homes may* ***lack love and attention****. Showing* ***genuine concern*** *to such a learner will boost the learner's confidence and increase their self-worth to* ***create meaningful relationships*** *and opportunities for* ***psycho-social development*** *in school.*

According to Richardson (2002), caring and loving relationships and an understanding of socio-economic contexts promote choices to include and accommodate learners with specific socio-emotional needs, and Gay (2002) argues that the education profession requires more

teachers who are critically conscious of the socio-political and economic climate of school communities. Zembylas (2002) describes the **socio-political** expression of teacher emotion as relative to the general school culture, power relations and politics where emotional experiences may effect change. Mrs. Oak chose a 'needle and thread' in her self-box to describe herself metaphorically, as an agent of change in the learning support environment:

> *It is important to me for people to be **happy and content.** I am **sad** when there is a feeling of **disconnection.** In a class group, I think the teacher acts as a needle, probing in and out of problems, finding a way through and keeping everything together. It also reminds me that 'a stitch in time saves nine' - early identification of learning barriers and supportive intervention goes a long way.*

The symbolic representation of a teacher as an emotional needle, probing in and out of the lives of learners, shows how teacher emotions transport teacher identity into the classroom (Zembylas, 2005). Mrs. Fynbos reported that she felt better able to do her job when she had validating emotional experiences, *"Mostly the **positive emotions** I feel come from having successful lessons, seeing children laugh and smile and at times, receiving acknowledgement from management."*

The results here show that learning support teachers have both positive and negative emotional experiences in relation to the self, others and the school culture that encourages them to act and to make important decisions concerning their professional work commitments and teacher identities. Thus, the emotional investment of learning support teachers positively influences professional agency.

4.4.1.2 Emotionally invested learning support teachers feel negatively disempowered

Day, Stobart, Sammons, Kington and Gu (2006, p. 612) delineate incidents where teachers inevitably experience disempowerment "when control of long-held principles and practices is challenged, or when trust and respect from parents, the public and their students is eroded", as a result of emotionally investing in their work.

Mrs. Acacia reported an **individual reality** of teacher emotion that reflected how her values and beliefs in education caused her to feel positive emotions of **deep concern and hope** that resulted in negative disempowerment. She said:

> *Children can grow on you as a teacher. They* ***bring out the most wonderful emotions and the nastiest too.*** *It's because of their sheer innocence that we feel such* ***sympathy*** *for them and our desire to see them succeed fuels our* ***frustration at failure, both ours and theirs****.*

Mrs. Acacia also relented that constructing her self-box was an emotional experience. She described the outside of the box as a reflection of her professional identity:

> *Box is completely black. The word* ***LOVE*** *is imprinted in white so from viewing only one side of the box at a time, it seems all dark but in reality when you come closer and look at me from another angle, you'll see that everything I do is done with* ***love.****"*

And the inside of the box as an expression of her personal identity:

> *[f]illed with copper strands (glitter raffia). Deep inside of me is a diva: I think only my family knows that side of me. Because I am in a position of authority at work,* ***I feel a strong need to keep that hidden for fear of judgement and disdain.***

Mrs. Fynbos described how the perceived lack of emotional understanding in her **social interaction** with non-verbal learners created greater moral distance between herself and them. As a result, she felt disempowered:

> ***I feel frustrated*** *at times because I often gain encouragement and motivation from learners' feedback. Some days* ***I feel inadequate*** *as if everything I've learnt so far in becoming a teacher has just flown out the window and* ***I feel helpless****.*

While Thomas and Loxley (2001) claim that teachers have begun to lose confidence in their *own* ability to assess and teach all the children, Bettini et al. (2018, p. 184) contend that "dissonance between actual experiences and ideal roles" was a source of stress for teachers. Mrs. Fynbos had complex emotional experiences. She observed that sometimes the negative emotions she felt as a result of the socio-political context of the community, reinforced her sense of professional agency: *"Of what use is* ***anger*** *other than to continue motivating me to better equip the learners with knowledge and skills to overcome their socio-economic conditions"*. However, her experience of working in a positive school environment empowered her. Miss Baobab remarked that she felt disempowered by the disapproval of other members of staff. These emotions caused her to keep greater physical and professional distances from both her peers and her learners. Hargreaves (2001) agrees that teachers like Mrs. Fynbos experience negative emotions and increased moral distance from others when their purpose is

perceived to be under threat and that great moral distance could result in emotional and physical retreat and a loss of zest as in the case of Miss Baobab. Miss Baobab, who describes herself as deeply private, illustrated "trust" and "lack of productivity" as strong winds threatening her Identi-tree and constructed a self-box that appeared to be sealed to visually represent her fragmented teacher identity. Mrs. Pine admitted that she felt **contempt** towards colleagues who she perceived to be unproductive: *"It's also **frustrating working with people who are shallow, negative and who do not understand** the children need active and enthusiastic teachers to learn from".*

The source of disempowerment for Miss Aloe, Mrs. Oak and Mrs. Acacia stems from their negative **socio-political** engagement with school management, education leaders and parents, the disparity in the widely accepted WCED Model for Learning Support (Dreyer, 2008) and actual experiences of teacher roles, and the effects of historical disadvantages that persist in post-apartheid South Africa. Miss Aloe stated that she felt frustrated when working with parents who were in denial about the diagnoses of their children:

> *The **frustration** stems from wanting to help the learners but not having parental consent and **not being able to provide the necessary support**.*

Miss Aloe added that she also felt **humiliated** and undermined by parents and authoritarian education leaders who focused on her youth and not her merit. Similarly, Hargreaves (2001, p. 1069) found that teachers' most negative emotional experiences resulted from engagement with parents where their (teachers') "expertise, instructional knowledge, and judgements for which they felt uniquely qualified were questioned". Miss Aloe depicted her emotional experience as a lightning storm in her Identi-tree drawing but juxtaposes it with a second storm cloud which was equally disempowering: *"My **fear of failure** owing to inexperience and overwhelming difficulties experienced by learners."* Mrs. Acacia reported feeling **shocked and embarrassed** when she was reprimanded by a manager in the presence of others and highlighted her emotional investment with the use of 'tissues' in her self-box:

> *I included a tissue to wipe tears, my own and theirs. I've had days where I shed many tears, sometimes from **sadness, sometimes anger, shame, self-doubt and even from elation**. Sometimes learners have **emotional outbursts.***

Mrs. Oak, who also included 'tissues' in her self-box and identified "lack of support in the work environment" as a threat to her Identi-tree, felt **disappointed** that the KwaZulu- Natal

Department of Education was not fulfilling an obligation in terms of the national model for learning support in her experiences at Fever Tree Special School. She testified that she experienced a diminished political identity, *"At the end of the day the children are the ones that* ***suffer***. ***Due to these issues negative emotions build up and you begin to lose hope and just go with the flow."*** Miss Aloe, who teaches at Bottlebrush Primary had a parallel perspective about the lack of support and consequently a strikingly similar resolve. She said*:*

> *I'm* ***frustrated*** *that the DOE continues to send children to our school who cannot be placed in special school. We are expected as learning support teachers who can offer moderate levels of support, to be specialist teachers offering high levels of support.* ***I feel like I have to just keep quiet and do my job***.

Mrs. Rooibos had a third, corresponding view about the conditions under which she teaches at Yellowwood Primary: *"I experience* ***frustration and exhaustion*** *due to workload, lack of support and resources, increased administrative duties and reduced collegiality."* Miss Aloe and Mrs. Acacia expressed having emotional experiences that resonated with the findings of Comfort, as cited in Gay (2002, p. 615), who described some teachers as **bitter** towards learners requiring support because of an overwhelming sense of imminent failure. According to Comfort (1992, p. 102):

> [t]eachers may sense that they will not be able to provide the child with an appropriate learning environment, that their teaching may be criticised, and that they will be accountable for a child who they could not serve.

In response to the vignettes, Miss Aloe said, *"A new admission deep into the first term in an established class group is challenging and* ***intimidating*** *for any learner, and* ***frustrating (almost resentful)*** *for any teacher.* ***I feel really helpless****"*. Walton (2011) highlights that teachers are acutely aware of the historical disadvantages of their learners and the fragmented inheritance of post-apartheid South African education. Although negative emotional experiences were common, it did not dominate the narratives. Mrs. Oak said, *"My emotions around being a learning support teacher are* ***more positive than negative***. *The school I work with is very receptive to providing support for learners who need it".* Learning support teachers highlighted their positive attempts to improve their teaching practice, despite the marked socio-cultural emotional distance they felt, in a profound display of the interwoven nature of teacher identity and teacher emotion.

The results here show that learning support teachers are emotionally invested in their work and, when they endure negative experiences in relation to the self, others and the school culture, they feel varying degrees of disempowerment. Seeing that teaching is an emotional practice, the strength of emotional bonds influences the teaching practice of learning support teachers.

4.4.2 THE NEGOTIATION OF EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES INFLUENCES THE TEACHING PRACTICE OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS

4.4.2.1 Emotional bonds

Zembylas (2002) argues that the individual, social and socio-political emotional relationships experienced by teachers are *emotional bonds* that are fundamental to teaching. Hargreaves (2001) asserts that teachers negotiate emotional geographies that influence the perceived distances in these emotional bonds. In this study, the narratives of learning support teachers revealed several accounts of the negotiation of emotional boundaries in relation to the self, others and the school culture in general, that either strengthened or weakened emotional bonds.

Miss Baobab, Mrs. Acacia and Mrs. Fynbos took responsibility for their **individual reality** by creating positive ways to strengthen the emotional bond with their selves. Miss Baobab articulated that her physical appearance was important to her. She expressed this view in her self-box by including 'bright red lipstick' and an 'energy bar'. Miss Baobab promptly said, *"When an individual **looks good, they feel good.** Red lipstick is bold and attractive: a colour that **makes me feel confident**",* and narrated about the energy bar as: *"A healthy body equals a healthy mind. The energy bar also represents the change in my lifestyle to **become the best version of myself.** A teacher with a **positive attitude** keeps learners motivated."* Mrs. Acacia included 'bright pastel crayons' in her self-box to demonstrate how she remains **optimistic**. She said:

> *I **love** art activities. **I feel alive** and the act of doing art particularly with paint and pastels, is so **gratifying**. The bright colours **uplift my mood.** Even when I have not planned an art activity, I like to keep art supplies in view on my desk to keep my day bright and beautiful.*

Additionally, the ‘teabag’ in her self-box was used to represent how a small physical act can stimulate **emotional regulation**: *“I cannot function without my cup of tea. I will sometimes skip a meal because I'm so busy but will **slow down for 5 min to enjoy my cup of tea and just think**”*. Lestari and Sawitri (2017) determined that emotional regulation is a characteristic of *emotionally intelligent* teachers with high work engagement. Mrs. Fynbos also described a mechanism she uses to strengthen emotional bonds with her ‘self’ and others, on days when she feels **melancholic**:

> *I have to disconnect and look after my **emotional wellbeing** before diving back in. It could be a massage, a doughnut, a good book or some retail therapy. Often it's just a quick chat with a **trusted colleague or friend** that helps me to **reset and focus.***

Miss Baobab reported that her awareness of “*healthy coping mechanisms”* that she employs *“to reduce stress levels”* made her more tolerant and strengthened the emotional bonds in the **social interaction** with learners: *“I've learned that some learners need certain stimuli to feel **regulated and calm** while others may be over stimulated which will cause them to be irritable and disruptive.”* Mrs. Oak reported unstable distances in the emotional bonds she experienced with vulnerable learners:

> *There's a string of emotions that surface when you realise how vulnerable these children are. You feel **sympathy, anger, resentment, tearful and defensive** but then you progress with some learners then you feel **pride, happiness and a sense of purpose**. I have learnt to take control of my emotions and **not get emotionally attached** to the learners.*

Mrs. Acacia’s choice of a ‘paper clip’ in her self-box, literally represented closing the figurative gaps in physical, moral and professional distance of herself and the learners: *“It’s important to remember that although our emotions are valid, we are modelling the role of a responsible adult who can self-regulate. I have to 'keep it together' and emulate **positivity**.”* Both Miss Aloe and Mrs. Rooibos reported weakened emotional bonds with parents as a result of negative disempowerment presented earlier in this chapter.

Although Mrs. Fynbos described weakened emotional bonds in the **socio-political relationship** she endured at school, she also revealed strengthened emotional bonds in the **social interaction** with her learners as a result of role changes in her personal life:

> *There are things that I would get **upset** about when I first started that I now find trivial. I also feel that now as a mom I have more **patience** for learners who battle with the everyday things such as tying shoelaces.*

According to González-Calvo and Arias-Carballal (2017, p.1703), "If the student does not feel loved and valued, then the pedagogical relationship is unreal and does not make teaching easy and pleasant." Mrs. Pine, who is close to retirement, recognised that she felt a strengthened emotional bond with the profession: *"Now I am more mature and at the end of my career, can finally **enjoy** the **respect** from the school community at large because of my experience and the years of service to the school".* Earlier in this chapter, I recorded Mrs. Acacia's negative **disempowerment** as a result of breakdowns in communication with school leadership, and the ubiquitous school politics. This experience led to weakened emotional bonds.

The results here show that when learning support teachers experienced a greater emotional distance in relation to the self, others and the school culture, they reported weakened emotional bonds that demotivated them, made them less productive and less resilient. Likewise, when learning support teachers perceived a lesser emotional distance in their individual, social and socio-political realities; they observed strengthened emotional bonds which motivated them, promoted higher work engagement and productivity, and resulted in a more resilient teacher identity. The findings of this study confirm Naidoo & Rule's (2016) argument that teacher emotion is intrinsic to teaching praxis.

4.4.2.2 Reflective practice

Seeing that Zembylas (2014, p. 2) describes the entwined relationship between teacher emotion and teaching practice as a "complex entanglement", the emotional experiences of learning support teachers in this study show varying degrees of interconnected influence on their teaching practice. According to Zembylas (2014), when teachers and their students consistently use opportunities to critically reflect on their emotions, they gain better control of their emotions and are able to express themselves in appropriate ways. Wilmot and Wood (2012) found that critical reflectivity stimulated a turning point in teacher attitudes towards HIV/AIDS education. Similarly, the participants in this study found that the negotiation of emotional boundaries in relation to the self, others and the school culture cultivated reflective practice that influenced pedagogy.

In the description of her self-box, Mrs. Pine said she included items to mirror her **individual reality**. These items suggested that the numerous emotional experiences she had over the span of her career fostered emotional management and reflective practice. 'Page markers' were symbolic of *"keeping track of what I was doing, marking things off a to do list, **coming back to unsolved problems**"* and a 'pencil case' was used to figuratively represent her mental space. Mrs. Pine said*:*

> *I put experiences together and carry them with me daily. I could open up my mental pencil case and **reflect on the things** that matter like knowledge and skills and **my emotions**, and change what I needed to when they were overly-used or outdated. I could **buy into new ideas** if they were innovative and creative.*

She spoke about her teaching practice with the aid of a 'sharpener' that she stuck on the outside of her self-box: *"The sharpener depicts me as a teacher, being aware or sharp in my adventures. I have to **sharpen my attitude** or values and thinking to overcome challenges in the classroom."* After serving nearly four decades as a teacher, Mrs. Pine reflected on her emotions about the future too. Although she claimed that *"a positive attitude and a healthy outlook will help achieve more in retirement"* (self-box), Mrs. Pine's Identi-tree contradicted this view due to the dominance of negative emotions (loneliness, unhappiness, age, illness, fear, unsolved problems and challenges) illustrated using storm clouds. Mrs. Fynbos reported that she had to endure failure several times in her early years as a learning support teacher and this made her feel anguish and resentment but she learned how to **consciously create new opportunities** for herself to start anew. Coincidentally, she also described herself as a 'sharpener' in relation to her teaching practice. Mrs. Fynbos included a 'dull pencil' in her self-box to narrate the following:

> *A dull (blunt) pencil represents the potential learners have and the barriers that they face which adversely affects their progress. One cannot write effectively with a dull pencil. It reminds me that **I am a tool too**, and I need to find a way to address the perceived barriers in my classroom.*

She went on to say that when learners succeeded she felt strengthened in her commitment to teach, echoing the view of Day and Gu (2007, p.36) that in "the emotional arena of teaching, pupils' progress and growth constantly fuel teachers' job satisfaction and motivation". Likewise, Ng (2018) suggests that growth mindset and reflective practice improved teacher confidence and productivity.

Miss Aloe highlighted how the fluidity of her reflective practice depended on emotional transactions in daily **social interaction** with her learners. She said:

> *With experience I am better equipped to plan, restructure when necessary and adapt depending on the needs of the individual learners and the **feel in the classroom on that day**.*

Similar to the findings of DeBettencourt and Nagro (2018), Miss Aloe's self-awareness and her willingness to adapt her teaching practice to improve the educational experience of her learners, is the ultimate goal of reflective practice. This idea is strengthened by the visual data of her Identi-tree, in which Miss Aloe drew herself as a **chameleon** and labelled it "**Adaptability**", She described her related emotions as "optimistic", "hopeful", "proud" and "self-confident".

Mrs. Rooibos reflected on her **socio-political** engagement with the learning support model and the effect of its curriculum on learners. She reported that negative emotional experiences inhibited her teaching practice:

> *I am **less empathetic** to those learners who lack discipline. I will not tolerate being disrespected in my own classroom. Values are important to me. My teaching practice has changed.*

Mrs. Acacia reported feelings of disappointment and disempowerment in relation to the present socio-political context of teaching, when compared with her positive emotional experiences of teaching in apartheid South Africa. Her perspective is cohesive with Kelchtermans' (2016) study which found that teachers experienced a sense of loss of their teaching practices when working conditions changed, and this resulted in feelings of vulnerability. Additionally, in response to a vignette, Mrs. Acacia admitted that she had to negotiate emotional boundaries between herself and learners based on the socio-political context of the school community. This made her feel helpless and negatively influenced her teaching practice in a way that made her withdraw a degree of her attention from some learners in favour of those from whom she experienced a greater socio-cultural and emotional distance:

> *Sometimes these learners are crying out for attention and they need me to support them most of the time. This means that I tend to neglect the more capable high-flyers and that becomes unfair to them.*

Learning support teachers traverse emotional boundaries in individual, social and socio-political scenarios, that results in the cultivation of reflective practice. Upon reflection, largely-negative emotional experiences made teachers feel vulnerable and inhibited teachers' willingness to adapt and improve their teaching practice, whilst largely-positive emotional experiences made teachers feel self-confident and encouraged teachers' to adapt and improve their teaching practice. While Zembylas (2003a, p. 104) highlights the relationship between teacher emotion and "the improvement of instruction and student learning", Day and Gu (2007, p. 36) argue that "through experiences of positive emotions, teachers are said to be able to transform" into better versions of themselves who demonstrate creativity, emotional competence and resilience. Reflective teaching practice is thus a distinctive habit of productive and resilient learning support teachers.

4.5 "DONKEY'S YEARS' EXPERIENCE": AN INTERSECTION OF TEACHER IDENTITY, TEACHER EMOTION AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE PHASES

Day and Gu (2007) explored the nature of teachers' learning and professional development throughout their careers, through the lens of teacher identity and how this affected their sense of commitment. They found that teacher effectiveness and commitment varied with age and experience, concluding that the most productive teachers in the study were influenced by a positive professional teacher identity. While experiences of individual teachers did not represent the entire sample, Day and Gu (2007) were able to identify significant typical characteristics of teachers in each of the professional life phases. The narratives of learning support teachers in this study were analysed against high frequency codes (teachers' professional development, efficacy, commitment and motivation) which Day and Gu (2007) identified as key determinants of teacher identity. A deductive analysis of the participants' narratives associated with their respective professional life phases is presented in Appendix 11, aligned with the life stages of a tree as described by Hoskins (2019). Narratives that were atypical of the profile are shown in bold, to highlight any contradictions. A deeper discussion on the themes arising from the data follows, intersected with the findings of the first research question on the three dimensions of teacher identity (Day & Kington, 2008) and, the findings of the second research question relating to the genealogies of teacher emotion by Zembylas (2005) who contends that teacher emotions mirror a teacher's identity.

Day and Gu (2007, p. 433) "found that teachers' work and lives spanned six professional life phases", distinguished by the number of years (range) of teaching. The narratives of learning support teachers in this study were compared to the typical teacher profiles in Day and Gu's theoretical framework, to determine the extent of influence that a teacher's career phase has on learning support teachers' identities. This helped me to address the third research question which addresses the extent career phases influence learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities.

4.5.1 "TEACHING AS A PROFESSION IS A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY"

Whilst early teachers acknowledged the strong emotional bonds and the positive influence of their social interaction with mentors, in their search for a professional teacher identity, they also highlighted weakened socio-political bonds they experienced by the unexpected demands (fluctuating dimensions) of being a learning support teacher. Miss Aloe said that her inexperience caused doubt and uncertainty in the classroom, that there was an overwhelming demand on her time and attention, and that she initially battled with disorganisation. With relevant developmental support from mentors, she was able to transform her professional teacher identity and is now proud to demonstrate improved productivity and greater resilience as a learning support teacher. Miss Aloe (Sprout, 0-3 years) illustrated her professional aspirations in the branches of her Identi-tree naming them "further my studies" and drew a pair of binoculars with the caption: "Search for my identity" which, when interpreted together, alluded to an unending pursuit of personal and professional development. Mrs. Fynbos (Sapling, 4-7 years) used several explicit terms in her narrative such as "becoming a teacher", "find a way", "journey of self-discovery", "you might lose yourself in there", "finding my own voice in the world" and "search for meaningful relationships" to strengthen her perspective of *navigating* an identity. While Miss Fynbos and Mrs. Aloe reflected on a sub-group of teachers in this phase who reported "easy beginnings", Mrs. Oak (Sprout, 0-3 years) echoed a sub-group of teachers with "painful beginnings" (Day & Gu, 2007, p. 434). Mrs. Oak said *"teaching is seen by many as an 'easy job' but it's not"* and *"I felt like my efforts were futile".* She added that she initially felt ineffective in the classroom due to the absence of mentorship and situated support: *"half a job is being done", "not enough support*", despite 'asking for help and advice' which she illustrated in her Identi-tree. Consequently, the lack of professional development and support, and the experience of weakened socio-political emotional bonds, adversely affected the development of Mrs. Oak's professional identity, and contributed to her feeling *"overwhelmed", "overstimulated"* and *"helpless"*.

Mature teachers recognised the positive influence of personal support structures that helped to sustain their professional commitments and strengthen their personal and professional identities. In the interviews, vignettes and self-box tasks, Miss Baobab (Seedling, 8-15 years) - who described herself as "very private"- did not overtly mention the influence of her family on the development of her identity. However, she illustrated a visually strong root system in her Identi-tree which was dominated by members of her family. Additionally, she represented "integrity", "trust" and "resilience" as innate qualities that have an impact on her emotions and identity. Miss Baobab drew a wise owl and a mysterious fox to depict influential support in her personal life. She identified the owl as her younger sister, whose knowledge as an occupational therapist strengthened her understanding of learning support needs. Although she chose not to identify the fox, the mere fact that he was present in the drawing confirmed that she gained positive support from him in times of crisis. Miss Baobab also identified emotional "bonds" in the branches of her Identi-tree, when prompted to indicate how experiences in the inclusive classroom may have affected her identity. In keeping with the idea of teaching as a journey of self-discovery, Mrs. Rooibos (Mature Tree, 16-23 years), literally travelled great distances within the profession. Deep into her established career in the Western Cape of South Africa, she endured an inter-provincial transfer to another school in KwaZulu-Natal where she felt like she had to start over. She described the emotional experience as *"new beginnings"* and credited her family for their understanding and support in times when she faced challenges to motivation and commitment as a result of personal and situated conflict, weakened emotional bonds with learners and management, and frustration arising from feeble professional development. Mrs. Rooibos also ventured further to define her *"work ethic"*. By using 'chalk' in her self-box as a medium to express how as a teacher, she desired to leave behind a trail, she said:

> *As the teacher uses the chalk, it is consumed leaving only the written imprint of the lesson on the chalkboard. Even an entire day's work for me is but a fleeting moment in the life of a child. I need to make an effort to leave an imprint in the minds and hearts of my learners that will last far longer than chalk dust and will extend beyond the classroom.*

Due to professional advancement, senior teachers identified *themselves* as mentors and hence, were responsible and accountable for professional development of others in the work environment. The narratives therefore were focused in favour of actual personal and professional experiences that helped them navigate their journey of self-discovery, rather than of the supportive structures available to them. Mrs. Acacia (Ancient tree, 24-30 years) who

described her teaching career as *"donkeys' years' experience"*, said that teaching is *"an emotional rollercoaster"* and reported that she sometimes felt she had reached *"a dead end"* or wanted to *"run for the hills"* when faced with challenges to her motivation and commitment. Mrs. Acacia's personal journey of becoming a teacher started with role-play at a young age and was shaped over the years by overlapping personal and professional dimensions of teacher identity: *"There are lots of teachers in my family so that can be advantageous as well as competitive around the dinner table or at a family function."* Both Mrs. Acacia and Mrs. Pine related incidents along the path of their professional lives in which they felt fluctuating motivation but asserted that, due to critical factors that shape identity and strengthen emotional bonds particularly with learners, they experienced a resilient sense of pride and commitment to the profession. Mrs. Pine (Snag, >31 years) expressed that although she felt "exhausted" now that her journey was coming to an end, she anticipated the rest and *"respect"* entitled to her at the destination.

4.5.2 "TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK"

Learning support teachers in this study recognised the value of teamwork, irrespective of their professional life phase. Those in their early careers, like Miss. Aloe and Miss Oak, acknowledged their mentor teachers, learners' parents and paraprofessionals for their contribution towards functional school-based support teams which aimed at interventions geared towards learners' success. Miss. Oak said, "*I am lucky enough to work in a wonderful environment and most of the time have full support from our SMT which does make the job easier*" and Miss Aloe succinctly remarked that "*team work makes the dream work*", reinforcing this sentiment in her self-box with the inclusion of a glue-gun.

In the midst of their careers, Miss Baobab and Mrs. Fynbos acknowledged meaningful relationships as pivotal to their professional development and roles as learning support teachers. Mrs. Fynbos, whose self-box included a picture captioned 'peers and school itself', said "*Healthy relationships, team teaching, professional development and mentoring are part of an inclusive learning environment*". More experienced teachers, like Mrs. Pine, Mrs. Rooibos and Mrs. Acacia who listed 'being a team player' as a personal strength in her Identi-Tree, welcomed the fresh perspective and technological skills of younger teachers who were new to the profession and embraced the roles of being a master teacher, mentor and in some cases, in a position of leadership. Mrs. Pine said, "*You can handle difficult situations with the help of others in your team*" and Mrs. Rooibos added, "*networking with other teachers has saved time and helped in the achievement of specific goals."*

4.6 THE IDENTI-TREE MODEL - A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF A TYPICAL LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER

Figure 10: Identi-tree Model of a typical learning support teacher

The Identi-tree model in Figure 10 above, is a visual representation of the findings collected from the narratives of learning support teachers in this study. It is a synthesis of the common themes found in the research data and addresses each of the research questions. The Identi-tree illustrates that although a typical learning support teacher has distinct personal and professional identities, these identities are inextricably interconnected and they interplay in the formation and development of a situated identity. A typical learning support teacher's personal identity is shaped by critical influences and personal aspirations such as emotional wellbeing, a happy family life and good health. The professional identity of a typical learning support teacher is largely related to professional development, proficiency in devising individual education plans (IEPs), agency, classroom management and career aspirations. Due to the multiple roles and responsibilities navigated by learning support teachers in the context of inclusive education, the typical learning support teacher experiences a demand to be highly adaptable. Despite this, a hidden dimension of teacher identity develops to suppress and regulate emotions such as fear, anger, guilt, shame and loss.

In particular, the formation of a learning support teacher's identity is rooted in an individual's heritage, personal drive, emotional experiences and critical influences. The root system of the Identi-tree illustrates the learning support teacher's foundational value system that anchors, supports and informs the teacher's identity. A learning support teacher is highly adaptable and flexible in her teaching practice in order to offer reliable learning support. This flexibility and reliability is illustrated using a swing which is firmly attached to a low hanging but sturdy branch labelled 'learning support system'. The swing alludes to the purpose of serving a child's needs for fun, excitement, engagement and success in the inclusive classroom, and the efforts of a typical learning support teacher 'going out on a limb' to meet those needs. Although the tree may bend in response to winds of change and storms (negative emotional experiences), it remains resilient and continues to grow because of its strong foundational elements. Thick bark illustrated on the outer trunk represents a typical learning support teacher's characteristic of resilience and grit. The key attributes of a typical learning support teacher are listed in the trunk of the tree: growth mindset, creativity, reflexivity, teamwork, work engagement and rapport with learners, colleagues and parents. A large boulder is used to illustrate obstacles to progress, as perceived by a typical learning support teacher. These obstacles are daily challenges (personal, professional and situated), emotional regulation and tests of commitment to the profession. The snail is a metaphor for overcoming barriers to learning and for the characteristically slow but steady progress that learning support teachers typical experience when working with their learners.

Emotional bonds are forged between typical learning support teachers and significant others. In their personal lives, a learning support teacher has emotional relationships with friends, family members and the self. In their professional lives, they will form emotional bonds with learners, colleagues and the profession. These emotional bonds vary in intensity and are therefore illustrated in the strong intertwined branches and the weak broken branches of the Identi-tree. Learning support teachers also experience strong emotions These emotional bonds are forged between The gifts (fruits) most valued by learning support teachers are hugs, acts of kindness and support given by others whilst the leaves in the wind describe departed loved ones, broken friendships and lost memories. In addition to the slow progress snail mentioned above, the learning support teachers in this study identified typical responses to perceived crises. These are illustrated in the Identi-tree drawing as animals who would come in a storm and metaphorically describes their own innate qualities or those of other people that a typical learning support teacher will rely on in times of crises. The owl describes wisdom and self-

awareness, the butterfly expresses self-empowerment and emotional competence, the chameleon suggests quick thinking and adaptability, and the dog represents loyalty, empathy, love, advocacy, emotional intelligence and the need to protect the basic rights of the child.

When glancing at the Identi-tree as a whole in the context of inclusive education, it is evident that the tree is alive and continuing to grow though it may have changed shape and direction. A glimpse beneath the soil gives an indication of where and how the growth began whilst the crown of the tree shows branches of the future dreams and aspirations. This alludes to the nature of a typical learning support teacher's identity being drawn largely from her roots yet still being influenced steadily over time throughout her career. The illustration of the topmost branches in the Identi-tree shows the link between teacher identity, agency and career phase. A strong sense of professional agency is neither inherited in the roots nor acquired in the trunk but rather develops over time in the later phases of a typical learning support teacher's career as the Identi-tree grows and takes shape. An enlargement of the illustration above is included as Appendix 6.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, I embarked on a journey to unearth the individual storied lives of seven participants. Methodological choices which were presented in the previous chapter *(Seeing the forest for the trees),* were justified in this chapter as each account unfolded, giving *lovely, dark and deep* layers of meaning to the narratives of learning support teachers as a cohesive and interconnected *forest* as well as individually, so that in each case we could also *see the tree*. The results of this study were presented and analysed using the frameworks of Day and Kington (2008), Day and Gu (2007) and Zembylas (2002) on teacher identity, professional life phases and teacher emotions respectively, and then related to the literature where possible. Additionally, the researcher presented the Identi-tree Model which is a visual profile of the identity and emotions of a typical learning support teacher based on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from participants in this study. Chapter 5 *Take it or leaf it* presents a final discussion of the study's findings, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5: TAKE IT OR LEAF IT - A FINAL DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data presented in Chapter 4 is discussed by addressing the research questions of the study and elaborating how the data is analysed, interpreted and connected to the conceptual framework and the related literature. A summary of the key findings is then presented, followed by the limitations of the study and the recommendations for further research. The chapter is then concluded with the researcher's final reflection.

The researcher adopted a tree metaphor to delineate the study. Seven learning support teachers from the Umgungundlovu educational district in Pietermaritzburg participated in this research study. The participants and their schools were assigned pseudonyms, which were names of indigenous trees. The focus of the study was the participants' narrative accounts which were generated from semi-structured interviews, vignettes, self-boxes and Identi-tree drawings. The study proposed to explore and interpret these narrative accounts of the learning support teachers' identities, emotions and real life experiences in the inclusive classroom, in order to address the following research questions:

1. What are the narratives of learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities in the field of inclusive education?

2. How do teacher emotions influence the inclusive teaching practice of learning support teachers and thus their teacher identity in the field of inclusive education?

3. To what extent do career phases influence learning support teachers' personal and professional teacher identities in the field of inclusive education?

5.2 DISCUSSION

5.2.1 WHAT ARE THE NARRATIVES OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS' PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE FIELD OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

The narratives of learning support teachers were constructed from their real life experiences and were positioned within the conceptual framework of Day and Kington (2008) to make meaning of the participants' understanding of teacher identity. Mrs. Pine described teacher identity mostly within a personal dimension of identity, attributing aspects of her

"individuality" and the influence of her family to her perception of teacher identity. Miss. Baobab and Miss. Aloe felt that determinants of teacher identity were largely located within the professional and situated dimensions, related to their roles as teachers. According to the rest of the participants, teacher identity reflects how they respond to aspects of their personal and professional lives, and to the schooling context. This view echoes Gilchrist et al.'s (2010) idea of the transactional nature of identity formation. Day and Kington (2008) similarly explain this phenomenon as fluctuating dimensions of teacher identity-scenarios.

The study found that the personal and professional identities of learning support teachers are deeply interconnected and co-dependant. While Mrs. Fynbos described her identity as a sum of her life experiences, Mrs. Oak opined that her personal and professional lives could not exist without the other. Wong (2016) explains this sense of continuity in her theory of Narrative Identity. This study found that the various experiences that learning support teachers had in both their personal and professional lives influenced the choices they made in the inclusive classroom. For some participants, it was a deep-rooted personal value system that informed their beliefs about teaching and the way they interacted with the learners. For others, their emotional experiences in the workplace and interaction with mentors, management and peers influenced their professional identity and shaped the way they interpreted and delivered the curriculum. These findings align with Jansen's (2001) perspective on teachers' political identity. All the participants reported that the situational demands of being a professional learning support teacher also had an effect on their personal lives. The results of this study show the interwoven nature of the personal and professional identities of learning support teachers. Having constructed the narratives of participants from several objects (concrete or symbolic), the results of this study, similar to the findings of Pillay, Pithouse-Morgan and Naicker (2017), show that objects have meanings that are deeply connected to personal and professional aspects of teacher identity and elicit teacher emotion. In particular, the personal and professional identities of learning support teachers are drawn from their deeply personal values and emotions which they narrated through the construction of their respective Identi-tree and self-box.

According to the narratives of participants, teacher identity was found to be shaped by critical influences. These critical influences include "wow moments", personal experiences, significant interpersonal relationships and learning support teachers' individual professional life phases; all of which shape identity either positively or negatively. The results show that the critical influences described by participants were infused with emotional and historical

experiences. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) contend that the interplay of emotions and the role of reflection are critical influences of identity formation. Four participants vividly recalled 'wow moments' which described specific turning points and events in their lives as learning support teachers, as fundamental to the formation of their teacher identity. All the participants recorded personal experiences and significant relationships as having a crucial impact on the development of their teacher identity. Morrison (2013) explains that a teacher's self-evaluation of lived experiences and their interactions with others form the basis of identity construction. The professional life phases of participants were also found to be a critical influence that shaped identity. Learning support teachers in this study demonstrated that their professional agency strengthened over time, that they were more confident later in their career to challenge authority and to question curricular changes. This can be explained using Rodgers and Scott's (2008) view that political stimuli such as power relations critically influences identity formation.

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) postulate that the narrative and discourse aspects of the self are indicative of a person's nature, an idea that resonates with Gee's (2001) description of nature-identity as a constituent part of a core identity. The dialogue about teacher identity with the participants in this study, revealed that they held a specific view about their roles as learning support teachers in the field of inclusive education. The interpretation of the narratives suggest that participants have a natural inclination towards advocating for learning support and this was closely related to their foundational beliefs and core values. The results show that learning support teachers have a personal drive and are resilient in nature. Six of the participants stated that they were personally driven by a strong sense of social justice. This resounds with the perspectives of Fullan (1993), who describes the 'moral purpose' in teaching and Kelchtermans (2017) who contends that teaching is rooted in moral commitment. Five participants either specified or illustrated that they were personally driven by spirituality and their faith in God. The narratives of all participants were dominated by a sense of duty and the expression of having a mission to make a difference. These findings can be extended by Hagenauer and Volet (2014) who posit that teaching has an intrinsic value as a profession. Learning support teachers in this study realised that they had faced several challenges in their personal and professional lives which led them to continuously reconstruct their identities and develop a growth mindset and the quality of resilience. Their resilient selves, though fluid and diverse in its formation, provides for a consistency in teacher identity: an idea that is supported

by Wong (2016) who claims that a sense of continuity and coherence is what affords a person an identity.

A scenario of teacher identity not acknowledged by Day and Kington's (2008) framework (illustrated in Figure 1, Chapter 2) but mentioned by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) and Rodgers and Scott (2008), was one in which a fourth, concealed dimension interacts with the personal, professional and situated dimensions. Korthagen (2004) also alludes to the innermost layers in his 'onion model' as the elusive and mysterious aspects of identity. The findings of this study, illustrated in Figure 11 below as an extension of Day and Kington's 2008 model, show that the narratives of learning support teachers revealed a hidden dimension of teacher identity that was not overtly observable, fluctuated in depth, and was triggered to prevent largely negative emotions of fear, distrust, guilt and shame from surfacing.

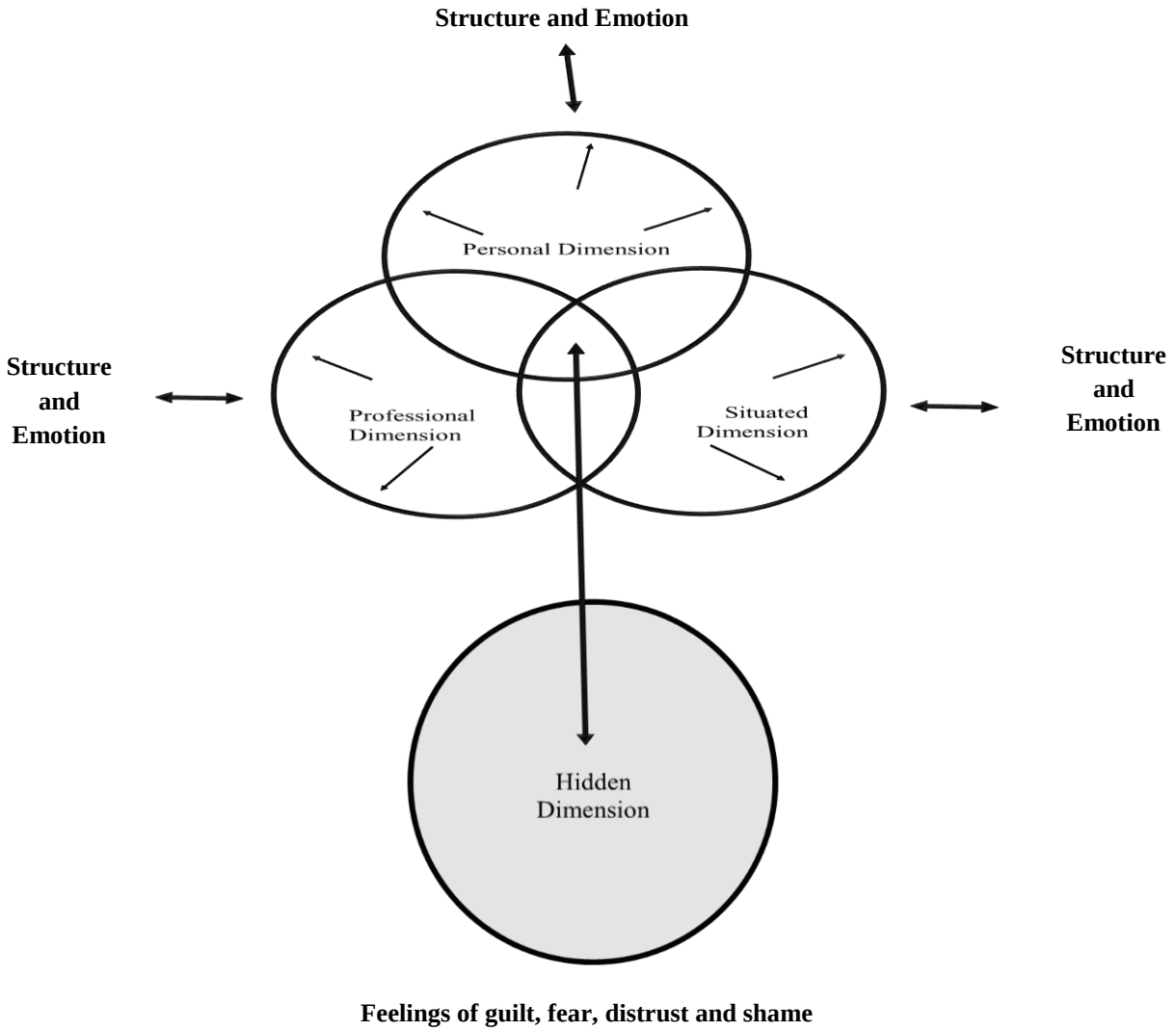

Figure 11. An extension of Day and Kington's 2008 model of fluctuating dimensions of teacher identity scenarios An illustration of the hidden dimension where negative emotions are concealed

Some participants embraced their current role as learning support teachers but shrugged off the identity, admitting to having dreams of relinquishing the teaching profession; while others expressed their dissatisfaction with their conditions at work which did not live up to their expectations. These phenomena can be explained using MacLure's (1993) theory of subversive and spoiled identities. Learning support teachers in particular experience spoiled teacher identities because of the mounting pressure to be productive despite the lack of support received in relation to professional teacher development in the field of inclusive education. Two participants reported that there were aspects of their identity that no one else had the knowledge of while Miss Baobab remained guarded about disclosing specific information despite the guarantee of anonymity. The study found that learning support teachers experienced negative emotions of fear, distrust, guilt and shame, which they instinctively hid from others as a coping mechanism for dealing with multiple demanding roles. The findings in this study are supported by Schutz et al. (2006), who refer to teacher emotion as a socially constructed transaction between the person and the context, as well as Lasky and van Veen (2005) who assert that instinctive emotive response and conscientious judgement shapes the realities of teachers. The narratives of learning support teachers therefore tell us crucial information about who they are as people and as professionals. Significantly, the study found that the personal and professional teacher identities of learning support teachers are interconnected and neither intrinsically stable nor unstable but can be affected positively or negatively by a range of critical personal, professional or situated influences

5.2.2 HOW DO TEACHER EMOTIONS INFLUENCE THE INCLUSIVE TEACHING PRACTICE OF LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS AND THUS THEIR TEACHER IDENTITY IN THE FIELD OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Zembylas (2002) argues that teacher emotion can have individual, social and socio-political contexts. This study found that in their interactions with the self, others and the school environment, learning support teachers experienced both positive and negative emotions. Six participants expressed that they had loving and caring relationships in relation to their learners and family members, and a sense of pride, growing self-confidence and enjoyment in relation to their inclusive teaching practice. Parrott (2001) and Chen (2016) classify these findings as primary teacher emotions of joy and love, which strengthened the personal drive and professional agency of learning support teachers. These learning support teachers felt emotionally invested in their work, 'close' to their learners and committed to the profession

despite context-dependent challenges. The findings correlate with Lestari and Sawitri's (2017) view that teachers who positively manage the appropriateness of their emotions in the face of adversity and in order to improve work engagement, display emotional competence and emotional intelligence. Hargreaves (2001) describes the virtual proximity or 'closeness' as the emotional distance between the teacher and external structures, which forms emotional bonds. This study found that learning support teachers' emotional experiences that were infused with joy and love, positively influenced their inclusive teaching practice, heightened their personal drive and enriched their professional agency. Comparatively, some participants shared negative emotional experiences due to self-doubt, strained or broken relationships with others and, frustration with the challenging curriculum and lack of practical support. According to Parrott (2001), these negative emotions are primarily, experiences of anger, sadness and fear. This study found that the negative emotions of learning support teachers made them feel disempowered and adversely affected their inclusive teaching practice. This can be explained by Zembylas (2014) who views the emotional investment of teachers as an entanglement with teaching practice. Learning support teachers who felt disempowered questioned their purpose and commitment, harboured resentment towards change and masked their emotions. Similarly, Hargreaves (2001) and Taxer and Frenzel (2015) found that teachers demonstrate 'masking' when faced with dilemmas in negotiating professional distance which ties back to the findings on a hidden dimension of teacher identity. Contrary to the study of Botha and Rens (2018) who found that South African teachers experienced reality shock in their first year of teaching, this study found that learning support teachers across various professional life phases continued to experience a critical dissonance between theory and practice. The participants attributed their perceived gap to the overwhelming emotional reality of providing learning support and the continued lack of effective professional development in this regard.

Considering Zembylas' (2003b) perspective of teacher emotion as a powerful lens through which to interpret reality, this study found that participants were faced with teacher identity scenarios which they navigated using their teacher emotions. Participants felt that they had to mediate emotional boundaries in an act of self-preservation, to determine the emotional distances to be maintained between the self and others. Lasky and van Veen (2005) explain that the biological and social construction of teacher emotion is negotiated by social structures and identity to prevent identity-crisis and emotional burnout. In this study, learning support teachers negotiated emotional boundaries to form emotional bonds. Learning support teachers who experienced a greater emotional distance in relation to the self, others and the school

culture, had weakened emotional bonds that demotivated them, made them feel powerless, less productive and less resilient. Likewise, when learning support teachers perceived a lesser emotional distance in their individual, social and socio-political realities; they experienced strengthened emotional bonds which motivated and empowered them, promoted higher work engagement and productivity, and resulted in a more resilient teacher identity.

Professional distance increased when learning support teachers experienced feelings of guilt, anger, shame, inadequacy, distrust and failure Additionally, the self-evaluation of participants' emotional experiences and bonds influenced the extent to which they critiqued and reflected on their inclusive teaching practice, and their willingness to improve. Upon reflection, largely-negative emotional experiences made learning support teachers feel vulnerable and inhibited their willingness to adapt and improve their inclusive teaching practice, weakened their professional agency and therefore accelerated the idea of subversive, spoiled and hidden teacher identities. Contrastingly, professional distance decreased when learning support teachers experienced feelings of love, joy, pride, self-confidence and appreciation. These largely-positive emotional experiences made learning support teachers feel encouraged to adapt and improve their inclusive teaching practice, strengthened their professional agency and reduced the need for masking a hidden identity.

5.2.3 TO WHAT EXTENT DOES CAREER PHASES INFLUENCE LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHERS' PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE FIELD OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

The narratives of participants in this study were intersected with the typical teacher profiles of Day and Gu's (2007) study on professional life phases. The findings showed that some aspects of teacher identity were congruent with Day and Gu's study whilst other aspects were not characteristic of the specific given teacher profiles but rather a shared view across all phases, irrespective of career age. Like Day and Gu's results, the learning support teachers in this study demonstrated that teacher effectiveness varied with age and experience and was influenced by a positive professional teacher identity. The participants, particularly in their early careers, valued professional development. The professional life phases of learning support teachers therefore have a critical influence on a learning support teacher's identity and agency.

Two atypical themes were highlighted across the data. Firstly, learning support teachers in different professional life phases concurred that the nature of teaching learners who require

support remained personally and professionally challenging over the span of their career and stimulated intense emotional experiences. In some cases, participants described their role in learning support as a journey of self-discovery which echoes Bankole's (2013) description of a search for identity. Learning support teachers in this study found that their personal and professional teacher identities continued to grow, evolve and transform throughout their career phases, influenced by the degree of support they received in their personal and professional lives. Secondly, all the participants recognised the value of teamwork in effectively catering for learner needs. Teamwork and the existence of strong emotional bonds promoted teacher motivation, productivity, resilience and commitment throughout a learning support teacher's career. Likewise, feelings of loneliness and the lack of professional development and support, fostered weak emotional bonds that hindered growth and commitment. This finding can be explained using Parkison's (2008) philosophy that successful teachers rationalise their duties and collaborate with other teachers who identify with what drives them and distresses them. Similar to the results of Mulholland and O'Connor (2016), the participants in this study found that despite collaborative efforts, professional relationships remained tense.

5.3 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

i. The personal and professional identities of learning support teachers are interconnected and shaped by critical influences.

ii. Learning support teachers are personally driven, and experience 'a moral purpose', 'spirituality' and/ or a sense of 'mission' as propellers of their personal drive.

iii. Learning support teachers have a resilient nature demonstrated by strong 'professional agency' in respect of the professional dimension of teacher identity, a 'growth mindset' in response to the situated dimension, and sheer 'grit' in relation to the personal dimension as signs of resilience.

iv. Learning support teachers' narrative accounts of their identities and emotions indicate a 'counternarrative'. The hidden dimension of teacher identity-scenarios fluctuates in depth and is mostly influenced by a teacher's core identity and the need to mask negative emotions such as fear, distrust, guilt or shame.

v. Learning support teachers are emotionally invested in teaching which positively influences professional agency and/or negatively harbours feelings of disempowerment. Learning support teachers traverse emotional boundaries in

individual, social and socio-political identity-scenarios that results in the cultivation of reflective practice.

5.4 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study involved a small sample of learning support teachers in one educational district within the city of Pietermaritzburg. Though a purposeful sample was drawn, it was limited regarding the gender representation as all the participants are female. Teacher identity and teacher emotion is deeply personal and individualised, owing to the panoply of historical and contextual factors. Further research into these factors on a larger scale, and how they interact with the identity and emotions of learning support teachers may afford a deeper understanding of the conceptual arguments raised in this study.

5.5 REFLECTION: A CHAPTER SUMMARY

In Chapter one, I was guided by Mittler's (2000) view on inclusive education as *a road to be travelled*, navigated by teachers' thoughts, attitudes, perceptions, identities and emotions. He further describes some of the barriers and obstacles on this road as being invisible whilst others are created by the self within our *own heads and hearts*. Mittler's view speaks directly to who teachers are innately as people and as professionals, as the determinants of progress along the inclusive education road. This aptly summarised the focus of my study which found that it is indeed the identities and emotions of learning support teachers that guides inclusive teaching practice. Korthagen (2014, p. 3) similarly contends that "if we take the person of the teacher seriously as the central instrument through which practice takes form, we have to realize that personal frames of reference, feelings and needs determine teachers' practices". In germinating the design of this study, I drew on Motee (2016) and found that I visualized a learning support teacher as a growing tree, one who draws on valuable nutrients from its firm and fertile foundation to not only sustain itself but to also bear desirable fruit. Through its own life stages, the tree has been shaped by its growth and development, endured seasonal climatic changes and gradually built a resilient nature. Similarly, in adopting the tree metaphor and as presented in the discussion on the Identi-tree model, I found that learning support teachers draw on their teacher identities, teacher emotions and experiences to guide their inclusive teaching practice, to overcome their challenges and to motivate themselves in order to bring educational ideals to fruition. If one had a view from the treetop of a typical learning support teacher's career, one

would find that she provides the mental nutrition, emotional protection and physical support for learners to climb the barriers *(some invisible)* to learning whilst continually building on pedagogical knowledge. Typical learning support teachers endure daily storms inside and out of the inclusive classroom, which threaten their identities and influence their emotional wellbeing. Some of these storms are within their own heads and hearts.

In Chapter two, Brown (2018) brought to light the concept of unlocking potential, by describing the awakening of a little plant that lay fast asleep buried deep in the heart of a seed. This idea summarises the global purpose of inclusive education to meet the needs of every learner. In the landscape of learning support, this study found significantly, that learning support teachers had a personal drive to unlock the potential of their learners which defined their interconnected personal and professional identities and gave rise to intense teacher emotions when success and/or failure was experienced. In Chapter three, the root of the problems faced within the field of inclusive education was identified and a detailed account of the rationale for using an interpretive paradigm, qualitative research approach and narrative inquiry was given. The individual value of the research design elements contributed to the 'bigger picture' of the study as a whole. In light of the findings of this study, the collective identity of learning support teachers was highlighted as well as the true identities and emotions of individual participants affording the reader an opportunity to *see the forest for the trees.*

As I documented the detailed narratives of my participants in Chapter four, I found it empowering to reflect on my own reality as a learning support teacher, my emotionality and the (re)construction of my own teacher identity, going *out on a limb* to prevent any bias in the authentic 'restorying' of my participants' realities. The primary themes that addressed the research questions were unpacked using the frameworks of Day and Kington (2008), Day and Gu (2007) and Zembylas (2002), and the Identi-tree Model was presented and discussed. Of significant importance, this study found that learning support teachers view their profession as a journey of self-discovery which resonates with the interwoven nature of personal and professional teacher identities. In chapter 5, I presented a discussion and final synthesis of the principal themes and highlighted the key findings of the study. Upon reflection, narrative inquiry proved to be an enriching and insightful choice to explore the identities and emotions of learning support teachers from their complex narratives, and will hence be valuable in future if blended into the professional development programmes of teachers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Phindile Duma Tel: 033 392 1063 Ref: 2/4/8/1720

Mrs S Moodliar
61 Capricorn Crescent
Allandale
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Mrs Moodliar

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"FOR THE LOVE OF TEACHING! NARRATIVES OF TEACHER IDENTITY AND TEACHER EMOTION ROOTED IN LEARNING SUPPORT"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 28 January 2019 to 01 June 2021.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Phindile Duma at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

UMgungundlovu District

[redacted]

Dr. EV Nzama
Head of Department: Education
Date: 01/02/2019

...Championing Quality Education - Creating and Securing a Brighter Future

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Postal Address: Private Bag X9137 • Pietermaritzburg • 3200 • Republic of South Africa
Physical Address: 247 Burger Street • Anton Lembede Building • Pietermaritzburg • 3201
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Facebook: KZNDOE....Twitter: @DBE_KZN.... Instagram: kzn_education....Youtube:kzndoe

APPENDIX 2: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

20 February 2019

Mrs Selina Moodliar 218081026
School of Education
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mrs Moodliar

Protocol reference number: HSS/0081/019M
Project Title: For the love of Teaching! Narratives of teacher identity and teacher emotion rooted in learning support.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 29 January 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

.....

Prof Ronicka Mudaly (Deputy Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr Jaqueline Naidoo
cc. Academic Leader Research: Prof SB Khoza
cc. School Administrator: Ms N Jeenaran, Ms N Ngcobo and Ms K Sophie

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 **Email:** ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF CONSENT

61 Capricorn Crescent
Allandale
Pietermaritzburg
3201

25 March 2019

Dear Participant

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

My name is Selina Moodliar (Student No. 218081026) a Master of Education (MEd) student in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus). As part of the requirement for this degree, I am required to conduct a research project. The title of my research study is: **For the love of Teaching! Narratives of teacher identity and teacher emotion rooted in learning support.** The aim and purpose of this research study is to explore the identities and emotions of learning support teachers in their role as teacher of learners with special education needs. I humbly request your participation in this research project.

Having granted your permission, participation in this study will involve the following procedures: You will be interviewed for an approximately 25 to 40 minutes at a time convenient to you which will not disturb teaching and learning. Follow-up interviews may be conducted if necessary. The interview will be voice-recorded and transcribed. You will also be required to do a drawing (Tree-of-life), construct a craft (self-box) and write a response to a short story as methods of collecting data. Photographs will be taken of the tree drawings and selfboxes to be used as visual data. The duration of this participation if you choose to participate and remain in the study is expected to be 4-6 weeks. You may interact with other participants during this time during group sessions.

This study will not involve any risks and/or discomfort for the school and participants. Also, the study will not provide direct benefits for the school or participants. In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me, my supervisor or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

My contact details
Email: selzmoodliar@gmail.com Cell: 060 530 6388
Supervisor
Dr J. Naidoo Email address: naidooj@ukzn.ac.za Telephone 033 260 5867

UKZN Research Office
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000 (KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA)
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research study is voluntary and you may withdraw participation at any point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation you will not be penalized. There are no consequences if you withdraw from the study. No costs will be incurred by you as a result of participation in the study and there are no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study.

All names of schools and participants will be changed and pseudonyms will be used so that schools and participants remain anonymous. Information provided by participants will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. Data generated through lesson observations, questionnaires and/ or semi-structured interviews will be stored in my supervisor's office, at the School of Education, Pietermaritzburg campus for five years, and thereafter be destroyed.
Your positive response in this regard will be highly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours in Education

[redacted]

S. Moodliar (Mrs)

DECLARATION OF CONSENT

I have been informed about the study entitled:

For the love of Teaching! Narratives of teacher identity and teacher emotion rooted in learning support by Selina Moodliar

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction. I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to. If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher via Email: selzmoodliar@gmail.com/ Cell: 060 530 6388.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researcher then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000 (KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA)
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable
I hereby provide consent to: (Please circle response)

Interview	(YES) / NO
Audio-recording of my interview	(YES) / NO
Photograph of my drawing and self-box	(YES) / NO
Group discussion	(YES) / NO

[redacted]

Signature of Participant

23/03/2019
Date

Participant's Pseudonym : Ms Fyabas

APPENDIX 4: SCHEDULE OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Biographical Information:

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. How many years of teaching experience as a learning support teacher do you have?
3. How would you describe your primary and secondary schooling experiences? Give examples
4. What tertiary education qualifications do you have?
5. What subjects did you major in?
6. What are the demographics of your school setting??
7. How many learners do you have in your class?
8. How many adults other than you are in the classroom?

Semi-structured Interview Questions:

1. What do you understand by the concept 'teacher identity'?
2. How would you describe yourself as a person?
3. How would you describe yourself as a teacher?
4. What motivated you to become a teacher?
5. What motivated you to become a special education teacher?
6. What motivates you to stay in the field of learning support teaching?
7. How has your views of teaching changed since you first started teaching?
8. How has your teaching practice changed over time?
9. Can you tell me about your first day in the classroom, your best experience as a teacher, and the moments you would like to forget?
10. If you had to go back to the first day in your teaching career, what would you say to your younger self? (please describe how experience may have changed your identity or emotions)
11. What positive or negative emotions affect your teacher identity as a learning support teacher?
12. What qualities do you think make a good learning support teacher? Explain or give examples.
13. What distinguishes or defines you as a teacher, specifically a special education teacher?
14. How has working with LSEN learners affected your emotions as teacher?
15. What do you think you still need to learn to become more effective as a learning support teacher?
16. What challenges do you experience as a learning support teacher? Give examples.
17. What strategies do you use to overcome these challenges?

APPENDIX 5: THE TREE OF LIFE - VERBAL PROMPTS TO AID CONSTRUCTION

Roots:

The roots are a metaphor for where you come from, your family history and those who have taught you most in life. It can include where you were born, where you went to school, old family stories and important lessons you learnt when growing up.

Questions to think about: What roots do you have in your life? How important are these to you? Do you feel that your roots have any impact on your emotions and identity? Do you have any favourite memories?

Ground

The ground is a metaphor for your present life and some of the day-to-day activities you engage in. For example, who you live with now, your work, where you go each day.

Questions to think about: What is the ground like in your life? What influences you on a daily basis? Who do you live or work with? Do you have a favourite place you visit? Which emotions do you experience in the classroom and if so, do they affect your inclusive teaching practice? Is your ground fairly stable or frequently changing?

Trunk

The trunk of your tree is going to symbolize your skills and abilities. The things that we (or others) feel that we are good at. This can range from being a good friend or listener, to being good at a particular aspect in your work.

Questions to think about: What skills or abilities do you have? Are you organized? Are you good with working with people or children? How important are these abilities to you? Do you value them in others? Do you find it easier to think of your faults compared to your skills? Are there any skills that other people think you have? Do you think you have unique abilities which can help you in the inclusive classroom? (e.g. expression through art, asking for help, etc.)

Branches

The branches represent your hopes, dreams and aspirations.

Questions to think about: If you could have three wishes, what would they be? Do you hope for health, happiness, success, money, family, etc.? How achievable do you feel your aspirations are? Have your experiences in the inclusive classroom affected what you are hoping for or aspiring to be? Do you have hopes and wishes for other people in your life?

Leaves & Fruit

We are now going to work on our leaves and add fruit (you can use any types of fruit or flowers). The leaves show important people in our lives. These can range from family, friends, members of staff, learners etc. Anyone who plays an important role in your life. You might also want to acknowledge people who have passed away as 'fallen leaves' or 'leaves in the wind'. The fruit symbolize the gifts you have received from the important people in your life. These can range from material gifts to expressions of kindness.

Questions to think about: Who plays an important role in your life? What type of influence have they had? How have they supported or helped you? Do you have a favourite memory with

each of these people? Do you feel that you have played an important role in their lives? Has your professional identity affected your relationships at all? Have these people provided you with a shoulder to cry on, support, compliments, or hugs? What have you given them in return?

Storms

Take time to think about what might be a threat to your tree. For this we use the metaphor of storms. These can include everything from problems at work, problems at home, family conflict, mental health problems, illness, lack of resources, loss of important people in your life, etc.

Questions to think about: What storms have you experienced in the past? How did you manage these? What was unhelpful and what was helpful during this time? What storms are you currently experiencing in your personal life? What storms are you currently experiencing in your professional life? What storms do you think there might be in the future?

Animals

We are now going to talk about animals which might come during a storm. These might be important people or services in your life who are good during really difficult times or times in times of a crisis.

Questions to think about: Who helps you during difficult times? Who is good in a crisis? What people and services do you have available in your life who are helpful and supportive? What type of animals could represent them? What type of characteristics do they have? (eg. wise owl, quickly adapting chameleon, busy ant, free flying bird, snail with a hard, protective shell, multitasking centipede, thrifty squirrel) Do you ever act as an animal for someone else who is in a storm?

Reflection

Now reflect on what you have created.

The Tree of Life is meant to give hope during difficult times. It allows people to speak about their lives in ways that make them stronger, as people get to speak about their 'roots' (where they come from), their skills and abilities, their hopes and dreams, as well as the special people in their lives.

APPENDIX 6: THE IDENTI-TREE MODEL - A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF A TYPICAL LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER

APPENDIX 7: VIGNETTES

Vignette 1

Ziyanda, a seven year-old diagnosed with ADHD*

Ziyanda is 7 years-old and has been asked to leave three different primary schools because of her disruptive and inappropriate behaviour. She has been sent to your school in March, by the Department of Education, and placed in your class which already has a role of 31 learners. In school, she bites and often hits or punches other children, fidgets constantly, and cannot seem to follow the teacher's directions. Her constant disruptions interfere with the momentum of teaching and learning. At home, Ziyanda's parents also experience her as uncooperative and easily angered. She throws temper tantrums at bedtime, mealtime, and whenever she is asked to stop one task and start another. Her parents had neuro-psychological testing done last year and she was diagnosed with ADHD with executive functioning deficits. Ziyanda started medication, which helped somewhat, but the tantrums and school difficulties persisted, escalating to petty theft from her friends and at home. Her parents are at the end of their rope because she does not respond to the same kinds of rules that worked on her older siblings. Her parents argued about what approach to take. It seemed the more they argued, the worse Ziyanda's behaviour became. They worry about her future and the effect she was having on the family.

1. How do you feel about including Ziyanda in your class? (Discuss your initial emotional response, any concerns and fears you may have personally and professionally as well as the approach you will need to take to ensure Ziyanda's success in your classroom)

2. Discuss a plan of action to support Ziyanda, drawing on your knowledge, skills, values and career experience. (This should focus on adapted instruction, assessment and socio-emotional support)

*Not a real name

Vignette 2

Caiden, a five year-old diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder*

Caiden presented with problematic behaviours that interfered with his learning, his social interactions, and his relationships. At home, Caiden frequently did not respond to instructions and had a difficult time interacting with his little sister appropriately. He refused to eat anything except bananas and rice. Caiden's single mum received reports from his teacher that he struggled with following directions in class, would not remain seated for circle time, and had difficulty with eye contact, impulse control and regulating sensory information. His speech development was delayed and he often relied on hand gestures and guttural noises in order to communicate.

1. Why is your inclusive classroom, teaching skills and career experience suitable to support a learner like Caiden with ASD?

2. What emotions do you feel when teaching learners who are unable to communicate as effectively as other learners?

*Not a real name

APPENDIX 8: SELF-BOX CONSTRUCTION

Craft activity for Research Dissertation:

For the love of Teaching! Narratives of teacher identity and teacher emotion rooted in learning support

Creating a self-box (A learning support teacher's toolkit)

Self-boxes according to Leitch (2008), are constructed in a creative process to capture the essence of a teacher's identity. It is a representation of the innermost self on the inside of the box and the outermost self on the outside of the box.

For the next session, please bring along an empty shoebox with a lid which you are at liberty to decorate, paint, collage or draw on in order to reflect aspects of your teacher identity. These reflections will be both personal and professional. The researcher encourages you to fill the box with any 5 objects or pictures that are significantly meaningful to your inclusive teaching practice. These objects can be literal eg. Your favourite lipgloss or they can be figurative eg. A rubber ball might represent your ability to bounce back from adversity. Photos will be taken of the final products.

Suggested Thinking Prompts for the construction of teacher self-boxes

1. Using the box, describe your personal and professional identity. What images have you placed on the outside to depict your outer-self and what have you placed inside to depict your inner-self?

2. Explain why you chose these objects. Share what the artefact represents in your teaching,

3. What is the time period of the artefact? Does it relate to your early teaching, current teaching or retirement goals?

4. Are there others involved in this artefact memory? What role do they play? What is their influence on your thinking?

5. What metaphor would you choose to represent, symbolize, and reinforce the significance of these objects to you?

6. Express an emotion that this artefact brings forth for you. Describe where that emotion generates from and might extend to in your teaching. Be descriptive.

APPENDIX 9: SUMMARY OF THEMES ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTION 1

The narratives of participants located within Day and Kington's (2008) Framework on the dimensions of teacher identity-scenarios

Interconnected personal and professional identities	
Participant	*Narrative*
Mrs Acacia	I think it's the factors that make-up who you are. Many of our learners think we're just a warm body in a classroom. It's hard for them to believe that their teacher has a life outside of the classroom so they cringe when they see us in the shopping mall or they think it's funny to find us at the pool. Hey, we have lives too. We're not just teachers! We're wives, mums, grandmothers, community helpers too. paperclip - to keep things together. It's important to remember that although our emotions are valid, we are modelling the role of a responsible adult who can self-regulate. my role at home and my role as a teacher may be different but invariably held together by my sense of self. Our own children and the learners in our classrooms are watching us like hawks. I have to 'keep it together' and emulate positivity.
Miss Aloe	I understand "teacher identity" as the role and value an individual teacher brings to their school as a whole, and their classroom as an educator. Because all teachers are different, and their skills, strengths and contributions are all different but still valuable, teacher identity to me is how a teacher fits into the school environment, and identifies their roles and contributions as a professional. As a teacher, I am flexible, adaptable and dependable as a teacher. I have a strong work ethic, I am reliable, and because I care so much I try to go above and beyond what is expected of me on a daily basis. I am organised and well-prepared, have sound classroom management strategies, and I enjoy the dynamic interactions I have with learners. All of these things however have been influenced by my personal experiences and I am no different in my personal life than I am in my professional role as a teacher.
Miss Baobab	I understand teacher identity as a teacher's individuality. The teaching style, teaching methods a teacher uses and their general choices. Areas of weaknesses and strengths that a teacher has both personally and professionally. Also the situations that a teacher has been placed in and experiences that a teacher has had in his or her career.
Mrs Fynbos	I think teacher identity would be the initial reaction of what people think of you. Is she strict, kind, organised, well planned etc.? But it's more than just my personality, it's my constituent parts. The sum of my experiences, emotions and values in my personal life and my work environment as a teacher. I would say that I am a quiet, patient person, someone that cares deeply for others and animals. A deep thinker, I internalise issues a lot rather than expressing myself off the bat. I tend to be a quiet teacher; however, I am strict. I am a good listener and I let my learners know that they are able to express themselves and that their opinions matter. I tend to use 'my teacher voice' at home as often as I use my 'mom voice' at school.
Miss Oak	I chose 5 things that describe me as a person. They both apply to my personal and my professional lives. I feel that my personal life creates my professional life: one cannot exist without the other. Cling film - A teacher should be transparent. What you see is what you get. I am very shy at the beginning but when you get to know me, I open up and speak honestly. People tend to appreciate this quality as they get my honest opinion. The cling film also represents seeing the world through a clear lens, that I should not be fooled by a rose-tinted view of the world. The learners I teach cannot overcome their condition or impairment but they can have a rewarding learning experience.
Mrs Pine	Be as wise as an owl. - My family and friends, colleagues have helped me 'make' who I am. I would not have become who I am without them. So grateful for having them in my life to support and grow my career. They have even burnt the midnight oil with me. I feel that it has shaped the way I relate to others. I know the benefits of having someone in your court, supporting, defending and protecting.
Mrs Rooibos	Rainbow - shows inclusivity of diverse learners and their cultures in the classroom which is a representation of South Africa's identity of a rainbow nation. Also signify new beginnings for me personally as I relocated to a different province and was transferred to a new school. I am adapting to a new environment and making a positive impact on the learners and the school because of my work ethic

Identity is shaped by critical influences			
Dimension of Identity	*Wow moments*	*Personal experiences*	*Significant relationships*
Personal		Miss Aloe Mrs Fynbos Mrs Oak	Miss Aloe Mrs Fynbos Mrs Oak Mrs Pine Miss Baobab
Professional	Mrs Acacia Mrs Pine Miss Aloe Miss Baobab	Mrs Acacia Miss Baobab	Mrs Fynbos Mrs Pine Miss Aloe Mrs Oak Mrs Acacia
Situated	Mrs Rooibos	Mrs Oak Miss Aloe Mrs Pine	Mrs Acacia Mrs Rooibos Miss Baobab

Teacher identity is personally-driven			
Dimension of Identity	*Moral purpose*	*Spirituality*	*Mission*
Personal	Mrs Acacia Mrs Rooibos Miss Baobab	Miss Aloe	Mrs Fynbos Mrs Acacia
Professional	Mrs Fynbos Mrs Oak	Mrs Rooibos	Miss Aloe Mrs Oak
Situated	Miss Aloe Mrs Pine	Mrs Acacia	Mrs Rooibos Mrs Pine

APPENDIX 10: SUMMARY OF THEMES ADDRESSING RESEARCH QUESTION 2

The emotions of teachers located in Zembylas' (2002) Genealogies of Teacher Emotion and cross-referenced with Parrott's (2001) 'Tree Structure of Human Emotion'

Emotional investment has a positive influence on professional agency

Nature of Emotion	*Participant*	*Primary Emotion*	*Secondary Emotion*	*Tertiary Emotion*
Individual Reality	Miss Aloe	love, joy	optimism, zest	caring, enthusiasm
	Mrs. Acacia	love	sadness, horror	anguish, despair, hope, satisfaction
Social Interaction	Mrs. Rooibos	love, joy	surprise, affection	caring, sentimentality
	Mrs. Pine	love	affection	sentimentality
	Miss Baobab	sadness	sympathy	hope
Socio-political	Mrs. Oak	fear	affection, optimism	eagerness, distress
	Mrs. Fynbos	joy	cheerfulness	satisfaction

Emotionally invested learning support teachers feel negatively disempowered

Nature of Emotion	*Participant*	*Primary Emotion*	*Secondary Emotion*	*Tertiary Emotion*
Individual Reality	Mrs. Acacia	sadness, fear	sympathy	frustration
Social Interaction	Mrs. Fynbos	sadness	neglect	frustration despair insecurity
	Miss Baobab	fear sadness	sadness suffering shame	unhappy worry anguish
	Mrs. Pine	anger	irritability exasperation disgust	frustration contempt
Socio-political	Miss Aloe	anger sadness fear	neglect revulsion	frustration inadequacy humiliation despair
	Mrs. Oak	sadness	disappointment	despair
	Mrs. Acacia	sadness	dislike	embarrassment bitter caring
	Mrs. Rooibos	anger	irritability	frustration

Negotiating emotional boundaries forms emotional bonds				
Nature of Emotion	*Participant*	*Primary Emotion*	*Secondary Emotion*	*Tertiary Emotion*
Individual Reality	Miss Baobab	joy	optimism, zest, pride	zeal, triumph
	Mrs. Acacia	joy	optimism	enjoyment, thrill
	Mrs. Fynbos	sadness	self-neglect, self-compassion	melancholic
Social Interaction	Miss Baobab	joy	irritability	eagerness
	Mrs. Oak	anger, joy	disgust, pride	sympathy, contempt, happiness
	Mrs. Fynbos	love	affection	compassion
Socio-political	Mrs. Fynbos	anger	irritability	agitation
	Mrs. Pine	joy	cheerfulness, pride	enjoyment
	Mrs. Acacia	sadness, fear	neglect, horror	embarrassment, humiliation, shock

Negotiating emotional boundaries results in reflective practice				
Nature of Emotion	*Participant*	*Primary Emotion*	*Secondary Emotion*	*Tertiary Emotion*
Individual Reality	Mrs. Pine	fear, sadness	nervousness	worry, melancholy
	Mrs. Fynbos	sadness	disgust, optimism	anguish
Social Interaction	Miss Aloe	love, joy	pride, zest	care, hope, enthusiasm
Socio-political	Mrs. Rooibos	anger	disgust	contempt
	Mrs. Acacia	sadness	disappointment	dismay, insecurity

APPENDIX 11: TEACHER NARRATIVES ACCORDING TO PROFESSIONAL LIFE PHASES

Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase One – (0-3 years)** 'commitment, support and challenge', building an identity and classroom competence
Biographical information of Participant	Miss Aloe (SPROUT)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*inexperienced teacher, doubt and uncertainty, mentor teachers, existing pressure and stress, Fear of failure, (rain) - the idea of hope, Sun - laughter makes the storm go away, there is an overwhelming sense of pride, and I am grateful that I have the opportunity to make a difference. Sometimes I wish I could pack my bags and start over in another profession.*
Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase One – (0-3 years)** 'commitment, support and challenge', building an identity and classroom competence
Biographical information of Participant	Mrs. Oak (SPROUT)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*difficulty giving the children the correct support, dealing with some parents, half a job is being done* ***physically burnt out****. professional role imposing on my personal role, stressful, grey clouds (illness, pregnancy, changing approach to work, mood swings, overstimulation, self-regulation;* ***lack of support in work environment****, change in growing family - the need for finding balance between wife, mom and teacher roles. Not just anybody can be a learning support teacher. thankful for past experiences both good and bad as they have moulded me, taught me valuable lessons.* ***lose hope and just go with the flow***
Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase Two – (4-7 years)** establishing 'identity and efficacy in classroom', developing a professional identity
Biographical information of Participant	Mrs. Fynbos (SAPLING)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*feel inadequate, helpless. I enjoy my job, home life gets in the way, change and adapt to the learners. It's my transition from wife, to wife and mother. maternal instinct now greatly influences my choices in the classroom. Being creative reduces the frustration, positive emotions come from having successful lessons, seeing children laugh and smile and at times, receiving acknowledgement from management. of what use is anger other than to continue motivating me.* ***I've also considered being a full time mom several times***
Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase Three – (8-15 years)** 'managing changes in role and identity: growing tensions and transitions', defining work/life balance
Biographical information of Participant	Miss Baobab (SEEDLING)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*general belief that a teacher's work ends at 2:30. Constantly growing, learning, adapting and finding a way to dig deeper into my experiences and knowledge, reaching out for assistance, mentorshipfrustration in the classroom, storm cloud - overcrowded classrooms, disrespect from learners, time. Strong winds - lack of productivity, shopaholic, issues of trust and deceit. My love and passion for mathematics sustained me through the tough times. You might even feel like you don't belong here.*

Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase Four – (16-23 years)** facing 'challenges to motivation and commitment', managing work/life tensions
Biographical information of Participant	Mrs. Rooibos (MATURE TREE)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*stress, frustration, not connecting with school management, poor communication, feeling of being undermined as a professional,* ***reduced collegiality****, inferior, takes a while to unpack the classroom experiences and change roles. separate work and home life, storm clouds - balance between home and school; insufficient resources in the classroom, frustration (discipline problems).* ***I have not attended any formal workshops on effective strategies to implement in the inclusive classroom****. chalk - symbolises an essential resource in teaching and learning. various colours of chalk to represent catering for learners' different levels of understanding. work is love in action, need for me to slay the dragon new beginnings for me personally, different province , transfer, positive impact, work ethic.*
Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase Five – (24-30 years)** encountering 'challenges to sustaining motivation', adjusting to change
Biographical information of Participant	Mrs. Acacia (ANCIENT TREE)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*confident in ability, built over time, continuous personal and professional development, self-motivation, stagnant career, accountable for my department. communication lines break down, personality clashes, embarrassment / negativity. didn't feel like coming to school, abusive acts of power. memory gets me through the tough and stressful times. emotional rollercoaster. question decision to become a teacher, transforming, old school teachers, donkey's years' experience, technobabble. restore my hope.* ***Run, damn it run! I want to run for the hills***
Professional Life Phase (Day & Gu, 2007)	**Phase Six – (>31 years)** 'sustaining/declining motivation, ability to cope with change, looking to retire', sustaining commitment
Biographical information of Participant	Mrs. Pine (SNAG)
Phrases coded for Teacher development, Efficacy, Commitment & Motivation	*retirement, feeling utterly spent, exhausted after years of giving all of myself and serving others. time for me to serve my own family now, take better care of myself. When I first started teaching I was soft spoken, calm and tolerant, lots of stress. Now I am more mature, end of my career, finally enjoy the respect from the school community, Sharpen my attitude/ values, achieve more in retirement. Wise owl. Personal concerns for post-retirement: illness, loneliness, age-related challenges, unsolved problems.*

APPENDIX 12: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

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APPENDIX 13: LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATE

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To whom it may concern

EDITING OF DISSERTATION FOR SELINA MOODLIAR

I have a master's degree in Social Science, Research Psychology and a TEFL qualification from UKZN. I also have an undergraduate and honour's degree Bachelor of Arts in Health Sciences and Social Services from UNISA.

I have 15 years of teaching experience and have been editing academic theses for students from UKZN, UNISA, the University of Fort Hare, and DUT for the past eight years. I have further undertaken editing, transcribing and other research work for private individuals and businesses.

I hereby confirm that I have edited Selina Moodliar's dissertation titled **"FOR THE LOVE OF TEACHING! NARRATIVES OF TEACHER IDENTITY AND TEACHER EMOTION ROOTED IN LEARNING SUPPORT"** for submission of her master's dissertation in education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Corrections were made in respect of grammar, tenses, spelling and language usage using track changes in MS Word 2013. Once corrections have been attended to, the dissertation should be correct.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Terry Shuttleworth (TEFL, UKZN, MSocSc, Res Psych, UKZN).

DISCLAIMER

Should the student not attend to the changes suggested by the editor and make additions to the dissertation after editing has been completed, the editor cannot guarantee the language, grammar and tenses are correct at the time of publication.