

**PROMOTING LIFELONG TEACHER LEARNING IN THE INTERMEDIATE PHASE:  
A SELF-STUDY OF A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**

**BY**

**BONGIWE CAROL VILAKAZI**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE**

**OF**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION – TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT (TEPD)**

**IN THE**

**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
EDGEWOOD CAMPUS  
DURBAN**

**DATE: DECEMBER 2013**

**SUPERVISOR: DR KATHLEEN PITHOUSE-MORGAN**

## **STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR**

This dissertation is submitted with / without my approval.

Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

Date:

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**  
**DECLARATION - PLAGIARISM**

I, Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
  - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced
  - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.
5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Signed.....

Date.....

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandmother who wanted me to be a successful woman. Her interpretation of success was a constant search for knowledge. To my late mother-in-law who encouraged me to persevere against all odds in my lifelong learning; may their souls rest in peace. I also make a special dedication to my daughter for her continued support throughout my research for *e learning* knowledge. I give a special word of gratitude to my family, my extended family and friends for their inspiration and motivation throughout my study.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank God Almighty for giving me strength to finish my life-long dream. It would not have been possible if my supervisor was not such a powerful encouraging person, thank you Kathleen for motivating me until the end. You showed me that as teachers we can make a difference by believing in our learners. You helped me re-ignite the passion I have for lifelong learning. Furthermore, I would like to thank my critical friends who have shared in all the difficulties and joys during the accumulation of this dissertation.

## ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessments
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
DET	Department of Education and Training
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
HED	Higher Education Diploma
HoD	Head of Department
HIV & AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MEd	Master of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SANCA	South African National Council on Alcoholism
SSA	Sub-Standard A
SSB	Sub-Standard B
TEPD	Teacher Education and Professional Development
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this self-study was to explore how I could learn from my own experiences to more effectively promote lifelong teacher learning as an Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. Lifelong teacher learning is treasured in this rapidly changing world and is also encouraged by the Department of Education through teacher professional development, which includes organisational learning and change. Wenger's (1998) *social theory of learning* and Kelly's (2006) *socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning* are two complementary theoretical perspectives that helped me understand the concept of teacher learning in a way that was appropriate for my self-study research. I used a personal history self-study methodology to re-examine myself and my experiences as a lifelong learner, with the aim of understanding how I can better encourage and promote lifelong teacher learning in my school. Using this methodology helped me to consider how a deeper understanding of my lived experiences could enhance my professional practice as a HoD. The strategies that I used to generate data for my study – journal writing, memory drawing and artefact retrieval – helped me to remember circumstances, events and people that have made a difference to my experiences of lifelong learning. These strategies could also be used by other teachers in developing themselves professionally through lifelong teacher learning. From my personal history narrative, I identified four key themes in relation to my topic of promoting teachers' lifelong learning: *the value of role models, the significance of self-motivation, the impact of gender in education and the language barrier*. By exploring my personal history of learning and teaching, I became aware of how central lifelong learning has been to my personal and professional development. Thus, my personal history self-study research helped me to become more mindful of the value of teachers' lifelong learning. Through the study, I became conscious that personal history self-study methodology is itself a form of lifelong learning that can be a vital tool for teacher development.

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE</b>	<b>CAPTION</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
FIGURE 3.1	A photograph of my maternal grandmother – <i>ukhulu</i> who still inspires me to keep on learning.	24
FIGURE 3.2	A photograph of my friends and me in our school uniforms: “We all felt the same” .	30
FIGURE 3.3	A photograph of my-mother-in-law supporting me at my Higher Education Diploma graduation.	37
FIGURE 3.4	A memory drawing of my late principal who encouraged me to study in order to lead with confidence.	38
FIGURE 3.5	A photograph of my B.Ed. Honours certificate of which I am very proud.	40
FIGURE 3.6	A photograph of My Grade Two class celebrating Heritage Day in 1990 (Commemoration of our heroes).	42
FIGURE 3.7	A photograph of Durban harbor where we took the Grade Six learners on an excursion.	44
FIGURE 3.8	A photograph of Grade Six learners at Moses Mabhida stadium.	45
FIGURE 3.9	A photograph of Some of Grade Six learners at EThekwini beach.	45
FIGURE 3.10	A photograph of Grade Six learners in a Science class learning about marine animals.	46
FIGURE 3.11	A photograph of a Children’s Rights Day march led by Grade seven learners.	47
FIGURE 3.12	A photograph of learners performing on Children’s Rights Day.	48
FIGURE 3.13	A photograph of me and a Grade Seven learner at Prize giving day 2011 (the Grade Seven learner is carrying other certificates received in various subjects and receiving the DUX shield).	48
FIGURE 3.14	A photograph of Grade Seven learners’ farewell function in 2010.	49
FIGURE 3.15	A photograph of Grade Seven learners, parents and teachers enjoying the meals prepared at school.	49
FIGURE 3.16	A magazine page that symbolises my relationship with learners.	51
FIGURE 3.17	A photograph of teachers’ workshop at my school.	54

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGE</b>
Title	i
Statement by Supervisor	ii
Declaration	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Acronyms	vi
Abstract	vii
List of Figures	viii

### CHAPTER ONE:

#### PREPARATION FOR A LONG JOURNEY

Introduction	1
Understanding Lifelong Teacher Learning	2
Who am I and why am I undertaking This Study?	6
My Research Questions	7
My Methodological Approach	8
Conclusion and Overview of the Dissertation	8

### CHAPTER TWO:

#### MY PERSONAL HISTORY SELF-STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS

Introduction	10
Research Paradigm	10
Personal History Self-Study Methodology	11
My Professional Context and Research Participants	11
Data Generation Strategies	13
Data Representation and Interpretation	17
Limitations and Challenges of the Study	19
Trustworthiness	21
Ethical Issues	21

Conclusion	22
------------	----

### **CHAPTER THREE:**

#### **THE FULFILLMENT OF THE DREAM OF A RURAL AFRICAN GIRL AND HER GRANDMOTHER**

Introduction	23
My School Days	23
Teachers' Training College: Life in an Unfriendly Environment	32
Further Education as the Pathway to Success	34
My Development as a Teacher	41
Conclusion	55

### **CHAPTER FOUR:**

#### **LEARNING FROM MY EDUCATIONIONAL JOURNEY: PERSEVERANCE IS THE MOTHER OF SUCCESS**

Introduction	56
My Interpretation of my Lived Educational Experiences	57
The Value of Role Models	57
The Significance of Self-motivation	61
The Impact of Gender in Education	70
The Language Barrier	75
Conclusion	80

### **CHAPTER FIVE**

#### **A REFLECTIVE REVIEW OF MY PERSONAL HISTORY SELF-STUDY**

Introduction	82
A reflective Review of the Dissertation	82
Conclusion	86

<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>88</b>
-------------------	-----------

<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>95</b>
-------------------	-----------



Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre  
Westville Campus  
Private Bag x54001  
DURBAN, 4000  
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587  
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609  
[mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

26 August 2011

**Mrs BC Vilakazi (208524870)**  
**School of Education & Development**  
**Faculty of Education**  
**Edgewood Campus**

Dear Mrs Vilakazi

**PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0753/011M**  
**PROJECT TITLE: Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-Study of a Head of Department**

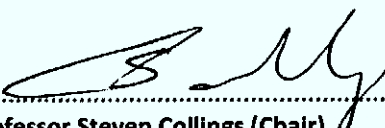
In response to your application dated 17 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**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 school/department for a period of 5 years.**

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

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
**Professor Steven Collings (Chair)**  
**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

cc. Supervisor: Dr K Pithouse-Morgan  
cc: Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research Office, Faculty of Education, Edgewood Campus

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **PREPARATION FOR A LONG JOURNEY**

#### **Introduction**

We teachers begin our practice with knowledge, skills and attitudes that we have acquired from our initial teacher education as well as our past experiences as learners in schools (Allender & Allender, 2006). However, in my view, this is not sufficient for classroom competence in a rapidly changing society. I believe that we continually need to improve our understanding and expertise in order to enhance and advance our teaching practice. Likewise, Nieto (2003) asserts that teachers need to keep learning throughout their careers so as to progress. Furthermore, Collins (2009, p. 614) maintains that because “experts estimate that knowledge doubles every 3 to 10 years” there is a need for teachers to update their knowledge and skills periodically.

Hence, we teachers need to acquaint ourselves with lifelong teacher learning. The South African Department of Higher Education and Training’s Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (DHET, 2011) stipulates that every teacher is expected to be “a scholar, researcher and a lifelong learner” (p. 49). The policy further emphasises that lifelong learning means that practicing teachers should engage in on-going learning in order to:

strengthen or supplement existing, or develop new, specialisations and interests, and in general improve their capacity to engage with, support and assist other educators, as well as support staff, pupils and parents, not only at the classroom and school levels but also in the community and wider context. (p. 31)

The focus of my personal history self-study research is on lifelong teacher learning. According to the DHET (2011, pp. 51-52), lifelong teacher learning is when “[the] educator will achieve on-going personal, academic, occupational and professional growth through pursuing reflective study and research in their field, in broader professional and educational matters, and in other related fields”. This implies that as teachers we are expected to develop ourselves personally and professionally, to benefit our learners, schools and society at large.



The purpose of this self-study is to explore how I can learn from my own experiences to promote lifelong teacher learning more effectively as an Intermediate Phase (Grades Four–Six) Head of Department (HoD). To accomplish this purpose, I re-examine my lived experiences of lifelong learning in order to gain insight into the phenomenon. Additionally, I look at how I can draw on my deeper understanding of relevant literature and of my lived experiences so as to enhance my day-to-day practice to promote lifelong teacher learning.

In this chapter, I introduce the study by declaring my focus and purpose. Then, I identify the key concept that underpins the study. To give clarity, I highlight three significant themes from literature in relation to my study of lifelong teacher learning and, in so doing, identify two complementary theoretical perspectives that have helped me to make sense of this key concept. Next, I give the reasons why I am interested in doing this personal history self-study and I explain my research questions. I also introduce my methodological approach. To conclude, I give an overview of the dissertation.

### **Understanding Lifelong Teacher Learning**

Here, I provide a brief introduction to particular scholarly perspectives on lifelong teacher learning that gave me a sense of direction as I began my study (Mitchell & Weber, 2005). This initial discussion has been organised according to key themes that relate to the focus and purpose of the study. Further engagement with relevant literature has been integrated into subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Therefore, there is no separate literature review chapter. As Nash (2004, pp. 6-7, 80) explains, in scholarly personal history writing, bringing in “scholarly background references...when they are directly applicable” serves to “enhance and add something to the writer’s text” as it evolves. In this way, “[other scholars’] ideas [are explored] within the framework of [the writer’s] personal narrative” (p. 66) rather than the other way around.

#### **Theme 1: Understanding Lifelong Teacher Learning as a Concept**

In this study, I am focusing on the key concept of *teacher learning*. Shulman and Shulman (2004, p. 267) state that teacher learning can be viewed as “a multi-layered conception”, consisting of “vision, motivation, understanding, practice and reflection”. Thus, I see that a

teacher who aims to be a lifelong learner always has a dream that is inspired by her thoughtful application of what she is learning and her consideration of being a better teacher. According to Fraser, Kennedy, Reid and McKinney (2007, p. 156), teacher “learning is a process of self-development leading to personal growth as well as development of skills and knowledge that facilitates the education of young people”. Thus, a teacher who is engaged in lifelong learning shows change in her attitudes, beliefs, values, skills and knowledge. Hence, I understand that teacher learning can involve emotional, intellectual and social dimensions.

Wenger’s (1998) *social theory of learning* and Kelly’s (2006) *socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning* are two complementary theoretical perspectives that help me understand the concept of teacher learning in a way that is appropriate for my personal history self-study research. Through the theoretical lens of a social theory of learning, I locate teachers as participants in communities of practice. In my understanding, teachers in a community of practice are a group of teachers who share teaching as a profession and who share a commitment to lifelong learning. Thus, I hope to use what I learn from my self-study to better support lifelong teacher learning within a community of practice at my school. Another primary focus of Wenger’s theory is on learning as social participation. Wenger (1998) explains that social participation shapes who we are, what we do and how we interpret what we do. Likewise, Samaras, Hicks and Berger (2004, p. 911) explain that “personal history self-study is about the self in relation to others in historical and social contexts that facilitate the educative experience”. Thus, I understand lifelong teacher learning as something that happens through teachers’ social participation in the various contexts in which they are located throughout their lives. As Putnam and Borko (2000) explain, social interaction with the people in teachers’ environments is a major determinant of both what teachers learn and how this learning takes place.

In addition to Wenger’s social theory of learning, I am drawing on Kelly’s (2006) socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning. This perspective highlights how culture also plays a role in teacher learning because during social participation there is sharing of and sometimes change in our customary beliefs and practices. Furthermore, Samaras et al. (2004, p. 918) highlight that “research in personal history with the goal of self-knowing also explores key, and often hidden, issues regarding the influences of culture, race, and gender in teaching and learning”. Thus, I

understand that researching lifelong teacher learning using a personal history self-study approach requires me to look closely such socio-cultural issues have influenced my own learning and development.

Kelly (2006) views teacher learning as an interactive process of developing expertise, with an emphasis on sharing information, experiences and ideas. He argues that “[the] process of knowing-in-practice does not reside within individuals; rather it is distributed across teachers” (2006, p. 507). Hence, I understand that sharing information, experiences, ideas, beliefs and practices, through both formal and informal learning processes, is a key part of teacher learning. As Samaras et al. (2004) explain, such sharing also plays a central part in personal history self-study research.

### **Theme 2: Lifelong Teacher Learning as an Opportunity for Professional Growth**

Shulman (1986) maintains that a teacher who presumes to teach subject matter to children must first demonstrate knowledge of that subject matter as a prerequisite for teaching. Correspondingly, Beijaard, Verloop and Vermunt (2000) maintain that for a teacher to be knowledgeable in a specific subject and to continue to develop subject matter expertise, there should be “programmes in teacher education that allow for self-diagnosis and evaluation of subject matter knowledge” (p. 751). This is proposed as a means to remedy insufficient or outdated knowledge and to help teachers in their on-going subject matter preparation and planning. Significantly, Kelly (2006) questions the idea that subject matter knowledge is learned in isolation from a teaching context. Kelly (2006) argues that expanding your expertise in collaboration with colleagues in your professional context by “sharing ideas and interpretations and responding to those of others results in a rich mix of perspectives and allows innovation and creativity” (p. 508). Hence, novice and expert teachers can form a valuable community of practice in a school if they engage such interactive teacher learning.

In my view, in addition to expanding our subject matter expertise, 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers should also continually develop as pedagogical and didactical experts. This calls for “a teacher who bases her profession on knowledge and skills to support students' social, emotional, and moral development” (Beijaard et al., 1999). Furthermore, Beijaard et al. (1999) emphasise the value of

teachers' reflection in order to keep learning from their pedagogical experiences. Similarly, Kelly (2006) highlights the significance of teachers' reflection, both individual and collaborative. Hence, in my study, I am reflecting on past experiences in order to reconsider my day-to-day practice to promote lifelong teacher learning. I am re-examining my experiences to assist me in understanding my own social, emotional and moral development as a teacher with the aim of learning from my experiences to better support my fellow teachers.

Currently, South African teachers are expected to act as facilitators of learning rather than to provide prescribed knowledge and learners are supposed to produce knowledge, while the teacher's role is to initiate, guide, and influence their thinking (DHET, 2011). However, Jansen (2001) cautions that this fairly recent shift in policy expectations could result in teachers feeling marginalised. He argues that teachers might "slowly but deliberately move back from centre stage into an invisible position on the margins of the classroom" (p. 242). Thus, it is important for teachers to maintain confidence in ourselves as professionals while adapting to changing policies and official expectations (Jansen, 2001). Hence, teachers' self-reflection on who we are and what we value as professionals can form an important part of our lifelong learning (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Similarly, Fairbanks et al. (2010) comment on the value of teachers' self-knowledge and maintain that we need to understand that teaching involves living in a world that is making multiple demands on us. They propose that teacher development initiatives should "prepare [teachers] to deal effectively with [these] forces as thoughtful professionals". Thus with the help of lifelong teacher learning, we should be better able to adapt to these changes.

### **Theme 3: Lifelong Teacher Learning for the Well-Being of Schooling**

Tight (1998) emphasises the "importance of continuing learning for survival and development at the levels of individual, the organization and society as a whole" (p. 254). This suggests that by engaging in lifelong teacher learning teachers are also contributing to school development. According to Knight (2002), the teacher who wants to be an expert in her field of work must be up to date with the changes around her. When the teacher develops new expertise in her field of work, then the school gains. As Knight (2002 p. 229) explains, "Teacher professional development is important for the well-being of schooling". This means that when I develop

professionally as an individual, the school community benefits because, with my learning, I can also serve as a resource for my colleagues' learning and for parents' and learners' learning. Similarly, Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010) maintain that learning is social and call for teachers to explore how they can develop themselves by working with other teachers to enhance the well-being of school communities. Furthermore, they advise that teachers may feel a greater sense of professional belonging when contributing to the school community in this way.

### **Who am I and Why am I Undertaking this Study?**

I am an Intermediate Phase (Grades Four–Six) HoD. As a HoD in the Intermediate Phase, I am in charge of 10 teachers and 345 learners. My duties include supervision of teachers' planning and preparation of lessons and of assessment of their tasks. In addition to supervising teachers, I have my own subjects to teach to 150 learners.

During my supervision of my colleagues, I have observed the high-quality performance of those teachers who are studying to improve their qualifications in comparison with other teachers who seem satisfied with their existing qualifications. I have also observed how the teachers who attend Department of Basic Education (DBE) workshops engage with or ignore any changes, including new policies to be implemented. Observing these varying behaviours of teachers has encouraged me to undertake this study in which I aim to discover more about lifelong teacher learning.

I was also prompted to undertake this study by the results of previous research done as part of my Master of Education (MEd) coursework. The main aim of this coursework research project was to gain an understanding of practising teachers' learning. This involved trying to comprehend *what* practising teachers were learning in schools and also *how* they were learning in their schools. Furthermore, I wanted to understand the kinds of processes and structures that support teacher learning in schools.

To generate data for the project, I conducted semi-structured interviews with two targeted participants from my school who were both experienced teachers, teaching Mathematics in the

Intermediate Phase. These interviews provided me with insight into types of teacher learning that were taking place and into where and how teacher learning was occurring.

I found that these teachers in my school were continually learning, but they were often not aware that they were learning at school and in workshops and therefore, they lacked confidence in what they had learned. The study also indicated that both formal and informal teacher learning was taking place at my school. According to Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex (2010), formal teacher learning is “when educational innovations are introduced to teachers through workshops, presentations and projects” (p. 267). On the other hand, informal teacher learning is where individuals engage in informal learning activities, such as sharing their reflections on their daily teaching experiences (Jurasaitė-Harbison & Rex 2010). However, based on the interviews I conducted, it appears that teachers are often not aware that this informal discussion is teacher learning. Therefore, through my self-study research, I wanted to draw on my personal history to better understand how teachers can recognise and build on their lifelong learning and develop their capabilities as learners.

### **My Research Questions**

The first question that guides this research is: *What are my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?* In answering this question (in Chapter Three), I aim to find out more about my past personal, educational and professional experiences. I attempt to comprehend what has inspired and motivated my own learning and then, how I can build on that understanding to promote lifelong teacher learning. Although this is my personal history self-study, I am hoping to use what I have learned about myself to see how I can make changes to the ways in which I try to promote lifelong learning among my colleagues.

The second question that supports this research is: *What can I learn from my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?* In responding to this question (in Chapter Four), I revisit my past educational experiences as represented in Chapter Three to explore what I can learn from my personal history about promoting lifelong teacher learning.

### **My Methodological Approach**

As I discuss in more detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation, this is a personal history self-study. According to Samaras et al. (2004), personal history self-study is when I study my past experiences and then explore possible relationships between my written stories of my personal history and my current and future professional practice. This methodology of self-study includes studying one's self and sharing what you are learning with other colleagues (Alderton, 2008). Hence, my hope is that what I learn from this personal history self-study will be relevant to my practice as an Intermediate HoD and to others who are interested in promoting lifelong teacher learning. As Nash (2004, p. 24) explains, "to write a personal narrative is to look deeply within ourselves for the meaning that just might, when done well, resonate with other lives; maybe even inspire them in some significant ways".

Additionally, Samaras et al. (2004) maintain that personal history self-study involves "being conscious about one's self and one's teaching [which] encourages teachers to examine and explore the unexamined reasons for their everyday actions" (p. 915). This calls for us teachers to be more observant in our teaching and to try to understand why we do things in certain ways and how we might make changes in what we do. Moreover, personal history self-study facilitates lifelong teacher learning in the sense that, as I am reflecting on my lived experiences, I also look at how I can learn from what happened to me in the past and try to change for the better in the future. As Samaras et al. (2004) advise, this methodology is aimed at supporting professional transformation. Therefore, it is imperative that I see possibilities for change after undertaking personal history self-study.

### **Conclusion and Overview of the Dissertation**

In this chapter, I have given the foundation for and furnished details of the focus and purpose of my study. To give clarity to my topic, I have identified three initial themes from the literature in relation to lifelong teacher learning. I have also explained the reasons why I am interested in doing this personal history self-study. In addition, I have highlighted and explained the research questions that underpin this study. Moreover, I have introduced the methodological approach used in my study.

In Chapter Two, I offer a more detailed explanation of the research methodology used in this study. I describe my professional context and also explain how my critical friends acted as my research participants. I explain my data generation strategies, as well as my approaches to data representation and interpretation. I also discuss limitations and challenges of the study. In addition, I consider issues of trustworthiness and research ethics.

In Chapter Three, I take the reader through my personal history of lifelong teacher learning, from my early experiences of schooling, on to my teacher training and my practices of being a teacher and a Head of Department. Throughout my narrative of this journey, I reflect on my experiences with the intention of enhancing my understanding of lifelong teacher learning.

In Chapter Four, I analyse my personal history narrative (as portrayed in Chapter Three) and identify significant themes that emerge from the journey of my educational life. I discuss these themes in relation to what other scholars have written about lifelong teacher learning.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter where I review the study, highlighting what I have learned that can help me to improve my practice as a HoD in promoting lifelong teacher learning.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **MY PERSONAL HISTORY SELF-STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **Introduction**

In this study, I am engaging in a journey of reflection where I recall my lived personal and professional experiences in order to comprehend how I might more effectively promote lifelong teacher learning among teachers in the Intermediate Phase (Grades Four–Six) at my primary school. In the previous chapter, Chapter One, I explain the focus and purpose of the study and discuss the reasons why I have undertaken this research journey. Furthermore, I present my key research questions and discuss the methodological and theoretical approaches underpinning the study. In Chapter Two, I give an in-depth account of my personal history self-study research process. I commence by explaining my research paradigm and why I have chosen personal history self-study as the methodological approach for my study. Additionally, I describe my professional context and research participants. I then discuss my data generation strategies. Next, I discuss the process of data representation and interpretation. Finally, I present matters of the limitations and challenges of the study, as well as trustworthiness and ethics.

#### **Research Paradigm**

My study is qualitative. According to Nieuwenhuis (2010b, p. 50), qualitative research “attempts to collect rich descriptive data in respect of a particular phenomenon or context with the intention of developing an understanding of what is being observed or studied”. Thus, in my study I have aimed to generate vivid, evocative data about my own experiences of lifelong teacher learning in order to deepen my understanding of this form of teacher learning. Through recalling my own experiences, I have endeavoured to learn more about how I can better promote lifelong teacher learning in my professional practice.

This study is located within an interpretive paradigm. Nieuwenhuis (2010b, p. 59) explains that “interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them”. In this personal history self-study, the focus is on understanding the phenomenon of lifelong teacher learning through making meaning of my experiences of teaching

and learning, from my early years of schooling to my years as a teacher and then presently as a Head of Department (HoD) in the Intermediate Phase.

### **Personal History Self-Study Methodology**

The ultimate aim of self-study research is to understand yourself better in order to transform your professional practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009); this then is what my study is about: to comprehend myself and formulate valuable changes in my professional practice as a HoD. The form of self-study I am engaging in is personal history self-study. This methodology takes into account teachers' personal experiences as a significant influence on their professional practice. According to Samaras, Hicks and Berger (2004, p. 905), personal history self-study includes examining "the formative, contextualised experiences of our lives that influence how we think about and practice our teaching". Thus, personal history self-study provides a mechanism for teachers to better understand how our lived experiences influence our professional practice (Samaras et al., 2004). Samaras et al. (2004, p. 910) define this methodology as "about self-knowing towards personal and professional growth". I have selected this methodology as a way of "exploring [my] personal history connections to [my] teaching and learning" (Samaras et al. 2004, p. 913) with the aim of understanding and learning from my own experiences. Samaras et al. (2004, pp. 933-934) point out that "personal history self-study is a lifelong process" that "can lead to transformative learning". Thus, I understand this methodology as appropriate for my study of lifelong teacher learning.

### **My Professional Context and Research Participants**

My professional context is a state paid primary school in a semi urban area. It is surrounded by informal housing and a few houses built by the government. Although it is in a semi urban area, the community comprises mainly poor families and many families are headed by young parents or single parents. Due to the HIV & AIDS pandemic, the parental death rate is high, such that many children are living with their grandparents or with their siblings or other relatives.

There are resources in this school, although they are not enough; for example, we do not have a library or a science laboratory. The average enrolment over the past few years has been 1 200 learners with an average of 40 teachers. It is a big school with seven members of the

management team, three non-teaching staff and three parents helping with the learners' feeding scheme. The average class size is about 80 learners. The community originates from various provinces in South Africa, and thus learners speak different Nguni languages at home. However, the school is dominated by learners who speak IsiZulu as their Home Language. As per departmental policy, the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is IsiZulu in the Foundation Phase (Grade R to Grade Three) while English is the LoLT offered in the Intermediate Phase (Grade Four to Grade Six) and in Grade Seven.

I am the main research participant in this study because I am looking at my past experiences in order to better understand how I might improve my professional practice as an Intermediate Phase HoD. However, even though my research is personal history self-study, I have also worked with a group of critical friends. We are four experienced female teachers studying Masters' degrees using self-study methodologies and we are all HoDs in our respective primary schools. For the past two years, we have met every fortnight with our supervisor to discuss our progress in our research and our dissertation writing. Samaras et al. (2004) highlight that personal history self-study is collaborative and that the "self-studier does not travel the road alone" (p. 910). Hence, in this journey, I have travelled with my critical friends.

A critical friend is "a trusted person, who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend" (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). Over time, my critical friends and I have learned to trust each other. As trusted critical friends, we have made time in order to understand and comment on each other's work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). For example, my critical friends tried to help me with my writing. One instance I recall is when Pearl (pseudonym) reminded me about being consistent when using written terminology. I was not aware that I was using terms such as *grades* and *standards*, and *teachers* and *educators* interchangeably, and so I learned from her comment.

What is more, my critical friends and I have discussed and shared our personal and professional experiences, including challenges we have been facing in our different school situations. As Samaras et al. (2004, p. 910) explain, "personal history self-study entails the opportunity to disrobe, unveil, and engage in a soul searching truth about the self while also engaging in critical

conversations, and most importantly continuing to discover the alternative viewpoints of others”. During our meetings, we have had the opportunity of sharing our fears and joys about past experiences that we have gone through as we have grown and developed professionally. Through these discussions, we have learned and helped each other to understand how we can change for the better in developing ourselves and working with our colleagues. From these conversations with critical friends, I have learned that self-study research involves looking at yourself and your relationship with others involved in your research and practice, and thus you mirror yourself through other people.

### **Data Generation Strategies**

A diversity of usually qualitative strategies is used in personal history self-study when generating data (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Samaras et al. (2004, p. 912) highlight the following methods: “narratives, journaling, correspondence, electronic mail exchanges, audio taped discussions, videotapes of one’s teaching, storytelling, memory work, emotion work, education-related life-histories, interviews, and multiple forms of artistic expression such as drawing, photography, poetry, and artistic installations”. In my study, I have used journal writing, memory drawing, and also artefact retrieval to generate personal history data. Using this variety of methods has helped me as a researcher to examine myself and my personal experience from a range of perspectives (LaBoskey, 2004). Below I elaborate on how I made use of each strategy in reconstructing my personal history.

### **Journal Writing**

According to Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009, p. 123), a journal is “a writing tool that offers a place for writers to expose and reflect on their personal feelings and perspectives”. As illustrated in Chapter Three, I first observed journaling from my late principal, although I did not know it as journaling then. She used to record everything that had happened at school each day. I then learned more about the importance of journaling in my first year study of the Bachelor of Education (BEd) Honours degree; it formed part of the coursework to be submitted for due performance requirements.

I started compiling my journal entries in 2008 when doing the BEd Honours degree. At first, I used a soft college exercise book, and although I did not record every day, it was full at the end of my course. Then, when doing my Master's degree, I began using a three quire hardcover book to record my ideas and reflections each time we had discussions in class and whenever I was engaging with my study books, either at home or at the university.

I have made journal entries all the way through my Master's research process to reflect on what has happened in the past and present. In all my journal entries, I have recorded the date and time. My journal writing has helped me in this research as an active participant researcher. Varathaiah (2010) highlights the importance of journal writing for participant researchers by explaining that it allows us to record and reflect on our experiences during the research process. I have written about all these experiences in my journal as advised by Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber (2009, p. 50), since the journal is an "informal and unthreatening [space]" where no one will judge me and there is no expectation of being academically correct.

I remember how, in my journal, I wrote about times where I felt like giving up on my studies. The most challenging experience for me was when we had to present our research topics during the Master's Proposal Writing module to a group of 21 other students and staff members. At that time, I had planned to be a self-study researcher and that had been discussed with my supervisor prior to my presentation. My journal entry records my surprise, shock and disappointment at feedback I received on my class presentation:

*"The topic was out; why do you have to include other teachers in self-study?"* (March 12, 2011)

This misunderstanding about self-study methodology unsettled me for a while, until I made a report to my supervisor who helped me to clarify in my research proposal why I was going to work with other teachers as critical friends in my self-study.

Making journal entries has also helped me to track my journey towards bettering myself through continuous learning. At school, while supervising my colleagues, I have used my journal to

record important issues that I feel might be used to enhance my leadership and management style to promote lifelong teacher learning. I have also reflected on how to guide and advise my colleagues, so as to make changes that will benefit teacher learning in my school in the future. This extract illustrates what I wrote in my journal after facilitating an Intermediate Phase meeting in 2010:

*“Make your policy documents your friends when preparing a lesson (a document that includes a guide on preparing a specific subject). They are for enrichment of knowledge. Also acknowledge learners’ prior knowledge from the previous grade.”*

### **Memory Drawing**

I have used memory drawing to help me to recall my personal history. Pithouse (2011, p. 38) highlights “the use of drawings as a method for recollecting, representing and examining” the important memories that have made a mark in your educational life. According to Pithouse (2011, p. 43), memory drawings can “bring forth the emotions of experiences that happened many years ago”. The use of memory drawing has helped me to realise that even when I could not find appropriate words, my emotions could be evoked by drawing. Similarly, Weber (2008, p. 44) highlights that visual images such as memory drawings can “help us to access those elusive, hard-to-put into words aspects of knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or ignored”.

As a personal history self-study researcher, I aim at “improving [my] own professional understanding and practice, as well as contributing to public conversations about teaching and learning” (Pithouse, 2011, p. 37). Thus, I have realised that the use of memory drawing is not about being an artist. Instead, drawings of significant experiences in our lives and work can help teachers “to represent, examine and better understand [our] professional lives and practice (Pithouse, 2011, p. 40). Therefore, my memory drawing has helped me to portray aspects of “my personal history that I felt that I had to share with my critical friends to enhance our learning” (Mlambo, 2012, p. 11). I had planned to do a number of memory drawings. However, as explained below, while writing my dissertation, I had a minor stroke which compromised my

ability to use my right hand. I was therefore not able to do any more drawings after that and so have only been able to include one memory drawing in this dissertation (see figure 3.4., Chapter Three).

### **Artefact Retrieval**

To enhance my research, I made use of artefact retrieval as a strategy for data generation. To help me in recalling my personal history, I have retrieved artefacts which include my photographs, my achievement certificate and a page from my school magazine. These artefacts are significant in my personal and professional life. Marshall and Rossman (2006) define artefact retrieval as a tool that helps us to reminisce about our past as well as our principles, ethics, standards, morals and ideals. Thus, in this research I have chosen to retrieve artefacts that hold emotional and intellectual significance in my life. These artefacts (portrayed in Chapter Three) have brought back memories of both happiness and sadness.

Some of the artefacts, particularly the photographs of my late grandmother and mother-in-law (see Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.3), hold especially touching and important meanings for me. Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse (2009, p. 119) argue that “the use of visual approaches to self-study can literally help us see things differently”. Seeing my grandmother’s photograph in the context of my research brings sadness but, at the same time, I am so thankful that she devoted her time to helping me to value education. My memories of her encouragement give me energy to keep on being a lifelong learner. In addition, although I feel a sense of loss when I look at the photograph of me with my mother-in-law, I also see how it portrays my mother-in-law showing support for my success. When deciding to use these pictures, I “[identified] personal and social issues” that they represented to me and I thought more deeply about them than I had before (Mitchell, et al. 2009, p. 128). In choosing these photographs as research artefacts, I realised the importance of these two role models in my educational journey. Thinking of them also brings anger that they are gone and I wish they were still alive to see me grow and achieve in life. Having looked at these photographs with a self-study lens, I am now more aware of the very significant role that my grandmother and my mother-in-law played in encouraging me with lifelong learning. I wish I could also encourage my colleagues to be lifelong learners as my relatives did for me.

Looking again at certain artefacts, such as those illustrated in Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.5 (my BEd Honours certificate), has brought joy in my life and also helped me to better understand my impetus for lifelong learning. These artefacts are evidence of what I have accomplished thus far, in relation to my own lifelong learning. For example, when looking at Figure 3.3 (a photograph of my mother-in-law and me at my Higher Education Diploma [HED] graduation), I remember that when I had completed my HED, I was not satisfied with my learning, which I felt was still inadequate for a 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher.

Allender and Manke (2004, p. 20) maintain that “variation among artefacts collected over the years evokes the ways [teachers] change and grow through their reflective practice.” Similarly, through looking at these artefacts, I have realised that, as years have passed by, I have tried to use different means to improve my learning. Thus, artefact retrieval has helped me to retrace my professional growth, as illustrated in Figure 3.13 (a photograph of me and a Grade Seven learner on Prize Giving day).

### **Data Representation and Interpretation**

In self-study, it is imperative to represent and interpret data in ways that help the reader to have a ‘feel’ of the study as if she has been part of the research journey (Varathaiah, 2010). Chapter Three of my study represents data that relates to my first research question: “*What are my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?*” As I have explained above, this data was generated through reflective journal writing, memory drawing and artefact retrieval. Through working with this data, I constructed a personal and professional narrative that expresses stories of my own educational journey, with an emphasis on lifelong teacher learning.

As a self-study researcher, I used personal narrative writing as a creative approach in representing my educational experiences, as explained by Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber (2009). They emphasise that personal narrative writing “requires teachers to insert themselves directly into texts they are creating and to write about happenings, contexts, and issues that are meaningful to them” (Pithouse et al., 2009, p. 49). In Chapter Three, I have inserted artefacts (e.g. Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.5) into my personal history narrative as illustrations of my lifelong



learning. Furthermore, in Chapter Three I have described the outings that we took learners on as a means of bringing theory to life. All these issues are significant in my life and to my research topic of lifelong teacher learning. I have also shared pieces of my personal narrative writing with my critical friends who have given me constructive advice and support (as discussed above).

In interpreting my personal history narrative, I looked for significant patterns and issues in my educational experiences so as to develop themes in relation to my research topic. Working from an understanding of the concept of teacher learning as socio-cultural (as explained in Chapter One), I searched for “emerging patterns, associations, concepts and explanations” (Nieuwenhuis, 2010a, p. 105) in response to my second research question: “*What can I learn from my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?*” My critical friends assisted me by asking challenging questions that made me think critically about my ideas, and then after long discussions, I managed to identify the four themes that I discuss in Chapter Four. I took note of my critical friends’ viewpoints in developing the following themes: *the value of role models, the significance of self-motivation, the impact of gender in education and the language barrier*. These themes bring to light my journey of learning in relation to the people who have played a significant role in this growth and to the socio-cultural issues of gender and language.

I used four different highlighters to colour code parts of my personal history narrative that seemed most relevant for answering my second research question. I used a pink highlighter to note all the issues and the people that I identified as my role models and had made a difference in my educational journey. I highlighted green all the issues related to gender that had an impact on my educational journey. In my entire personal history narrative, there is an element of motivation, which I highlighted in orange. In the midst of my educational journey I had difficulty when communicating in English and thus I decided to include the language barrier as one of my themes and I used a yellow highlighter to code experiences that related to this theme. I then referred to relevant literature to deepen and extend my understanding of these themes (Nash, 2004).

### **Limitations and Challenges of the Study**

This is a small scale, in-depth self-study, in which I am drawing on my unique personal history to explore the topic of lifelong teacher learning (Nash, 2004). Nonetheless, I hope that my personal history self-study offers some understandings about lifelong teacher learning that will help other researchers, teachers and school leaders who wish to better understand and encourage lifelong teacher learning. As Nash (2004) explains, I am making use of my personal narrative to explore an educational issue that is relevant to others as well as to me.

I enjoyed retracing my educational journey. I found that it is somehow fulfilling to review your past experiences both at home and at school. I have learned that my past experiences are significant and have shaped me in particular directions. Writing these memory stories about myself has helped me to examine and revise issues or incidents that I have gone through. This has brought forth both pleasurable memories and memories that hurt; however, I have discovered that reviewing a story from your past can be another way of healing (DeSalvo, 2000). Nevertheless, I think it is important to understand that when using personal history self-study as a methodology you are not compelled to include things that you are ashamed of or not comfortable with revealing publically. As Nash (2004, p. 32) advises, “students who write personal narratives, or who share experiences within a small group, [should] recognise that they have an ethical and personal responsibility to themselves to pursue or disclose only what they believe they are ready to undertake”.

It was not an easy process to reconstruct my personal history narrative. If I had not used all the above mentioned data generation strategies, I would not have managed to recall the details of significant experiences. It also helped to have my critical friends as participants; even though we are not all in the same age group and we have different backgrounds, it happened that we had some similar past learning experiences. Therefore, in our discussions we were able to share our past experiences and sometimes this assisted me to remember other important issues or incidents I had long forgotten. For example, we discovered that rote learning had been practiced in all our primary schools, as illustrated in Chapter Three (p. 10).

I had hoped to complete this dissertation in the second year of the Masters' programme (2011); nevertheless, due to some challenges, it could not be so. While writing my dissertation, I had a minor stroke. This was a life test as I was physically challenged because I could not use my right hand and the entire right hand side of my body was dysfunctional. This predicament forced me to take a temporary break from my studies. On the other hand, I had a very persuasive, encouraging supervisor, who referred me to the disability department in the university. She arranged everything for my progress. I had an appointment with the disability department supervisor who was very friendly and arranged for someone to do the typing for me whilst I was narrating my dissertation. However, I found that this frustrated me more because I could not think while she was waiting to type. Therefore, I returned to my supervisor and explained the situation again. Then that is when we decided that I would suspend my studies for the following year. The wonderful thing is that my critical friends were always encouraging me to complete and finally graduate. My supervisor also encouraged me to write at least a paragraph a day. (Typing on a computer using my left hand was possible; however, it was very slow).

This period in my life was really thought-provoking; however, it was a valuable lesson for me because I learned that whenever my learners are in such a situation I will need to refer them to relevant people for assistance. Also, the constant reminder of love and encouragement that was shown by my supervisor gave me strength to continue and finish this tough race. It is under such circumstances that caring is very important and motivation can lift up a person who has lost hope of completing the journey. From this incident, I am hoping to learn more and to be able to help my Intermediate Phase teachers when they face challenges in their lifelong learning.

My personal advice to my colleagues who wish to use personal history self-study as a methodology is to use a range of data generation strategies as advised by Samaras et al. (2004). Moreover, it is helpful to retain artefacts and value them as I have done with mine. In addition, keeping records of what is happening in your personal life and of your professional growth is a necessity, especially if you plan to be a lifelong learner teacher. As a researcher and teacher, the regular use of a journal can also be very helpful.

### **Trustworthiness**

Nieuwenhuis (2010b) highlights the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research. Consequently, to satisfy the requirements of trustworthiness in my personal history self-study, in this chapter I have aimed to give clear and full explanations of what data sources have been used and how data has been generated, represented and interpreted (Feldman, 2003). In addition, as advised by Feldman (2003) in Chapter Four I have explained how my educational understanding has been enhanced through my self-study. Furthermore, Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) highlight that trustworthiness in self-study can be enhanced by the use of variety of methods to gain different perspectives on what is being studied. For this reason, as explained in this chapter, I have used journal writing, memory drawing and artefacts such as photographs and documents to help me to reconstruct and explore my personal history. I have also sought the views of my critical friends to gain diverse perspectives on my personal history (Samaras et al., 2004).

### **Ethical Issues**

Another important issue to consider when doing self-study is the acknowledgement of the rights of people that are directly or indirectly involved in the research (Samaras, 2011). These people need to be protected by all means. As I am a participant myself and a practising teacher at a specific school, I needed permission for my research from the Department of Education; I therefore filled in an application form to the Education Department (KwaZulu-Natal Province), giving an explanation of my proposed study. The ethical clearance letter from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) is attached to confirm ethical approval of the proposed study. With the permission letter from the Education Department and the ethical clearance letter from UKZN, I wrote a letter to the principal of my school in which I gave details of the study and the photographs I intended to include in my study. A consent letter was signed by the principal. (Copies of the informed consent documents are attached as appendices). Another consent letter from the parents of a former Dux prize recipient (Figure 3.13.) was signed. Since I could not get hold of my other previous learners who were featured in the photographs that I included in Chapter Three, I had to blur their faces using artistic effects to maintain anonymity. I also used my late grandmother's and my late mother-in-law's photographs; therefore I obtained signed consent letters from my mother and my husband respectively. As I have used my former school friends' photographs, I had to also ask for their consent.

As explained in Maree (2007), the principle of confidentiality in presenting the findings of a study is essential. Since I have worked with my critical friends, I have used pseudonyms to protect their identity and I have obtained their signed consent letters. Fortunately, we addressed issues of informed consent and ethics in our discussion sessions with our supervisor.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have given details of my personal history self-study research process. I have explained why I chose personal history self-study as the methodology for my study. I have enlightened the reader about my professional context and my research participants. I have also discussed the data generation strategies I have used in this study. In addition, I have explained the process of data representation and interpretation. Finally, I have presented matters of the limitations and trustworthiness and ethical issues of the study. Through using a personal history self-study methodology, I have learned various strategies for how to draw on my personal history to enhance my own learning. Using personal history self-study methodology has helped me to understand how revisiting the past through a self-study lens can be a form of lifelong teacher learning.

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I present a narrative of past experiences that have shaped me as a learner, teacher, teacher educator and a HoD. My aim is to develop a deeper understanding of who I am as an educational practitioner and of my experiences of lifelong teacher learning.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE FULFILMENT OF THE DREAM OF A RURAL AFRICAN GIRL AND HER GRANDMOTHER**

#### **Introduction**

The focus of this self-study research is on lifelong teacher learning. My aim is to explore how I can learn from my personal history to better support lifelong learning amongst teachers through my own practice as an Intermediate Phase (Grades Four to Six) Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Two, I give an account of my personal history self-study research process. In Chapter Three, I adopt personal narrative writing as a creative approach to represent experiences that relate to my own educational journey, with particular emphasis on my own lifelong learning. As explained in Chapter Two, I used data generation methods of reflective journal writing, memory drawing and artefact retrieval to assist me in constructing this personal narrative. Through personal narrative writing, I aim to find out how much I understand about myself and my past activities and then, in Chapter Four, I consider how I can use that understanding to promote lifelong learning among teachers that I supervise as a HoD in the Intermediate Phase. The long journey of accomplishment represented in this chapter includes: my early schooling years; my higher primary school years; my high school years; my tertiary education years; and then my working experience up until the present. In all these stages, I draw attention to circumstances, events and people that I see as important for a better understanding of my experiences of lifelong learning.

#### **My School Days**

##### **It all Started in a Small Square-Roomed House**

I started attending school in 1968 during the apartheid era in a rural area in Amahlongwa – Umkomaas. This is in the South Coast area in the KwaZulu-Natal Province (KZN), which was previously known as Natal. I grew up with my maternal grandmother. My story starts in a small square-roomed house where my four siblings and I were living with my grandmother because my

mother was working in Durban (a town far from the area where we lived). My mother only came home for a day visit once in three months. My uncle also lived with us.

I lived in this area for all the years of my schooling, from primary to high school. In this area, the schools were very far from our home, such that we had to walk five kilometres to school. In the morning, we walked in groups with our neighbours. The distance did not hinder my schooling because my grandmother always awaited my arrival on return from school. She would see me from afar and call if I was walking very slowly.

### **My Maternal Grandmother: An Inspiration for my Lifelong Learning**

Looking back, I can now see the significance of my maternal grandmother's influence on my lifelong learning. She taught me how to look after myself because she gave us certain duties to perform at home. For example, after coming home from school each day, I had to wash my socks and polish my shoes. I also recall how my grandmother used to wash my school uniform on a Wednesday when I was very young, but then she showed me how to do it on my own when I was old enough.



**Figure 3.1: A photograph of my maternal grandmother –*ukhulu*– who still inspires me to keep on learning**

### **Being Responsible to Learn Against All Odds**

An artefact I have chosen to represent my junior primary school learning years is a slate. Even though I do not still have a slate, I have a vivid picture in my mind of this rectangular shaped piece of chalkboard that was very fragile. The slate was the only resource that we used to write on in Sub A and Sub B (currently known as Grade One and Grade Two). It was used for Arithmetic on one side and for vocabulary/spelling on the other side. A soft wet cloth or sponge was used as a mode of erasure.

A slate has a particular learning significance in my own experience. It was imperative to have it intact for as long as possible. It was also important always to keep it clean as one's cleanliness and responsibility were displayed through the slate. These values were taught at home and also at school. I remember how, through the slate, we were taught that valuing what you have is essential. The slate was easily broken if you were running to or from school and you unfortunately fell over it. It was embarrassing to have a broken or cracked slate.

My home language, IsiZulu, was the language of learning and teaching in my junior primary school. I remember how our teacher would teach us the sounds every day and then we had to write them on our slates. We would learn different short sentences with the same sound for a week, for example:

*Umama umi.* (Mother is standing)

*Ima mama* (Stop mother)

*Umama umema omame* (Mother is inviting other mothers)

These words were spread on the classroom walls with pictures depicting them to help us to remember by rote learning. Then, on Fridays, we had to reproduce what we had learned. We would spread out outside the classroom and stand back to back with our slates. We would listen to our teacher calling out the words that we had read on the classroom wall. We usually wrote 10 words and then our teacher marked them. Getting the total mark was very exciting; however others who got fewer marks were given some strokes with a bamboo stick.



We also learned English at school, but we did not write down anything in Sub A, only in Sub B and in the fourth term. In Arithmetic, we used counters; I used to collect ice cream sticks to use as counters when I went past the local shops. Daily, we would write different sums on our slates and then on Friday we would have a ‘speed test’. This was an oral test during which we would write our answers down on our slates.

I recall that it was important to have a total in both Arithmetic and spelling written on our slates at the end of each day. Even though our parents were not educated, they appreciated our hard work displayed on our slates. I remember that once, after we had written 40 words and I had got them all correct, I was so excited that I wanted to show them to my grandmother. I ran all the way home after school, and when I was close to home I started screaming and calling out to my granny. I was not aware of the stone that was in the way and I tripped and fell over my slate. It broke into pieces and I started crying. My grandmother came out and thought that something or someone was chasing me. I sadly told her the story that I had come running to show her my total marks and then I fell. She promised to buy me a new slate when my uncle had been paid at the end of the month. Due to poverty, I had to use the same broken piece for a while until the new slate was bought. Thus, for me, the slate also symbolises being responsible to learn against all odds. The most important thing at the time was the knowledge that was gained. Although the slate was broken and I had to carry it with embarrassment, the knowledge rooted in it was never futile. Poverty in the family never hindered my learning progress. Instead, it motivated me to strive for the best.

The junior primary school I attended had overcrowded classes. I remember that there were over a 100 learners packed into one class. The Grade One and Two teachers (all females) did a double shift everyday – taking the first group in the morning and the second group in the afternoon. The first group of learners came in the morning session. I was in the second group of learners that attended the afternoon session. After the break time, the groups would be combined for Religious Education lessons and, therefore, when the second group came in we could not have the seats. We had to kneel on the floor while we had our lesson. We could not write anything during that period because there was no space; we could only listen to the teacher narrating the different religious stories. The teacher could not also move along the rows to supervise and check if we

were listening or not. Now that I am also a teacher, I can see that the lack of floor space was a hindrance to effective learning and teaching. I now realise that the lessons were more teacher-centred because the teacher was always standing in front and we had to memorise everything. After a while, we could ‘sing’ what we had memorised and sometimes we did not understand the meaning.

### **An Attentive Awareness**

When we moved to the senior primary level in Standard Four (now known as Grade Six), we were still over 100 learners. We were then divided into two classes: one big class, taught by an old male teacher, and a smaller class that had to share a classroom with the Standard Three (now known as Grade Five) learners. I was in that multi grade class (two grades in the same classroom).

My teacher, Mrs. Ntaka<sup>1</sup>, had to teach and give work to one group and then concentrate on teaching the second group whilst the other group was busy with class work or reading. Now that I am a teacher too, I can empathise with this woman. I wonder how she coped so well. This was a very difficult situation even for us as learners because it was very important to pay complete attention during the teacher contact time since there was no time for individual attention. However, I still managed to pass.

Although it was important to listen attentively whilst the teacher was teaching, it sometimes happened that I missed some points or facts taught. I remember that my grandmother was very helpful in filling in the gaps. She also always encouraged me to do my homework and she helped me with my homework. For instance, when writing creative compositions in English, I used to say a sentence in IsiZulu and she would translate it into English, until the full page was completed. (I had that skill of writing correct spelling that was taught in earlier primary classes.) My grandmother always said that she was a “walking dictionary”, meaning that she knew all the meanings of the words without consulting a dictionary. (As an uneducated person, she said that

---

<sup>1</sup>Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of all people mentioned in this personal history narrative.

she had learned English when she was a domestic worker in the White family's house where she was called a "maid").

I remember that, when I was in Standard Six, a new principal arrived in our primary school and he taught us Geography. He was very harsh and always carried a stick, so as to beat us if we missed the correct answers. We had to memorise everything, such as continents in the world and our own African continent and countries, including their capital cities. For example, I will never forget that that is when I learned that the capital of Egypt is Cairo. We also learned the names of rivers. There was a special way of pointing when you had to point to the particular river in the hand drawn map on the board. You had to start on the land and move to the sea or ocean. If you did other than that, you would receive a hard beating on the back. This teaching approach was tough and very painful. Nevertheless, this taught me to be very attentive in class.

Looking back, I can see that the lessons at primary school level were always teacher-centred in all subjects. The teachers would come with information and teach, and then we would have to memorise for the tests. In this way, rote learning was promoted. I was fortunate because I used to learn by heart whilst the teacher was teaching.

All Standard Six teachers were males. They used sticks to enforce learning. Although corporal punishment is now illegal in South Africa, at that time using corporal punishment was legal and was seen as acceptable by many. I could not report such incidents at home because my grandmother would take it that I was not listening to the teacher, and also hit me again for not listening.

I remember that, as the last year in the primary school, Standard Six was very difficult. Our teachers were always telling us that we needed to pass because it was the last year of having that class – all learners who were doing Standard Five and Standard Six were to pass to the next grade called 'Form One' (currently known as Grade Eight). These changes affected me emotionally, in the sense that I then had to be in the same grade with my younger brother who was a year behind me. Luckily, I passed Standard Six and I was happy, especially because I received better marks than my younger brother.

### **Stepping Higher**

The following year, I was in the same grade with my brother. The high school was close to my primary school buildings; it was less than a 100 metre walk. Our classrooms had concrete walls and the floors were plastered but not polished. The lowest standard was Form One (currently known as Grade Eight) and the highest standard was Form Five (currently known as Grade Twelve).

Some of the classrooms were overcrowded, especially the junior classes. Nevertheless, the number of learners decreased as the classes progressed. I remember that there were those tall, older girls and boys who were not performing to the expected standards. Perhaps they felt threatened by us younger girls and boys and hence they dropped out before completing the higher classes.

We had the school feeding scheme that was sponsored by the Health Department. The feeding scheme assisted all the learners by providing a healthy meal. There was a variety of meals, including meat and vegetables. Looking back, I can see how these meals enhanced the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Due to poverty, our parents could not afford to feed us with such healthy meals, although we never went to bed at night with empty stomachs.

Even though we were in a rural area, we were able to enjoy extra mural activities. Our school participated in soccer competitions (played by boys) and basketball (played by girls) and also choral music competitions, which I enjoyed the most.



**Figure 3.2: A photograph of my friends and me in our school uniforms: “We all felt the same”**

In this narration, I wish to highlight the role played by school uniforms. A uniform is the same clothing worn by certain people in a certain common place. Learners wear uniforms in certain schools. Nowadays, the uniform is supposed to be chosen by all the stakeholders involved in the school, including learners in high schools. However, I have no idea if learners were consulted about the uniforms in our high school years.

Our school uniform served to identify which school we were attending. Wearing the school uniform was compulsory for all learners. The girls wore green and gold tunics (see Figure 3.2) and the boys wore grey trousers and gold shirts with a green and gold neck tie. It was a relief to wear these uniforms because we all felt the same; no one could tell if you were poor or you were rich. Neatness and cleanliness were highly enforced such that in the morning we had to stand in straight lines during assembly and the principal would walk between the lines to check if we had polished shoes and we were wearing clean socks. Due to long dusty road we walked to get to school, we had to carry cloths to shine our shoes at school.

Each morning after assembly, we would recite the multiplication tables until the teacher’s arrival. From the primary classes we had learned multiplication tables up to 10. So, we were revising and learning how to recall the answers easily. For example, in the 9 table; one simply

uses units backwards as 9 and 8, 7, 6 and so on, whilst in 10s one counts forwards, 9 18, 27, 36, 45 and so on.

I particularly remember one teacher who was teaching us English. She was a young African unmarried lady. She was always cheerful and made us enjoy being at school. Although there was rote learning, we enjoyed ourselves. We especially enjoyed doing dramatisation. I remember one of the stories we dramatised was of two dating children. I can still remember saying, “See me now . . . see me no more . . . Bye Linda”. (In this story, a couple was arguing about something and the girl decided to leave the boy). This made it interesting because we were learning and playing at the same time. However, we would articulate the words without understanding their meaning.

We also had to say poems after break until the teacher entered the class. I can still remember parts of the Daffodils poem by Wordsworth:

*I wandered lonely as a cloud*

*That floats on high o' veils o' hills*

We enjoyed chanting this poem, but we did not understand the meaning at that time until later on in other classes.

My grandmother also encouraged me to use English when I was at high school. English was the language of learning and teaching in high school, which was different from our primary schooldays. This was a barrier to all my learning of other subjects. (This was particularly evident at the tertiary level where we were taught by English speaking lecturers, as detailed in next section. I found that it was not easy when conversing with English speakers.)

I passed Form One (Standard Seven of my time) and Form Two and then I had to part ways with my brother. Due to our different capabilities, my brother and I were in different subject groups as from Form Three (Standard Nine). The Form Two teachers used the accumulated marks for the previous terms in the current year to identify learners who could cope well in Mathematics and Physical Science.

I was in a Science class, doing Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology, Languages and Biblical studies as an additional subject; and my brother was in the History class. As the Science group, we were a small group of 25 learners compared to other classes that had 60 or more learners. In the Science class, there were only nine girls and the rest were the boys. We ‘marginalised girls’ used to spend most of the school breaks together. I think that the other learners’ view was that we saw ourselves as better learners than them. Our classroom was separated from other buildings and so, this small classroom was like an island. Even though the classroom was small, it was spacious because of our small number.

In the Matriculation class, I felt very special because I was one of the few chosen girls perceived as cleverer than other learners. The Matriculation or Matric class was the last class in the high school level. From that class, the year end results determined whether the learner received a school leaving certificate or an exemption to study in a university.

Fewer numbers of girls were chosen for Physical Science because, at that time, the perception was that the boys were to study Physical Science and the girls were to study Home Economics. I passed matric with a school leaving certificate which only granted me entrance to attend a teachers’ training college. Only exemption certificate recipients were able to enrol in the universities. We were notified about the pass requirements; however, I could not make it to the top. Earlier on we were informed about the professions that we could take when we passed; however, these were limited to teaching, social work and nursing.

### **Teacher’s Training College: Life in an Unfriendly Environment**

The school leaving certificate I received channelled me to register for the teaching profession. The circumstances decided my line of work. At that point in time, I felt that I needed to be somebody, a learned somebody and so I enrolled at a teacher’s training college. My line of specialisation was Mathematics and Biology.

As a female student from a rural area, I encountered various challenges at the tertiary institution. I was ashamed of my clothes, thinking that other students might laugh at me. I now realise that

there was nothing wrong with them; I just had that inferiority complex. However, aspects of life at the college were enjoyable. For example, we had excursions as a Biology group. We also played sports and visited other colleges.

I was fortunate to share my room with just one other student that was doing her second year, completing the teachers' certificate. In other rooms, up to eight girls were sharing a big room; hence there was always competition in clothing. It was the final year of the two year Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate course. A new course was introduced for us in 1982 – a Diploma in Secondary Education, which was a three year course.

The main problem I experienced was the language barrier. Most lecturers were White people, speaking either English or Afrikaans for communication. The few African lecturers were teaching either isiZulu or doing Physical Education as a subject. We students were all Africans. I remember how Anile, my roommate, was always helping me when I returned from the classes. After school hours, she used to check my homework and then she would explain clearly how to go about that particular homework. Additionally, to help myself to overcome this communication problem issue, I brought my translation dictionary (English – Zulu) to college after the Easter vacation; this was the one I had previously used in my high school classes. Eventually, I learned to understand the lectures while they were in progress.

Looking back, I can see that we were treated as if we were children. It was not such a bad idea to be looked after because it was my first time without my grandmother always guiding the way. Anyway, I always adhered to my grandmother's advice that I needed to look after myself and never disappoint my family. When not attending classes, everything was done according to a timetable – with the bell ringing and the supervising matron behind. (This was a woman looking after the female students in the boarding establishment). We had supervised study hours in the evening, but regrettably, at the end of the year, I failed Biology and was granted a supplementary examination.

In a class of 18 students, only two of us had to supplement and we failed. There were no student representatives at that time; we would have consulted them for a paper remark or scripts viewing



because we were not satisfied. We even thought that our supplementary papers were not marked, but that we failed based on the assumption that we could not make it. I was unhappy and could not afford more funds to repeat the first year. Then I decided to take a temporary job to raise funds for the following year.

During my first year of study, after the winter holidays I had gone for observation lessons in my previous high school. I met my friends that had also obtained school leaving certificates and repeated the class because they wanted exemptions to attend the universities. (An exemption qualified a person to attend the university.) They were excited for me and said that I had made a correct choice – some of their mothers were also teachers. With them knowing that I was in teacher training, it was then imperative that I became a teacher after three years. Even the teachers that had taught me before were very proud to see me doing observation lessons. I now realise that, in a way, I was a mirror in which they saw themselves as a working group – able to produce valuable learners. Therefore, I had encouragement from various people in my life; I wanted to please my family, including my grandmother, as well as my high school friends and also my ex teachers. Over and above this, I wanted to be somebody. All this influenced my decision to try to study a teaching course again.

### **Further Education as a Pathway to Success**

I started privately paid teaching. This meant that I was paid by the school committee. I was teaching the Standard Four (currently known as Grade Six) learners. With one year of failed teacher training, I was very nervous to stand in front of the learners. I was not confident about my teaching skills because I felt that they were not fully developed. Nevertheless, in due course, with the help of my principal, I grew to learn how to approach a lesson.

This was a small school with 450 learners and only seven teachers. These teachers were always doing things together such as preparing the lessons and helping each other with assessing the learners. In this way, I learned various methods of teaching and, by the end of the year, I felt ready to enrol again for teacher training. My first principal was an old man who always encouraged me to study so as to have a teaching certificate. He would say, “My child, you are

too young for a privately paid teacher's salary, you must go for teacher training so as to have a certificate. Then you will earn a living wage and also improve your teaching skills".

Therefore, in 1984 I went for a one-year course, a Primary Teachers Certificate, which helped improve my teaching methods. Afterwards, I started teaching again, but I still yearned for a better qualification. I was aware that the one-year Primary Teachers Certificate was not enough because, with the growing knowledge in the field, there was the need to upgrade now and again.

I then registered for distance learning at Vista University, firstly for a Secondary Education Certificate in 1993 and after that a Secondary Education Diploma in 1996 and, finally, a Higher Education Diploma in 1998. During those six years, I had trouble because, in distance learning, there were no classes where one could connect with the lecturers. I made a great effort to the end and, in time, I obtained the expected qualification for a professional teacher, which is four years.

In the midst of my journey, I met my husband, who is also a teacher. He is from an educated family. His late mother was a school principal in a teacher training college and then an Inspector of Schools. (The Inspector of Schools was a person who visited schools to monitor progress and effectiveness and also to develop teachers where necessary – currently known as a Superintendent Education Manager). Arriving in this family encouraged me to study further. As a schools' inspector, my mother-in-law supported me in my drive to further my studies. I also felt that it was important for me to study further so as to maintain the standard of my husband's family.

Although my mother-in-law always encouraged me to strive for the best, my husband never accepted this because I had to divide my time between school work, my studies and family responsibilities. Then, after I had completed the Higher Education Diploma, my husband confessed to my mother that he had tolerated enough and hoped that I had finished with furthering my education so as to concentrate more on family needs. For that reason, I gave myself a break from studies (which I regret now). However, after two years, I informed my husband about the changes in education that required a person who was well versed about the latest developments in life as a whole. Although he was reluctant, my mind was made up; I was

not requesting but informing him about the further educational journey I was planning to undertake.

### **Important People on the Way to Success**

Looking back on my educational journey, I realise that studying is more stimulating if there are people who show interest in your growth. Other than yourself, you always wish to make people around you proud. Three important people who played a role in my educational progress are my maternal grandmother (as described above), my mother-in-law and my late (deceased) principal. I have not mentioned my mother because, although she had that ambition of having well-read children, she was not our primary care-giver and my grandmother was the one who was guiding us through our growing years.

### ***My Mother-in-Law***

I have already said a mouthful about this woman. She wanted only the best for me. She encouraged me to the fullest and tried to explain to her son (my husband) the importance of lifelong learning. She taught me about being a good leader, full of knowledge that is relevant to the people that she leads.



**Figure 3.3: A photograph of my-mother-in-law supporting me at my Higher Education Diploma graduation**

The above photograph (Figure 3.3) was taken in 1998. We were at the graduation ceremony in VISTA University, Pretoria, where I received my Higher Education Diploma. Looking at this photograph reminds me that I had full support from my-mother-in-law in my quest for lifelong learning.

### ***My Late Principal***

When I met my late principal, she was studying for a Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of South Africa. She passed and continued with the Bachelor of Education (Honours) degree. She was computer literate and she was always updated with the Department of Education issues. She encouraged me to register for a Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA). When I was promoted, she encouraged me to study something relevant to my promotion so as to lead with confidence.



**Figure 3.4: A memory drawing of my late principal who encouraged me to study in order to lead with confidence**

### **The Ladder to Being Somebody**

As mentioned previously, after completing the Higher Education Diploma, I had to take a break due to family pressures. After two years, I enrolled for a BA degree, which I passed after five years. I then attempted a BA Honours course with Communication as my specialisation. I found this course very difficult and I could not pass the first semester. Failing dampened my enthusiasm for a while, but I nevertheless reminded myself of what my grandmother would always say, “Education is the road to success”, and besides, the consolation was that I realised that the problem was that I had opted for the wrong degree. I needed to try something else that was more relevant to education. I registered for an Adult Basic Education and Training Teachers Certificate in 2006. I also registered for a part time computer course. I was not satisfied with my knowledge at that point, as my aim was to be knowledgeable in various fields of education.

I was promoted to a Head of Department (HoD) post in 2001. My new duties included supervising teachers’ work, drawing up time tables, chairing meetings in my department,

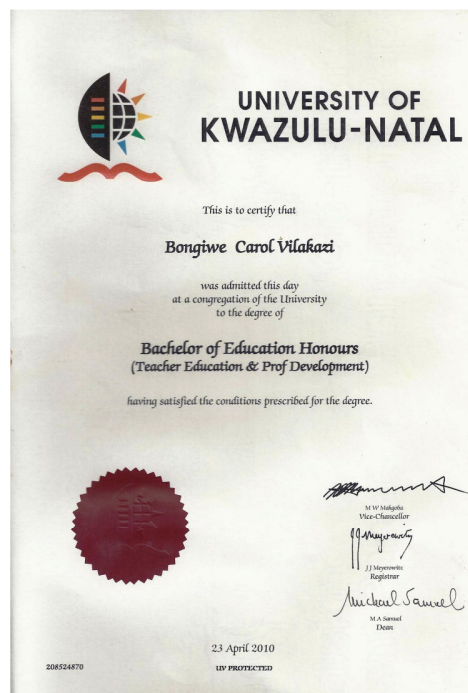
developing teachers in different subjects and also ‘workshopping’ them on newly proposed methods of preparing lesson plans and assessments. I was very excited, but also not quite sure if I would be able to manage efficiently. However, I succeeded, thanks to my late principal who guided me all the way. My principal provided me with books on leadership and management that helped me in my managing process. On top of that she explained how she had managed in her previous position as a Junior Phase HoD (Substandard A to Standard 2). She then put emphasis on me furthering my studies. The qualification I needed at that particular time was a leadership and management course. I was eager to advance myself as I felt that my management skills were not adequate.

That is when I decided to visit the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Edgewood campus with the aim of gaining information related to the Education Leadership and Management course. Regrettably, the course was in demand in 2007 and many students had flocked in. I was informed about the Teacher Education and Professional Development (TEPD) course. However, I was notified that it was unavailable due to an insufficient number of registered students in that year.

### **Triumph Aligned with Trials and Tribulations**

I registered for the TEPD course the following year (2008) and completed my Bachelor of Education (BEd) Honours in December 2009. During 2008, I had a few challenges again (I lost my mother-in-law and thereafter was admitted to hospital for tonsillitis), which resulted in me failing to attend classes as expected. To mourn for my-mother-in-law’s death, I had to be at home for a few days before and after the funeral. Culturally, as the daughter-in-law, married to the first-born, I was expected to carry the entire burden of the funeral to the end. As a result, I eventually failed one of the compulsory modules (Understanding Academic Literacy). According to the rules of the university, I had to appeal and explain the reasons for failing and why the university should accept me for the second time. This was very hard as I had not done it before and I had to explain the whole trauma again. I filled in the form I was given at the administration office and wrote the detailed information, supported with the doctors’ letters and death certificate as proof of evidence. The appeal was successful and I repeated the module in my second year of study.

That year was very difficult because I had to complete five modules in one year. With hard work and perseverance, I made it to the end and I graduated on 23 April 2010 (see Figure 3.5: my BEd Honours certificate). Studying different modules related to teacher education and professional development helped me in dealing with the changes that were brought by the various policies given to teachers by the Education Department for implementation. This course also enlightened my way of thinking. I realised that one needs to question things before applying them; it is not that one needs to defy the Department, but one needs to be vigilant about the impact of any intended changes. This course also highlighted the relationship between teachers and economy. I became aware that teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to be aware of the changes around them and to be part of that, not just spectators.



**Figure 3.5: A photograph of my BEd Honours certificate of which I am very proud**

### **Personal and Professional Development**

The Teacher Education and Professional Development (TEPD) specialisation I am taking for my Master's (MEd) degree is fascinating in the sense that it relates to the school and home life as the places where we spend most of our time. I have learned various things in this specialisation. The

knowledge I have gained is enormous and I wish I could have my colleagues from school join me and study these various empowering and developing subjects. I would also like to help them with the knowledge I have gained thus far whilst they are deciding to join.

Another important thing that I have learned while writing my MEd research dissertation is the importance of praising students. From this experience, I have learned that students need to be treated the same, whether they are performing well or slow at learning. The comments that are written should always be encouraging. When starting with my supervisor, I perceived myself as a person who might fail on the way, however with her encouraging words, draft comments and her understanding in group discussions I have managed thus far. I hope to use this understanding to enhance my support for my colleagues and my learners at school.

Unfortunately, this studying period has affected my personal life in the sense that quality time to be spent with my family is minimal. It is very difficult for the family to understand that there are functions or funerals that one cannot attend due to the workload at the university and sometimes having classes.

## **My Development as a Teacher**

### **My Initial Teaching Experience**

I started teaching at the age of 23 at a school in a semi urban area. During my first year of teaching, I was not very happy because the children in the class were nearly my age. Imagine an 18 year old boy in a Standard Four (Grade Six) class! Nevertheless, I ultimately learned to relate to them and to feel comfortable in the school environment.

When I got married, I relocated to a deep rural area, which was different from where I grew up. The learners were even older than in my previous school. Fully grown men were in lower grades. Girls were dropping out due to family demands; some had to get married for the benefit of their parents. In my Zulu culture when a boy plans to have a wife, he usually has to pay 11 cows (*ilobolo*) to the parents of the girl. Those cows are taken as the token of agreement with the opposite family. A man with many cows was highly recognised in that rural community and the assumption was that he would help his son to 'pay' for the woman of his life and this was a



reason for ‘selling’ their daughters. Some of the boys also had to drop out because they had to look after those cattle.

### **A Home Away from Home**

We then relocated again and currently I am teaching in a state paid primary school in a semi urban area around Pinetown in the KZN province. (I describe this school context in more detail in Chapter Two.)

The classes I enjoyed teaching the most in this school were Grade Two classes. As I had learned from my junior primary school days, I also used pictures in my teaching practice when teaching Grade Two. The pictures were displayed and then the words, for example *a* for *apple*; *b* for *bat*; *c* for *cat*. Those children were like my own children, and they also related to me as though I was their mother.



**Figure 3.6: A photograph of my Grade Two class celebrating Heritage Day in 1997 (Commemoration of our heroes)**

In the photograph above (Figure 3.6) my Grade Two class is doing Zulu dance. The learners display the outfits that are used in such functions. During this day, we were celebrating Heritage Day where learners were taught about different heroes and heroines. Special meals for such occasions are identified. Since most of my learners are Zulu speakers, our well known hero is

Shaka Zulu kaSenzangakhona (Shaka was a son of Senzangakhona, ruler of an insignificant small chiefdom, the Zulu. Shaka was a great Zulu king and conqueror. During his brief reign more than a hundred chiefdoms were brought together in a Zulu kingdom.)

In this picture, the boys are wearing *umqhele* (crown) on the head, *amabheshu* (worn around the waist which plays the role of trousers), and carrying *amahawu* (shields), whilst the girls are wearing bead-trimmed skirts. In my experience, the learners enjoy such occasions since they are given the chance to display their talents. I have observed how their self-esteem is built at the same time by performing in front of a big group, including their parents.

After 10 years of teaching, having taught three different grades, I started teaching the Grade Six learners. I am still teaching Life Orientation to Grade Six learners. Life Orientation is a new subject that was introduced with the new post-apartheid Curriculum (Curriculum 2005). It includes Healthy Living, Personal Development, Religions and Infectious Diseases. My favourite topic in Life Orientation is “Making Choices and Decisions”. This topic helps my learners to be open about their lives and to make better informed life choices. These children are entering their teenage years and they are in the adolescent stage. They are very inquisitive and wish to know everything. Therefore, they need to be knowledgeable about life. These learners have been a source of inspiration for my lifelong learning. Having previously taught them in Grade Two, they look up to me.

My professional duties include organising educational and entertaining trips at school, where learners learn and are entertained at the same time. The photograph below (Figure 3.7) was taken at the Durban harbour. We visited this harbour so that learners would understand more about water transport. The boats that are parked are used for fishing and pleasure by various owners (some are hired at a special price). We also used one of these boats for a 45 minute cruise at Durban harbour in September 2010. During that cruise, we had a guide who showed us around the harbour. The learners had worksheets which were previously prepared at school that they had to fill in. The trip was very informative and we also learned as teachers.



**Figure 3.7: A photograph of Durban harbour where we took the Grade Six learners on an excursion**

When I think back to my primary school days, I do not remember going on any excursions. So, as the times changed, I felt the need to familiarise my learners with important places. My aim was to bring the learning theory into their lives. From these excursions, they learn different things. For instance when we were in the Durban harbour, they saw the boats and also the different sizes of ships. During the cruise, we had the tour guide who was teaching the learners about water transport and why it is a preferable mode of transport.





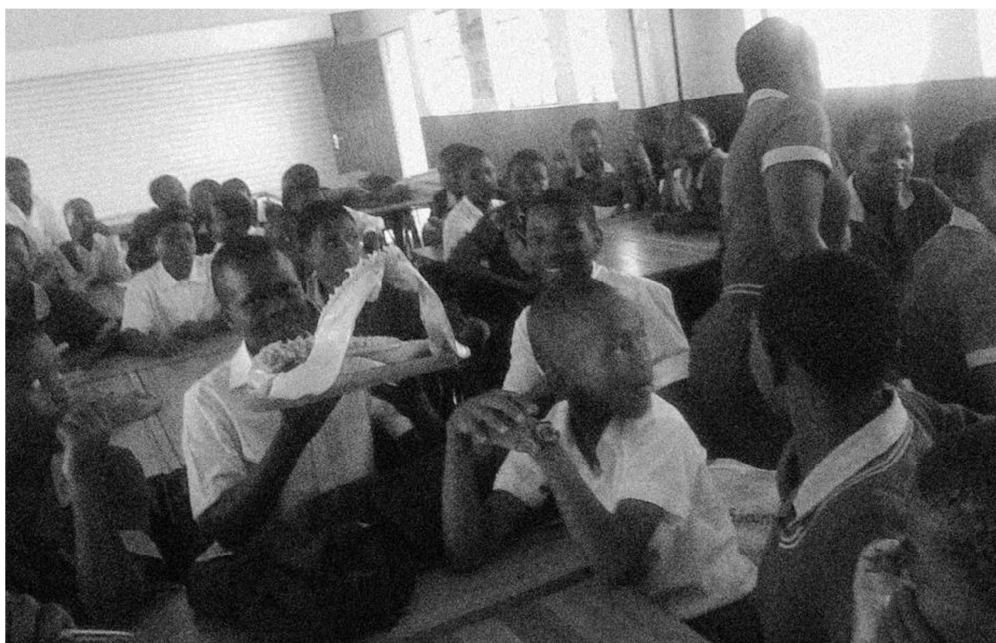
**Figure 3.8: A photograph of Grade Six learners at Moses Mabhida stadium**

As mentioned above, my own learning at school was mostly theoretical and rote learning. Thus, in my teaching experience, I have enjoyed using the opportunity to explore with my learners. So, in 2010 before the World Cup, my learners and I visited Moses Mabhida stadium (see Figure 3.8). The trip was very exciting as it was my first time entering the new stadium and the learners were thrilled too. At the stadium, we had tour guides who gave learners all the relevant information related to playing soccer in groups.



**Figure 3.9: A photograph of some Grade Six learners at EThekweni beach**

As a way of entertaining the learners, we have an annual school trip to Durban South Beach. In Figure 3.9, some of the learners posing for the camera. Although they are entertained by the outings, the learners are also encouraged to behave well and to learn in all these places that we visit.



**Figure 3.10: A photograph of Grade Six learners in a Science class learning about marine animals.**

The photograph above (Figure 3. 10) depicts some of Grade Six learners who were visited by UShaka Marine World educators at school, emphasising the importance of water animals. Teachers, together with the learners, had two hour sessions in small groups. In this case, my task was to supervise the process and moreover to learn. This photograph shows a learning situation which is interactive where learners are hands on with the real objects. In my experience, such learning inspires learners' understanding and fosters a love of education.

Teaching these learners has stimulated me to look for more information to help them in addition to the prescribed subject content knowledge. In order to be successful in my mission, I have visited various groups that deal with children's needs, for example, the Child Protection Unit

which deals with abuse, the Children’s Rights group, Child Line, the South African National Council on Alcoholism (SANCA) and many more. I have invited these groups to school on different occasions. They promote awareness on different issues relevant to learners’ lives. They always answer positively whenever invited by the school to respond to learners’ personal needs.

I vividly remember when we celebrated Children’s Rights Day, where I invited these organisations. We firstly had the protest march to the local police station, where we handed a memorandum compiled by Grade Seven learners to the station commander (see Figure 3.11). Then we returned to school for activities related to child abuse. The topic of that year was: “Don’t abuse us, protect us”. Everyone was excited at such an unexpected, successful function. It was the first of its kind where the school had invited the parents and different stakeholders to enjoy listening to speeches specifically dealing with their children. The local area councillor and school committee were also present to support the function. The outcome was super and I even received complimentary remarks from the parents. These activities have helped me to grow intellectually and develop my passion for this profession.



**Figure 3.11: A photograph of a Children’s Rights Day march led by Grade seven learners**





**Figure 3.12: A photograph of learners performing on Children’s Rights Day**

The learners in the above photograph (Figure 3.12) were performing at a celebration of Children’s Rights Day. I encouraged them to be the best they could be by building up their self-esteem. Even the nervous learners were encouraged to work with the group.

Looking at my own background of having limited sources of information about career choices, I took it as a responsibility to equip my learners with as much information as possible related to the available professions. I also introduced a prize giving day (Figure 3.13) and farewell functions to inspire them to keep learning.



**Figure 3.13: A photograph of me and a Grade Seven learner at Prize giving day 2011 (the learner is carrying certificates received in various subjects and receiving the DUX shield)**

In the above photograph (Figure 3.13), the school was having a Prize Giving Day (2011). This special day is now held annually. The teachers identify all the best learners who have excelled in different subjects. Then, only in Grade Seven, the learner who achieves the highest overall results receives the Dux prize. Other than the class subjects, extra mural activities are also considered. For example, in 2009, the Dux recipient was also awarded the best soccer player trophy. The shield has the name of the school and the recipient's name. The year is engraved on the small silver shield. The learner takes the shield home and it is returned the following day. As the organiser, I enjoy the privilege of explaining to the parents how the learner is identified.



**Figure 3.14: A photograph of Grade Seven learners' farewell function in 2010**



**Figure 3.15: A photograph of Grade seven learners, parents and teachers enjoying the meals prepared at school**



The above photographs show how the school holds a party to bid farewell to Grade Seven learners who are going on to secondary school. The learners come to school dressed formally and enjoy a party prepared by their teachers. They are treated as queens and kings of the day. The photographs show the decorations in Figure 3.14 and meals in Figures 3.15. The decorations and healthy meals are prepared at school as part of educating learners about possible professions, for example a designer or a chef.

The picture below (Figure 3.16) represents how I communicate with my learners. This page is extracted from the magazine that was specially designed for the Grade Seven farewell occasion. As I have stated, we have the farewell function yearly. This farewell function was held in 2009. The qualified photographer (who was my Grade Two learner in 1990) prepared the magazine. The comments in the magazine signify how I relate with my learners, telling them the truth and being honest all the time. I always display my state of mind to them. I see no point of acting as if everything has been good during the past 10 months, deceiving them and also their parents. It is then imperative to make note of all the challenges that the teachers have gone through and at the same time highlight the improvement of behaviour, that in time they have rectified their mistakes.

The Organiser-Mrs Vilakazi



THE ORGANISOR-MRS VILAKAZI

*Even if you can call her " The Jack Of All Trades " ,nobody will deny it, She is very cool ,calm,organised,well mannered, a good listener ,very vibrant and she knows her subjects(tasks).From her speech I managed to identify those comments that made her be so unique on the day.This function was about positive things and good wishes but she bravely stood up and emphasized that some of the learners misbehaved throughout the year, but the fortunate part of all was that nobody went beyond the school rules ' limits.That was a very strong message and also a wake up call that they have to change their ways if they want to succeed in life.*

Figure 3.16: A magazine page that symbolises my relationship with learners

On these different special occasions, we invite people from different sectors, for example, high school principals, the media, journalists and accountants. These people are given the task of explaining their jobs and the subjects to study for specific professions, and an estimation of salary. My intention is to help the learners to make informed career choice decisions when in high school. Due to an increase in the crime rate, last year we decided to invite a representative from the Correctional Services and this year we intend to invite an ex-convict. The aim is to empower the learners with the relevant information and for them to receive first-hand information from relevant sources; they need to understand about the consequences of actions such as committing crimes or using drugs.

Through dealing with the learners, I have also grown up in this profession. Long after they have finished school, they return to inform me about their whereabouts. I was very excited at one stage when I was having a meeting with my supervisor on the university campus and I was recognised by one of my former learners who helped me to find the venue of the meeting. He said that he was doing second year in Civil Engineering.

At school we recently introduced an Orphans and Vulnerable Children committee. The committee identifies the orphans and vulnerable children in our school. We help them with clothing and food parcels. We liaise with the health practitioners from the local clinic and also the social workers who even visit the families who live with these orphans. For example, a recently identified group of learners stay with their 21 year old brother who is temporarily employed. As the committee, we organised the Social Development representative to help this family with a social grant. I am the Grade Five, Six and Seven learners' confidant, even for those that I have not taught before in lower grades.

### **Supporting Teachers' Learning**

As explained before, I was promoted to the HoD post in 2001. I am in charge of 10 teachers with an enrolment of 345 learners. My duties include management of teachers' planning and preparations of lessons, and assessment of their work. I am also responsible for supporting teachers' continuing learning and development.

A range of types of formal teacher learning is occurring at my school. For example, the recent changes that are proposed to improve teaching and learning, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) (DHET, 2009), were introduced in 2011 for Foundation Phase teachers. Foundation Phase teachers from our school attended a one week workshop and then they had to implement the new policy as from 2012. Afterwards, the Intermediate Phase teachers also attended a one week workshop in 2012 and they are implementing CAPS this year (2013). At present, there are follow up workshops offered by the DBE to address any challenges that teachers are experiencing. Other formal teacher learning activities relate to the Annual National Assessments (ANA), which test Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 9 learners' Numeracy and Literacy achievements at the exit points (the end of each Phase). For ANA, specific teachers are given prescribed manuals on what and how to teach the learners. The DBE also offers workshops on ANA, as well as the programmes with specific dates of when to write the tests. Currently, teachers are also attending cluster workshops with teachers from other schools where they discuss their progress related to the previously planned work schedules and lesson plans to view whether they are still in line with departmental requirements.

To further support teacher learning, I organise workshops within the school (see Figure 3.17), where teachers who have attended DBE workshops give feedback to their colleagues. Additionally, with the knowledge I have gained in my studies, I share some issues that are relevant to teachers' work; for example, we shared an article by Evans (2002) in which she defines the concept of teacher development. I also highlight the need to understand the collective roles of teachers as per the requirements of the Department (DHET, 2011).



**FIGURE 3.17: A photograph of a teachers' workshop at my school**

Informal teacher learning also happens at my school in the staffroom where teachers discuss their teaching methods and sometimes talk about how to accommodate specific learners. For example, when I was teaching Grade Two, a boy from Gauteng Province was admitted in Grade Three and, due to a partial disability with his writing hand, he was returned to Grade Two (to repeat the class). I spent time trying to identify the problem; eventually I learned that the lesson pace was the problem because of his partial disability. We discussed this problem with his Grade Three teacher, and then he was taken back to Grade Three. The Grade Three teacher adapted class activities to suit his pace. For me, that was learning because I came to understand that learners' needs are not all the same. Thus, I realised that we as teachers need to pay attention and to try to work together to meet our learners' needs. Informal teacher learning also happens on our school veranda where teachers meet to help each other in aspects of various subjects.

### **On the Way to Fulfilment**

After having been promoted to a HoD post in 2001, I kept on making applications for senior positions at various schools. I have been shortlisted for a Deputy Principal post at three different schools, but was unsuccessful. I did not receive any feedback on why my applications were

unsuccessful. In year 2011, I was selected as an Acting Deputy Principal at my school and it only lasted for 10 months. However, in that period I made a mark by helping my school in making records of teachers' leave and accumulating a file of learners' mark schedules. I attended Phase meetings and made positive suggestions where necessary; for example in Grade R, I suggested communication books to help teachers and parents in monitoring the child's learning. To promote the culture of reading I emphasised the need for all learners at school to have a library card and we ensured that we instituted a reading period once a week for the whole school. The short period in this position helped me in dealing with different people in various situations. It also taught me to make rigorous decisions; for example at one stage I had to decide about employing a temporary teacher to teach learners for three months. I reviewed five curriculum vitae, which were very rich with some of the things that were not important to me. Since I needed a primary school teacher to teach Grade Six, I had to be very alert about the one I chose as Grade Six is the exit point in the Intermediate Phase.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have recalled and discussed my own educational journey in order to respond to my research question: "What are my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?" Writing my own story has helped me to remember and re-examine issues and incidents that I have experienced. Some brought joy and others brought forth painful memories; however, I have learned that reviewing such memories can be another way of healing. From writing my own personal narrative, I have realised that it is important that teachers retell their stories and think about how they can make use of them in teaching and learning (Nieto, 2003).

In the next chapter, Chapter Four, I consider how I can draw on my lived experiences to promote lifelong learning among teachers that I supervise as a HoD in the Intermediate Phase. To achieve that, I identify and discuss significant themes that have emerged from the recollection of my experiences in relation to lifelong learning. I draw on other scholars' ideas to deepen and extend my exploration of each theme (Nash, 2004).

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**LEARNING FROM MY EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY:**  
**PERSEVERANCE IS THE MOTHER OF SUCCESS**

**Introduction**

The aim of this study is to learn from my own educational journey in order to see how I can better encourage lifelong learning among teachers in the Intermediate Phase (Grades Four to Six) in my primary school. For this study, I have used a personal history self-study methodology, which involves studying one's self by reconstructing important events from one's past and making meaning of them for one's practice (Samaras, Hicks & Berger, 2004).

In the previous chapter, Chapter Three, I present the lived experiences that have played a role in my own lifelong learning. As a person who grew up in a rural area with my maternal grandmother, my story started in a small square-roomed house where we were a family of two adults and five children living together. My personal narrative reveals how, through lifelong learning, I have gone on a journey of accomplishment to become a qualified teacher and Head of Department (HoD). In Chapter Three, I relate how this long journey started from my early schooling years and developed through my higher primary school years and high school years, my tertiary education experiences and my working experience until now. Many education scholars, for example, Pithouse, Mitchell and Masinga (2009), put emphasis on the value of lifelong learning for teachers, but it was not until I explored my personal history that I realised how central it has been to my personal and professional development. I now realise that it should be considered useful and important for all teachers.

In Chapter Four, I revisit my lived educational experiences as portrayed in Chapter Three to consider what has added value to my being and enhanced my personal and professional growth. In so doing, I explore “[other scholars’] ideas within the framework of [my] personal narrative” (Nash, 2004, p. 66). This chapter addresses my second research question that asks what I can learn from my personal history about promoting lifelong teacher learning. Thus, in this chapter, I re-examine my personal history to identify significant issues that have emerged through retracing the stages of my educational journey.

## **My Interpretation of my Lived Educational Experiences**

This chapter presents my interpretation of the personal narrative of my lived educational experiences that is portrayed in Chapter Three. Because I am working from an understanding of the concept of teacher learning that is informed by Wenger's (1998) *social theory of learning* and Kelly's (2006) *socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning* (as explained in Chapter One), the discussion in this chapter highlights the development of my learning in relation to the people who have played a noteworthy role in this growth and to the socio-cultural issues of gender and language. Using this socio-cultural lens, I have identified the following four themes from my narrative of educational journey:

*The value of role models*

*The significance of self-motivation*

*The impact of gender in education*

*The language barrier*

### **The Value of Role Models**

The first significant theme that emerges from my personal history narrative is the value of role models for promoting lifelong learning. According to Solomon (1997, p. 399), "a role model is someone who positively influences a person's values, goals, or outlook on life". My personal narrative shows how certain people have had an important, positive influence on my lifelong learning. I can identify these people as my role models because they possessed the qualities that I would like to have and they are those who have affected me in a way that makes me want to be a better person.

### ***My Grandmother***

In Chapter Three, my grandmother is portrayed as a person who displayed great love for her grandchildren and a wish to see them growing through better education. She showed "dedication to family life, devotion to bringing up children with love, care humanity, warmth and support" (Varathaiah, 2010, p. 51). Boggs and Golden (2009) draw attention to the supportive role that mothers often play in teachers' early learning experiences; in this case, my maternal grandmother was playing the role of a mother. From her example, I realise that I too, can show such love to my colleagues at school, by guiding and inspiring them as though they were my own family.



My personal history reveals how, during my time as a primary school learner, in the confusion of a big mixed grade class where focused listening was essential, my grandmother served as my ‘knight in shining armour’:

*Although it was important to listen attentively whilst the teacher was teaching, it sometimes happened that I missed some points or facts taught. I remember that my grandmother was very helpful in filling in the gaps. She also always encouraged me to do my homework and she helped me with my homework.*  
(Chapter Three, p. 27)

I now realise that by assisting me in these ways, my grandmother was trying to make me a better person who had an improved understanding through education. Although she was not formally educated, she had an interest in my learning and she used her own general knowledge to help me in building up my intelligence. As illustrated in Chapter Three, she had her own way of emphasising the value of education; the slogan that she used to inspire me was: *“If you have an education then nobody can touch you – keep on learning!”* This slogan shows that, to my grandmother, learning was very important and she had a belief that a well-read person is untouchable. I too believe that if you are well educated, then you are better able to help yourself and other people to have relevant knowledge about important issues of education. So, I will also encourage my fellow teachers in the Intermediate Phase to advance them in education by being actively involved in lifelong learning.

### ***My Former School Principal***

Another person who was of great value in my educational life was my late school principal. She put emphasis on being a good teacher that is self-assured in her work and full of knowledge. As I explain in Chapter Three (p. 37), she had a Bachelor of Education degree and was computer literate. My personal history narrative reveals that my late school principal was important to my educational progress; she was a very encouraging person. When I met her, I had a Teachers’ Certificate – a two-year course certificate. Therefore, she encouraged me to continue studying and strive for a diploma and a bachelor’s degree. As I relate in Chapter Three, *“she encouraged me to register for a Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA)”* (p. 37)

I came a long way with my late principal. During my teaching practice, she was my supervisor. I also observed her teaching methods. She had her own methods of making the learners understand her. As Solomon states, “role models are important for their perspectives and practices they brought to their pedagogy” (1997, p. 397). This woman was excellent in everything that she did. The manner in which she presented herself to colleagues was very impressive. She had a special manner of addressing the staff and the learners. She was effective and self-confident in all that she organised.

According to Solomon (1997, p. 399), “a role model is the person one could identify with, and whose achievements, lifestyles, philosophies, and/or values had a positive impact on their self-esteem and aspirations in life”. Hence, in my view, my late principal had all the qualities of a worthy role model. When I was promoted to a HoD post, so was she promoted to a principal post. She encouraged me to use English when addressing my colleagues; she said that using English defined professionalism. She again became my guide in my daily duties. Before I went for the Department of Education’s induction workshops, she was my mentor. I learnt a lot from her, including keeping a journal – which is one of the methods that I have used in generating my personal history data for Chapter Three. Thus, as Solomon (1997) highlights, the achievements that she attained and her lifestyle and values had a positive impact on my lifelong learning journey. My late principal inspired me and improved my self-confidence (Solomon, 1997).

Although Lunenburg, Korthagen, and Swennen (2007, p. 589) discuss role modelling by teachers in higher education institutions, I can relate their ideas about role modelling to my late principal: “Modelling by teacher educators can contribute to the professional development of student teachers. When their teacher educator models certain behaviour, student teachers not only hear and read about teaching, they experience it”. Likewise, observing my late principal developing herself as a professional has encouraged me to keep on studying until now. As Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010) maintain, on-going professional development is necessary for all teachers so that they can keep up with this changing world. Similarly, Day and Gu (2010) emphasise that teachers need to widen their knowledge and be developed. Therefore, I too remain inspired by my late principal’s example to be a well-informed teacher and knowledgeable HoD.

### ***My Mother-in-Law***

My mother-in-law is equally another person who added spice to my educational journey by being my role model. She always showed interest in my learning – and encouraged me to further my studies. As I recall in my personal history, “*She taught me about being a good leader full of knowledge that is relevant to the people that she leads*” (p. 36). Consequently, in striving to be knowledgeable, I felt it necessary to upgrade myself academically. I wanted to be up to date with the current issues of education and policies. As Wood (2007, p. 281) states, “because teachers need to be knowledgeable in ever-changing contexts, on-going professional learning simply must be part-and-parcel of their work”. Likewise, on-going professional learning became part of my life.

### ***Becoming a Role Model Myself***

My role models’ encouragement to be an excellent leader with relevant knowledge continues to help me in my current duties of being the supervisor in the Intermediate Phase. I feel that, just as my role models have done for me, I too can guide and inspire my fellow teachers to be effective leaders in their fields of teaching. I also wish to motivate my colleagues to develop adequate knowledge that enhances the level of teaching and learning in our school.

Hence, from this theme, I have come to see that to support lifelong teacher learning I must become a role model myself to my colleagues, the Intermediate Phase teachers. Just as my role models encouraged me, I am going to encourage my colleagues to register for further development in their specific subjects, hence promoting lifelong learning. As I highlight in Chapter Three, I have already encouraged them about my current specialisation, which is Teacher Education and Professional Development (TEPD):

*The knowledge I have gained is enormous and I wish I could have my colleagues from school join me and study these various empowering and developing subjects. I would also like to help them with the knowledge I have gained thus far whilst they are deciding to join. (p. 41)*

For me, the most useful aspect of this specialisation is that, as students, we receive first-hand information about the changes that are happening in education, especially in the official curriculum. Currently, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is being introduced in the Foundation Phase and I learnt about this in a module in 2010, my first year of the Masters in Education (MEd).

From my personal history narrative, I have learned that it is imperative to acknowledge people who make a difference in your life and, at the same time, you yourself should make a mark wherever you go and be a role model to other people. As Lunenberg et al. (2007) state, role modelling contributes to professional development of teachers, and thus can help to make a change in education. Hence, the key message of this theme is that role models can inspire and guide teachers to be lifelong learners.

### **The Significance of Self-motivation**

Self-motivation is the second theme that has emerged from my personal history. Motivation can happen within a person without any rewards expected and motivation can occur for gain in return. Ryan and Deci (2000) maintain that intrinsic motivation is for enjoyment and personal fulfilment, while extrinsic motivation is for tangible rewards. Looking at my personal history narrative, I identify my motivation as being intrinsic because I have enjoyed most of the activities that have contributed to my success. By being self-motivated, I was able to fulfil my wishes and goals without being forced to by another person. However, my personal history also shows how there might be other people who are contributing to your progress even though you are unaware of this at the time. To expand on this theme, I will look at self-motivation in relation to poverty as a hindrance to learning, other people's input in learning, and finally, passion to promote learning.

### ***Self-Motivation Diminishes Poverty as a Hindrance to Learning***

In Chapter Three, I highlight a number of challenges that I encountered in my educational journey. Rural areas are often associated with poverty and my family was not so different in this regard from other families. In my personal history narrative, this is evident in my story about a broken slate. To illustrate:

*I recall that it was important to have a total in both Arithmetic and spelling written on our slates at the end of each day. Even though our parents were not educated, they appreciated our hard work displayed on our slates. I remember that once, after we had written 40 words and I had got them all correct, I was so excited that I wanted to show them to my grandmother. I ran all the way home after school, and when I was close to home I started screaming and calling out to my granny. I was not aware of the stone that was in the way and I tripped and fell over my slate. It broke into pieces and I started crying.... My grandmother came out and thought that something or someone was chasing me. I sadly told her the story that I had come running to show her my total marks and then I fell. She promised to buy me a new slate when my uncle had been paid at the end of the month. Due to poverty, I had to use the same broken piece for a while until the new slate was bought. Thus, for me, the slate also symbolises being responsible to learn against all odds. The most important thing at the time was the knowledge that was gained. Although the slate was broken and I had to carry it with embarrassment, the knowledge rooted in it was never futile. (p. 26)*

Although I was hurt by having to use the broken slate, in a way I can see now that I was being taught to be more cautious in the future. As I relate in Chapter Three, the important thing was the thirst for learning that I gained at that period and which has led me thus far.

My personal history narrative also reminds me how school uniforms played a significant part in my school life. After the 1994 elections in South Africa, various policies were introduced, including the school uniform policy, which states that “learners who do not have school uniforms or have incomplete uniforms should not be denied entry to school”(MiET, 2009, p. 113). Further, the MiET states that a child without a uniform or that has one which is not in good condition will feel uncomfortable when attending the school. I recall that I was doubtful about my uniform because my mother sewed it at home, whilst other children’s were bought ready-made from the shops. Fortunately, however, as highlighted in Chapter Three, (p. 30), the emphasis at school was on “*neatness and cleanliness*”, no matter the condition of your uniform. Looking back, I think

that our teachers may have identified the poverty in the area and decided to focus on the positive side for learners' education. As illustrated in Chapter Three, "*It was a relief to wear these uniforms because we all felt the same; no one could tell if you were poor or you were rich*" (p. 30). The presence of the uniform gave self-worth to me and thus created an interest in learning, valuing of education and confidence in my capacities and attributes (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991).

Although I was carrying a broken slate and wearing a home-sewn uniform, my teachers commended me because I was neat and clean. I can see how, in this manner, our teachers chose to engage with our poverty in a way that built our confidence. Similarly, in relation to recent research done in KwaZulu-Natal schools in poor communities, Grant, Jasson and Lawrence (2010) explain how teachers can make use of learners' problems to help them to achieve and to do better:

*The schools clearly did not run away from their problems but instead interrogated them and used them as a springboard from which to learn and improve.* (p. 93)

The above extracts from Chapter Three depict the socio-economic context of my early life of learning. I now realise how my grandmother and my teachers tried to break out from the economic constraints and motivate us as learners. Thus, as I look at my personal history narrative, I can see that "*poverty in the family never hindered my learning progress. Instead, it motivated me to strive for the best*" (p. 26). While impoverished socio-economic contexts may impede the progress of learning, it is important to have a dream and be motivated to achieve it against all odds. As Varathaiah (2010, p. 48) explains, in her study, teachers' "educational achievements whilst at school emerged from the motivation to achieve that [they] gained from parents' and other family members' attitudes towards learning rather than from their economic circumstances". Similarly, being encouraged by my grandmother and teachers helped me to develop the self-motivation to overlook all these challenges and therefore I was able to succeed.

In this case, I may conclude that poverty was never a significant hindrance to my learning. So too, it should not be a limitation for my Intermediate Phase teachers. I can encourage my

colleagues to pursue their dreams of studying despite economic constraints. I will inform them about funding options that are available for furthering their studies, as well the bursaries that are offered by the Department of Education. In addition, I will keep them informed about free workshops that are run by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to help teachers to advance their knowledge.

### ***Motivation from Others in Learning***

My personal history narrative shows how self-motivation can become stronger when receiving external support. As explained in the discussion of my first theme, my grandmother's love still gives me strength in bettering myself. I used all her advice to become an educated grandchild. That I am now a learned somebody shows that her teachings did not go to waste. Similarly, as explained above, my mother-in-law, together with my late principal, motivated me in various ways in my learning.

My personal history narrative reveals that other people who contributed to motivating my learning were my high school friends and teachers. While doing practice teaching during my initial teacher training, my high school friends and former high school teachers motivated me to complete my teaching course:

*They were excited for me and said that I had made a correct choice – some of their mothers were also teachers. With them knowing that I was in teacher training, it was then imperative that I became a teacher after three years. Even the teachers that had taught me before were very proud to see me doing observation lessons. I now realise that, in a way, I was a mirror in which they saw themselves as a working group – able to produce valuable learners. Therefore, I had encouragement from various people in my life; I wanted to please my family, including my grandmother, as well as my high school friends and also my ex teachers. Over and above this, I wanted to be somebody. All this influenced my decision to try to study a teaching course again. (p. 34)*

Thus, my high school friends, together with my former teachers, played a role of supporting and empowering me, which strengthened my willpower “*to be somebody*”. The encouragement I received from them gave me courage to go back to my studies and become a qualified teacher. As Kohl (1984) explains, these teachers felt that they had an obligation to care about every student. Many of my high school teachers “found the opportunity to be deeply and personally involved with their students” (Goldstein & Lake, 2000, p. 862). Likewise, Varathaiah (2010) highlights how the attitudes that teachers portray to learners can encourage their learning. Furthermore, Varathaiah draws attention to the role played by teachers that express admiration for their learners’ achievements. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, the pride that my former teachers showed in me as student teacher had a positive influence on my lifelong learning.

Looking at my personal history narrative, I can see how these outside influences increased my self-motivation, by confirming that I “*had made a correct choice*” to become a teacher. Eisner (2002) highlights that schools need to be places where teachers help each other and are supportive. In this instance, my former teachers played that supportive role during my teaching practice. My former teachers’ caring included the will to see me succeed and become a teacher myself (Goldstein & Lake, 2000).

With such enthusiasm from others, I now see why I had to become a well-educated person. I could not fail my former high school teachers, because what they had foreseen during my practical teaching period had to transpire in the next three years. I now understand that, as a HoD, it is important to encourage my colleagues to keep on pursuing their dreams of lifelong learning, even if they might fail on the way. I have learned that to have people to please on your way to success gives a person more energy to strive for victory.

### ***A Passion to Promote Learning***

As I have stated in Chapter Three, I initially embarked on a career as a teacher because “*the school leaving certificate I received channelled me to register for the teaching profession. The circumstances decided my line of work*” (p. 32). However, my personal history narrative



illustrates how, along my teaching path, passion for teaching and learning developed and I became passionate about issues that were challenging in the learning situation; especially those that affected the learners, Day (2007) highlights the significance of a passion for teaching. He puts emphasis on the mastery of content knowledge and on pedagogical skills, but also argues that “teaching requires both intellectual and emotional commitment” (p. 2). My personal history reveals that working with learners makes me give my all because of my wish to help them develop a love of education and to make better-informed life choices. In this way, I try to pass on the educational motivation I have received from significant people in my life. I also wish to give the learners opportunities that I did not get in my early learning life situation.

Day (2007, p. 4) explains, “being passionate creates energy, determination, conviction, commitment and even obsession in people”. Since passion is a motivational force coming from strength of emotion (Day, 2009), I have involved myself deeply in learning about issues that deal with child welfare to have more understanding about caring for children. As I point out in Chapter Three:

*I have visited various groups that deal with children’s needs, for example, the Child Protection Unit which deals with abuse, the Children’s Rights group, Child Line, the South African National Council on Alcoholism (SANCA) and many more. (pp. 46-47)*

Visiting these places has helped me in gaining knowledge and confidence that strengthens my passion for teaching and learning. These organisations have given me first-hand information on how to deal with my learners on issues that are important to them and to my Intermediate Phase teachers. According to Morrow (2007 p. 10), a competent teacher has to be a “scholar, researcher and lifelong learner”. I feel a social obligation to research and am a lifelong learner to benefit and care for my school learners.

From my personal history narrative, I can also see how, to enjoy my profession, I have involved myself in various social activities to augment my teaching and learning. Through such activities, I have myself been learning and at the same time promoting lifelong learning among my teachers

and learners. For example, as Walters (1999, p. 218) explains, I have discovered that lifelong learning can be enhanced by “socialising with other people through local community activities”, as illustrated in Chapter Three:

*I vividly remember when we celebrated Children’s Rights Day, where I invited these organisations. We firstly had the protest march to the local police station, where we handed a memorandum compiled by Grade Seven learners to the station commander (see Figure 3.15). Then we returned to school for activities related to child abuse. The topic of that year was: “Don’t abuse us, protect us”. Everyone was excited at such an unexpected, successful function. It was the first of its kind where the school had invited the parents and different stakeholders to enjoy listening to speeches specifically dealing with their children. The local area councillor and school committee were also present to support the function. The outcome was super and I even received complimentary remarks from the parents. These activities have helped me to grow intellectually and develop my passion for this profession. (p. 47)*

Thus, I realise that to stimulate motivation for lifelong teacher learning, I should emphasise to my Intermediate Phase teachers that learning includes formal, non-formal and informal education, which means that effective teaching and learning does not only happen in a formal classroom situation (Eisner, 2002; Jurasaitė-Harbison & Rex, 2010; Walters, 1999). Eisner (2002) emphasises that we need to have schools where learners are able to experience learning outside the school premises. He explains that teachers must help learners to connect this ‘outside of classroom learning’ to the ‘inside classroom learning’. In this way, learning at school should “enable learners to do well in life” (Eisner, 2002, p. 581). Significantly, my personal history narrative highlights that teacher learning also continues outside the classroom situation when taking learners on excursions:

*We visited this harbour so that learners would understand more about water transport . . . We also used one of these boats for a 45 minute cruise at Durban harbour in September 2010 . . . The learners had worksheets which were*

*previously prepared at school that they had to fill in. The trip was very informative and we also learned as teachers.* (Chapter Three, p. 43).

Upon our return to school, during class discussions, these excursions excite the learners and make the classroom a safe and an enjoyable place to express ideas, making it possible to meet their emotional needs, and at the same time empowering them to become self-confident learners. As explained by a teacher as cited in Zembylas (2004, p.194):

What really makes an experience so wonderful is how fascinating it is to see kids being engaged, . . . I became much more aware of my excitement and kids' excitement, and I'm always trying to understand why something is so exciting [y] What excites me is really see kids get excited about something [y] Kids need to feel that they are loved and cared for and that they "can do it" (Interview, October 11, 1998).

In the above quotation, the teacher is expressing her emotions when seeing her learners engaged and excited about learning. I experienced similar emotions when my Grade Seven learners took part in the protest march (Chapter Three, p. 47). Seeing them approaching the local councillor and the police made me feel proud of their confidence and self-esteem. At the same time, their parents acknowledged their performance: "*I even received complimentary remarks from the parents*" (Chapter Three, p. 47). On my own part too, I felt good and I had that satisfaction of achievement.

All my involvement in these extra-curricular activities has advanced me intellectually and socially. I have been doing them "freely, with a full sense of volition and without the necessity of material rewards or constraints" (Deci et al., 1991, p. 328). Furthermore, the learners' positive responses to their activities have been a source of motivation for my lifelong learning. I have tried to fulfil the definition of teaching as expressed by Day (2009, p.7): "a journey of hope based upon a set of ideals". My personal history shows that it is important to me to make difference to the learning and lives of my learners.

### ***Inspiring my Colleagues to be Self-Motivated***

As demonstrated in my personal history narrative, I have always yearned for a better education – my belief is that, if I am learned in various spheres of my field (education), then I will be able to better able to support my Intermediate Phase teachers in developing expertise and to supervise and run the department effectively and competently. From my personal history narrative, I have learned that to be motivated from within and by others helps to promote lifelong learning. Retracing my personal history has reminded me of how I started out as an unqualified teacher:

*With one year of failed teacher training, I was very nervous to stand in front of the learners. I was not confident about my teaching skills because I felt that they were not fully developed. (p. 34)*

The support given and interest shown by my principal and colleagues gave me confidence and motivated me to learn try various approaches to teaching and to further my studies. Therefore, I see that it is essential for me as a HoD to inspire and support my Intermediate Phase teachers to be self-motivated and self-confident in order to achieve to their full competencies.

To fulfil that dream, I have already started encouraging teachers to report back on workshops that they attend, as explained in Chapter Three (p. 53). I have also formulated committees of teachers who are teaching the same subjects and then we meet monthly to learn of the latest developments. If any challenges are encountered, they are tackled as soon as they are identified. Moreover, I am planning to organise teacher development workshops where we will share our expertise in various fields of education. Thus, teachers can learn from their colleagues (Eisner, 2002). Although we attend workshops organised by the Department of Education, we also need to teach each other (see Chapter Three, p. 53) in order to “create the kind of supportive and educative community that culminates in higher-quality education than is currently provided” (Eisner, 2002, p. 577). With these initiatives, I hope that my colleagues’ self-esteem will be developed and they will increase in self-confidence. My hope is that through my support and encouragement my teachers will be motivated to keep on learning, just as others have motivated me.

## **The Impact of Gender in Education**

The next major theme that emerges from my personal history self-study is the impact of gender in education. Moletsane (2004) argues that women teachers and girl learners in South Africa often experience gender discrimination and oppression in schools. This raises the question of whether women teachers see themselves as lifelong learners. To expand on this topic, I look at teachers being categorised according to the phases they teach, the choice of subjects at school, women teachers' promotion in the education field and pressures brought by family responsibilities.

### ***Gender Influences on Teaching Phases and Choice of Subjects at School***

According to Christie (2006), boys and girls do not receive the same experiences at school and this can further lead to them having unequal opportunities "in life after school" (p. 157). Hence, women are often encouraged to enter the 'caring professions' such as nursing and teaching, with lower status. In my experience, even when a male has chosen to be a teacher, he is often more highly recognised and given the highest grades at school and those subjects perceived as difficult. In my 27 years of teaching, I have noticed that female teachers are mostly placed in lower grades; even in primary schools, the male teachers are teaching the highest grades, such as Grade Six or Grade Seven. The same practice occurred in my primary school years. From Sub Standard A (Grade One) until Standard Five (Grade Seven), I was taught by female teachers. Then the male teachers came in at Standard Six, the most senior class in a primary school. As I point out in Chapter Three: "*All Standard Six teachers were males*" (p. 28).

This relates to the observation by Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007, p. 238) that there are "gender imbalances across education phases, women teachers are in the nursery and primary sectors, overall less valued and rewarded". In my experience, women are often seen as better in handling young children and thus tend to be placed in the lower grades. Likewise, referring to female teachers in the United States of America, Galman and Mallozzi (2011, p. 283), point out that "good female teachers....were (and are) constructed as gentle guides, caregivers and even babysitters instead of authority figures." As Makhanya (2010) highlights, this can lead to women primary school teachers being looked down upon as if "their intelligence is the same as that of the learners they are teaching" (p.59). Similarly, Galman and Mallozzi (2011, p. 283), explain

that in this way, women teachers are “positioned as quasi-adults [and] are relegated to child-like status.” Makhanya recommends that the School Management Teams should be familiar with the curriculum in a primary school to understand that the work of teachers in the primary grades is as important as those in the higher grades because it is where the foundation of learning is laid.

On top of that, Moreau et al. (2007) comment about subjects that are commonly taught by female teachers. They emphasise that in the United Kingdom “there is a lower proportion of women in Mathematics and Science compared with other subjects” (p. 238). My personal history narrative illustrates how the same approach seems to have applied in South Africa. However, it is a relief to me that nowadays in my school this practice is slowly fading away. In my school, we have female teachers teaching Mathematics and Science in Grade Six and Grade Seven classes.

In my experience, it does happen that there are those female teachers who still think the traditional way and consider these subjects as difficult; nevertheless, I think that this is because of how they were taught in their high school times. These teachers need to be educated about gender equity. Moletsane (2004, p. 2) contends there is an urgent need to transform teachers “into active and effective change agents for gender equity”. From my personal history narrative, I can see how such behaviour is linked with the time when I was in high school and the teachers separated us learners according to our performance in relation to the choice of subjects. The Science subjects were known as difficult subjects that could be studied mainly by boys. This segregation usually was initiated from Form Three (Grade Ten): “*Form two teachers used the accumulated marks for the previous terms in the current year to identify learners who could cope well in Mathematics and Physical Science*” (Chapter Three, p. 31).

That method is practised even now, in this democratic era. Leach (2003) highlights that certain subjects have been traditionally viewed as appropriate for intelligent learners and others for less intelligent learners. In my schooling, female learners were viewed as the ones who should study those subjects for less intelligent learners and those subjects that relate to care giving and nurturing such as Biology, Agriculture and Home Economics. However, I was in the class for ‘intelligent’ learners, and thus able to study Science. Nevertheless, my personal history narrative shows that I was an exception and that there was a social cost attached to this exceptionality:

*We 'marginalised girls' used to spend most of the school breaks together. I think that the other learners' view was that we saw ourselves as better learners than them. (Chapter Three, p. 32).*

I was fortunate in that gendered subject choices did not hinder my lifelong learning. I believe that an important aim for every teacher is to be skilful in your field. As Corcoran (1995) states, it is important for teachers to be competent in their teaching fields and therefore, teachers should study further and develop themselves professionally. Cropley (1989) maintains that lifelong learning is a means of coping with and adapting to change. Therefore, as teachers, we need to advance ourselves by learning continuously. Thus, from my personal history self-study, I have learned that I have to inspire my Intermediate Phase colleagues to continue learning so as to be experts in their various fields of teaching, despite their possible previous experiences of being limited by gendered subject choices or of being undervalued because of teaching in the lower grades.

### ***Gender and Promotion in the Education Field***

Although there tend to be large numbers of women teaching in primary schools, it appears that their chances of being promoted are insignificant (Hutchings, 2002). In addition, Galman and Mallozzi (2011, p. 283) stress that “the professional rewards for female elementary teachers are located almost exclusively in relationships with the children, such that the children themselves are often considered the reward in lieu of monetary gain.” Similarly, in the South African context, Christie (2006) highlights that woman teachers are less frequently promoted to higher positions than men. Furthermore, Lumby, Azaola et al. (2010, p. 4) point out that in a survey across 23 countries, “on average almost 70 per cent of teachers in lower secondary schools were females [and] only 45 per cent” were female principals. As I have noted in Chapter Three, after studying at various learning institutions to develop my education and be at the expected teacher level (a four year teacher qualification), I was hoping for better chance of the promotion and yet that was not the case. My efforts to improve my qualifications are reflected in this extract from Chapter Three:

*I then registered for distance learning at Vista University, firstly for a Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) in 1993 and after that a Secondary Education Diploma (SED) in 1996 and, finally, a Higher Education Diploma (HED) in 1998. (p. 35).*

After such an improvement, I am still only a HoD in the Intermediate Phase. As illustrated in Chapter Three: *“I kept on making applications for senior positions at various schools. I have been shortlisted for a Deputy Principal post at three various schools, but was unsuccessful”* (p. 54).

Day (2007) highlights how some teachers remain committed and passionate despite a lack of official recognition. However, he cautions that such a lack of recognition can “[turn] initial passion to frustration” (p. 10). However, my personal history has been different because, as I highlight in Chapter Three, a lack of promotion has not hindered me from continuing with my studies. I went on to study for a BA degree (2004), computer course (2006) and BEd honours degree which I obtained in 2010 (Chapter Three). My personal history narrative also reveals that this lack of recognition has also not diminished my passion for teaching and learning (as discussed in the previous theme.)

Kanjere (2008) maintains that the shortage of women in leadership positions in some areas is due to cultural beliefs that refuse “to embrace the capability of women to influence and even to lead” (p. 2). Kanjere (2008, p. 2) also cautions that “the absence of women from...leadership positions undermines democracy and women’s empowerment”. My personal history narrative has made me aware that the system of promoting teachers to higher posts has to be revised since women teachers need to be given opportunities to serve ‘in higher positions because [we] are capable,’ (Lumby et al., 2010, p. 6). Moreover, using “the pool of talent in women would contribute to securing excellent leadership [that] is vital to developing societies and economies” (Lumby et al., 2010, p. 3). Hence, in spite of prevailing gender imbalances in promotion, I will always encourage my female Intermediate Phase teachers to be lifelong learners so as to be knowledgeable and adept in the education field. I will also continue to seek opportunities for professional promotion and to support my female colleagues in doing the same. While I



acknowledge that lifelong learning is essential for all teachers, both female and male, my personal history suggests to me that female teachers will benefit from inspiration in this area as they might not have received such encouragement as learners earlier on in their lives.

### ***Gender and Geographical Mobility and Family Responsibilities***

In my experience, another key problem for women teachers in relation to promotion is that a woman is expected to follow her husband after they are married. This is evident in my personal history narrative: “*When I got married, I relocated . . . We then relocated again . . .*” (pp. 41-42). This geographical mobility and the successive relocations affected my career path. Moreau et al. (2007) contend that this happens because, in the past, men were identified as the breadwinners and women as child-minders. Thus, “women teachers’ professional and geographical mobility depended on their partners” (p. 242). As I have explained in my personal history narrative, I started teaching in 1985 and only started to improve my education in 1990. To study part-time was a means of developing professionally. However, it also needed stability in relation to a postal address for tutorial letters and other technological means of communication that were not available in my area at that time. Therefore, that is one of the hurdles that I encountered because of my relocation.

My personal history also illustrates further issues that can hinder women’s lifelong learning. Moreau et al. (2007) highlights that women often have to juggle work, family and domestic responsibilities. I am still experiencing such a problem with my family in the sense that there is a lot of work to do in my study and hence I fail to satisfy my family needs. As I explain in Chapter Three: “*I had to divide my time between school work, my studies and family responsibilities*” (p. 35).

I have had to choose between remaining just a qualified teacher (with a four year Higher Education Diploma) and becoming a graduate with at least a Master’s degree. As I highlight in Chapter Three, “*I wanted to be somebody*” (p. 34). To me, to become that ‘somebody’ is the foremost wish in my life; this is to be a well-educated person as far as a Doctor of Education graduate. This is reflected in this extract from my personal history narrative:

*Then, after I had completed the Higher Education Diploma, my husband confessed to my mother that he had tolerated enough and hoped that I had finished with furthering my education so as to concentrate more on family needs. For that reason, I gave myself a break from studies (which I regret now). However, after two years, I informed my husband about the changes in education that required a person who was well versed about the latest developments in life as a whole. Although he was reluctant, my mind was made up; I was not requesting but informing him about the further educational journey I was planning to undertake. (pp. 35-36)*

### ***The Importance of Education for Women***

Through looking back at my personal history, I have realised the significance of placing importance on education for women. Women need to be encouraged to advance themselves through lifelong learning. They should be conversant with gender equity for various needs in life, including education. One way in which I think I can help to stimulate awareness of gender issues at my school is to organise activities to highlight all the public holidays that commemorate women's struggle. I also intend to formulate a special group for women teachers to explore ways on which we can engage with important issues and challenges pertaining to our lives and work as women. The key message is that, as women, we should use any opportunity to involve ourselves and gain more knowledge about gender discrimination and equity. Through my self-study, I have become aware that to promote lifelong learning, I must invigorate women teachers to grow and develop in learning. The saying is, "If you educate a Woman, You Educate a Nation". This phrase is certainly true in the case of teachers.

### **The Language Barrier**

The fourth notable theme that emerges from my personal history narrative is the language barrier that has had an impact on my lifelong learning. In my understanding, a language barrier occurs when an individual struggles to communicate in a certain language and this prevents her from achieving her goals. Although there are 11 official languages that we use in South Africa, English is commonly used as the *lingua franca* and hence, as Ndaleneni (2013) highlights, English communication skills are needed in order to compete for educational and career opportunities.

My personal narrative shows how I have experienced a language barrier when communicating in English. I discuss English as *a language of learning and teaching* and then strategies that could help my Intermediate Phase teachers in *overcoming this barrier* in future.

### ***English as a Language of Learning and Teaching***

In revisiting my personal history, I have realised that although English was the official medium of learning and teaching at high school, my high school years did not prepare me for communicating in English:

*English was the language of learning and teaching in high school, which was different from primary schooldays. This was a barrier to all my learning of other subjects. (This was particularly evident at the tertiary level where we were taught by English speaking lecturers, as detailed in next section. I found that it was not easy when conversing with English speakers.) (p. 31)*

While I sometimes enjoyed English classes in high school, I now see that the dominant mode of rote learning did not enhance my ability to comprehend and communicate in English:

*I particularly remember one teacher who was teaching us English. She was a young African unmarried lady. She was always cheerful and made us enjoy being at school. Although there was rote learning, we enjoyed ourselves. We especially enjoyed doing dramatisation....This made it interesting because we were learning and playing at the same time. However, we would articulate the words without understanding their meaning. (p. 31)*

Similarly, Ndalen (2013), who also was an isiZulu-speaking learner in an English medium high school, draws attention to how his high school experiences of rote learning hampered his opportunities to become confident in using English to communicate at high school level:

Initially, I did not speak much English at school. Teachers generally chose rote learning as a method of teaching and, therefore, I reproduced what I could ‘cram’ when doing homework. I memorised my school work and reproduced it verbatim. (pp. 23-24)

Through looking back at my personal history, I have realised that I encountered the impact of the language barrier when I failed my first year in the Teachers’ Training College. I was confident with my work at college; hence I was hoping to pass at the end of the year. However, as I have highlighted in Chapter Three:

*In a class of 18 students, only two of us had to supplement and we failed. There were no student representatives at that time; we would have consulted them for a paper remark or scripts viewing because we were not satisfied. We even thought that our supplementary papers were not marked, but that we failed based on the assumption that we could not make it. I was unhappy and could not afford more funds to repeat the first year. Then I decided to take a temporary job to raise funds for the following year. (pp. 33-34)*

The word “only” in the above extract shows my disappointment and dissatisfaction at those results; however I now understand that I had difficulties when communicating and answering questions in English:

*The main problem I experienced was the language barrier. Most lecturers were White people, speaking either English or Afrikaans for communication. The few African lecturers were teaching either isiZulu or doing Physical Education as a subject. We students were all Africans. (p. 33)*

Likewise, Makhanya (2010), who is also isiZulu-speaking, explains that English as the language of learning and teaching at her teachers’ training college was a barrier for her:

This was a teacher training college with 98% White lecturers. All were loving and caring people. However, the fear of the unknown took hold of me as I started to think of my

language problem. How was I going to understand these lecturers who lectured in English as well as in Afrikaans during Afrikaans lessons? (p. 30).

Makhanya's experience illustrates how many "English additional language students encounter language difficulties when they attend lectures at university (Mbatha, 2004, p. 9). Nel and Muller (2010) also draw attention to the challenges that many students who do speak English as their home language encounter when arriving in higher education institutions in South Africa. They explain that "these students are often labelled as at risk or disadvantaged as a result of the linguistic, cognitive and social transition they have to make when entering higher education where most teaching staff are white and proficient in English" (p. 635). Thus, Mbatha (2004) argues that students' perception is often that indigenous languages such as IsiZulu do not have value in education or status at the tertiary level. Mbatha (2004) proposes that using creative teaching methods and creativity to enhance our learning of both IsiZulu and English as means of fruitful communication, so that students will be able to express themselves fluently and confidently in various situations at least in two languages.

According to Cummins (1981, p. 24), a child is expected to master her mother tongue in the first seven years after birth. De Klerk (1995, p. 56) confirms the need for children to "develop advanced skills in their first language before they can function academically in a second language. Thus, the language of learning and teaching is currently prescribed as mother tongue in the Foundation Phase (Grade R – Grade 3) and then First Additional Language (FAL), which is English (in most *isiZulu* speaking schools) from the Intermediate Phase upwards (Department of Education, 2011). Some parents wish to have their children taught in English, arguing that other indigenous languages are not useful in their future learning (De Klerk, 2002). However, in my experience, many Intermediate Phase teachers still use *isiZulu* when teaching. It happens that teachers in *isiZulu* speaking schools code-switch to accommodate all the learners in the classroom; however, this is problematic when learners are writing tests because they have to write their answers in English. Ndaleni (2013) explains code-switching as "the alternate usage of two languages by the same speaker during the same discussion" (p. 22) and gives some insight as to why teachers might code-switch despite the prescribed policy:

Looking back at my personal history, I have realised that one of my weaknesses has been the use of code-switching in gathering learner feedback.... I am now aware that I have been quick to think that learners do not understand me when I speak in English. Therefore, I have tended to use both IsiZulu and English when teaching English oral communication. (Ndaleni, 2013, p. 44).

Masinga (2009) explains that she requested the learners in her study to use the language of their choice:

Because the children are all isiZulu speaking, I knew that language, with English as the medium of instruction at the school, could be a barrier to their understanding of and response to the activity. Hence, to facilitate understanding the preliminary discussions were held mostly in isiZulu. I gave the learners an opportunity to respond in any language with which they felt comfortable. (p. 239).

The language barrier is something that needs to be overcome by learners at all cost, which is why I try to use English all the time in my lessons. When my learners are not clear, I try to use alternative English words, failing that then I code-switch between English and isiZulu.

From another perspective Makhanya (2010) explains that, while she is expected to use English in her work as a Department of Education Subject Advisor, she still feels that the language barrier hinders her excellence in performance:

*I realise that because of a language barrier, I am not equipped or assertive enough to deal with the ever-changing world of curriculum policy. When people from other racial groups raise issues, I sometimes feel inferior and might be inclined to think that they want to show others how much they know. (p. 37)*

Similarly, Makhanya (2010) detects this barrier in the quietness of the teachers in departmental workshops: “Now I understand why teachers are so quiet during workshops; it is often because of a language barrier” (p. 37). In my experience, a feeling of failure to be conversant in a

language creates fear and one becomes less confident, which leads to lack of self-esteem and can hinder one's lifelong learning. Thus, the language barrier is something that needs to be overcome by teachers at all costs.

### ***Overcoming the Language Barrier***

To overcome the language barrier that I observe from my teachers, I will persuade them to acquaint themselves with reading books as per Education Department's request to increase literacy in South Africa. I hope this reading will improve such that they even read in their own time. As the saying goes, 'Practice makes perfect'. I believe that always trying to communicate in English can help teachers to grow and love the language, which is more important for understanding all the policies that we receive from the Department of Education.

I would also encourage teachers to use a range of teaching methods to try to encourage more creativity in writing and oral discussions where topics are more relevant (Ndaleni, 2013). It is also important to inspire learners to focus on topics and activities that they like and appreciate, while still adhering to the requirements of the prescribed curriculum. I would encourage my Intermediate teachers to use team work so that we can help each other in developing creative and stimulating approaches to learning and teaching English (Mlambo, 2012) that we and the learners can enjoy. All this will be more successful if teachers keep on learning.

### **Conclusion**

As this chapter was addressing my second research question that asks: *What can I learn from my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?* I have identified four significant themes that have emerged from the recollection of my experiences in relation to lifelong learning. From this chapter I have learned that lifelong learning is essential for all teachers because by keeping on learning one grows in various spheres of life; both personal and professional. As I have grown professionally, I have learned the importance of equipping my teachers with meaningful strategies of dealing with learners in this changing society. Personally, I have learned to be thoughtful and passionate in my supervision of my fellow teachers and to be a role model to my Intermediate Phase Teachers at school.

In the final chapter, Chapter Five, I give summary of my dissertation and reflect on the suitability of my personal history self-study methodology. I share my experiences of doing self-study and I make recommendations for educational practice and further research.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **A REFLECTIVE REVIEW OF MY PERSONAL HISTORY SELF-STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this self-study was to explore how I could learn from my own experiences to more effectively promote lifelong teacher learning as an Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) Head of Department (HoD). Therefore, to achieve my purpose, I have examined my personal history of learning and teaching from childhood to adulthood. This has allowed me to reflect upon significant educational experiences to look at how each incident might have made a difference to the teacher and Head of Department I am today and to consider what I might learn from the past to make a difference in the future.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Four, I re-examined my personal history, as represented in Chapter Three, and discovered four key themes that emerged from my personal history. In this chapter, Chapter Five, I review my dissertation chapter by chapter and present my reflections on the study, in which I reflect on and assess the suitability of my personal history self-study methodology for addressing my research questions. I also sum up what I have learned from my study about promoting lifelong teacher learning and how I intend to take this forward in my work as a teacher.

#### **A Reflective Review of the Dissertation**

In Chapter One, I introduced my research study by stating the focus, which was on lifelong teacher learning, and also the purpose, which was aimed at promoting lifelong teacher learning in my own practice as a HoD. I described how my research had originated from my observations of my fellow Intermediate Phase teachers, coupled with the findings of the small-scale study that I had undertaken as part of my Masters' coursework. I explained how this study had revealed that although teachers in my school were learning in formal and informal ways, they were often not aware that they were engaging in lifelong learning and, therefore, they lacked confidence in themselves as learners and in what they had learned. For that reason, I felt a need re-examine my

own lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning to better understand how teachers can acknowledge and use their lifelong learning experiences and develop themselves as learners.

Furthermore, I explained that my understanding of lifelong teacher learning was informed by two theoretical perspectives: Wenger's (1998) *social theory of learning* and Kelly's (2006) *socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning*. These perspectives have helped me to understand that the teachers in my school are not just individuals, but that together they form a learning community, in which, as Waghid and Smeyers (2011, p. 5) emphasise, "care, integrity and trust [which] are of utmost importance". Thus, I have realised that, to promote lifelong teacher learning, I need to show care by supporting and appreciating my colleagues' development. The two theoretical perspectives have also enabled me to view teachers' social participation in socio-cultural contexts and their sharing of experiences, ideas, beliefs and practices as central to lifelong teacher learning.

In Chapter Two, I provided a detailed explanation of my personal history self-study approach. I identified my reflective journal, memory drawings and personal history artefacts as data sources. Furthermore, I explained how I worked with my critical friends during my study. I clarified that my critical friends were of value in my research, as they supported me in our discussions where we shared our personal and professional experiences, including challenges we were facing in our research and our different school situations. I also described how I used personal narrative writing as a creative approach to represent my educational experiences and how I used an inductive approach to interpret my personal history narrative. At the end of the chapter, I considered limitations, challenges of the study, as well as trustworthiness and ethical issues.

In this research, I have used a personal history self-study methodology to re-examine myself and my experiences as a lifelong learner, with the aim of understanding how I can better encourage and promote lifelong teacher learning in my school. A personal history self-study methodology was appropriate for my study because it helped me to look at how a deeper understanding of my lived experiences could augment my professional practice as a HoD. As explained in Chapter Two, the strategies that I used when generating data for my study – journal writing, memory drawing and artefact retrieval – helped me to recall circumstances, events and people that have

made a difference to my experiences of lifelong learning. Thus, doing this research has familiarised me with various strategies for generating data. For example, in Chapter Two, I explained that I used journal entries as means of generating data. I can now recommend this to my colleagues as one of the ways of recording everything related to teaching and learning for future use. I have also learned that the use of drawing in self-study research did not require any artistic skill as long as I could make a detailed explanation of what the drawing represented and how it related to my research topic.

It was not until I explored my personal history of learning and teaching that I became aware of how fundamental lifelong learning has been to my personal and professional development. Thus, my personal history self-study research has helped me to become more conscious of the value of teachers' lifelong learning. Furthermore, through the study, I have realised that personal history self-study methodology is actually a form of lifelong learning that can be a vital tool for someone who has willpower to develop herself and her career. Samaras, Hicks and Berger (2004, p. 2) state that it is important for teacher educators "to model – to show and not just tell, that life-long learning is vital for the teachers' professional development". So, as a HoD who is involved in facilitating teachers' professional growth processes, I am happy to have attained strategies for personal history self-study that I can use to help my colleagues in developing themselves professionally through lifelong teacher learning.

In Chapter Three, I addressed my first key research question: "*What are my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?*" I reconstructed my personal history of lifelong teacher learning, from my early experiences of schooling, on to my teacher training and my practices of being a teacher and a HoD. I reflected on these lived experiences with the aim of enhancing my awareness of lifelong teacher learning in the context of my own life.

Writing my own personal history narrative helped me to recall and review situations, incidents and people that have played a part in my journey of lifelong learning. This remembering was often joyful as, when I think of how I have become a lifelong learner, I feel happy because I feel that my wish to become a well-educated teacher is being fulfilled. Being involved in continuous learning is helpful because your knowledge and understanding increases and you are always up

to date with the current issues related to education. Even though some memories were painful (for example, carrying a broken slate to school and wearing a home-sewn school uniform), I have learned that revisiting such memories can be a way of healing. For instance, through my personal history self-study, I realised that even though my family was poor, our poverty was never a major deterrent to my learning. So too, I can inspire my colleagues to study further regardless of economic constraints. Thus, the process of writing my own personal history narrative has helped me to understand that lifelong teacher learning can be enhanced when teachers have opportunities to re-examine their lived experiences and to think about how they can learn from them.

Doing this research has also equipped me to better understand my fellow teachers, both personally and professionally, especially the Intermediate Phase colleagues I am supervising. I have learned that although we are all professionals, our lived experiences are not the same and thus some of our behaviours are due to different contextual factors in our lives. I have realised that in caring and trying to make everyone feel accepted in our small learning community as Intermediate Phase teachers I must try to understand the reasons for different teachers' responses and behaviours. As Fairbanks et al. (2011) highlight, this kind of understanding requires teachers who are not only equipped with subject content knowledge or pedagogical knowledge, but teachers who are qualified "beyond knowledge".

My second research question was, "*What can I learn from my lived experiences of lifelong teacher learning?*" From my personal history narrative I identified four themes, which I explain in Chapter Four: *the value of role models, the significance of self-motivation, the impact of gender in education and the language barrier*. In revisiting my educational history, I realised that, on my journey, particular people had had an impact on my success; they had had an influence and I looked up to them. I regarded them as my role models. I became aware that their influence motivated me within, which was important in my journey, because to keep on learning one needs to be inspired. Thus, to be motivated from within and by others helps to promote lifelong learning. From my personal history narrative, I have learned that it is vital to recognise people who make a difference in your life and, at the same time, I should try to be a role model

who can inspire and guide my fellow teachers in their own journeys of becoming lifelong learners.

I also felt it was important to include gender as one of my significant themes because I realised that this affects many women's educational experiences. As I have explained in Chapter Four, as a woman teacher, I still feel discriminated against in some areas. I love developing myself professionally; however, there are socio-cultural limitations that hinder my progress. With this realisation, I wish to encourage my female colleagues to keep on learning and working together to fight this gender inequality in education. Despite gender imbalances, I will always encourage my fellow female teachers to be lifelong learners and to support each other in seeking opportunities for professional promotion and advancement.

Because I understand that communication (sharing of experiences, ideas, beliefs and practices) is vital to lifelong learning, I also identified the language barrier as a noteworthy impediment to my progress in learning. However, even though I have struggled with learning in situations that required me to express myself in English, I have realised that, as you communicate, conveying your message is more important than keeping quiet, even if you are afraid of making mistakes. Thus, I will encourage my colleagues to contribute in meetings and workshops even if they lack confidence in using English to communicate.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have reviewed my dissertation and offered my reflections on the study. I have explained what I have learned from my study about promoting lifelong teacher learning and how I intend to take this forward in my work as a HoD. Using a personal history self-study methodology has helped me to understand how revisiting the past through a self-study lens can be a form of lifelong teacher learning. From my research, I have learned how to draw on my personal history to enhance my own learning and I have realised that it can be valuable for teachers to recall their personal histories and to think about how they can make use of them in teaching and learning. I have also learned that lifelong learning is essential for all teachers because it helps one grow both personally and professionally. Teachers come to school with their own influences and experiences and, to promote lifelong teacher learning, I must try to

understand teachers from various backgrounds and show them the same care and support that I have received from the role models in my life.

## REFERENCES

- Alderton, J. (2008). Exploring self-study to improve my practice as a mathematics teacher educator. *Studying Teacher Education: A Journal of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*, 4(2), 95 - 104.
- Allender, J. S., & Manke, M. P. (2004). Evoking self in self-study: The analysis of artifacts. In D. L. Tidwell, L. M. Fitzgerald & M. L. Heston (Eds.), *Journeys of hope: Risking self-study in a diverse world. Proceedings of the fifth international conference on self-study of teacher education practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England, June 27 - July 1* (pp. 20-23). Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa.
- Allender, J., & Allender, D. (2006). How did our early education determine who we are as teachers? In L. M. Fitzgerald, M. L. Heston & D. L. Tidwell (Eds.), *Collaboration and community: Pushing boundaries through self-study. Proceedings of the sixth international conference on self-study of teacher education practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England, July 30 - August 3* (pp. 14-17). Cedar Falls, IA: University of Northern Iowa
- Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39(2), 175 - 189.
- Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2000). Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: An exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(7), 749-764.
- Boggs, M., & Golden, F. (2009). Insights: Literacy memories of preservice teachers self-reported categories of impact. *The Reading Matrix*, 9(2), 211-223.
- Christie, P. (2006). *The right to learn. The struggle for education in South Africa*. Raven Press: Macmillan
- Collins, J., (2009). Lifelong learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. *Radiographics*, 29(2), 613-622.
- Costa, A. L., & Kallick, B. (1993). Through the lens of a critical friend. *Educational Leadership*, 51(2), 49-51.

- Corcoran, T.B. (1995). *Helping teachers teach well: Transforming professional development*. CPRE Policy Brief, RB-16. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Cropley, A. J. (1989). Lifelong education: Interaction with adult education. In C. Titmus (Ed.), *Lifelong education for adults: An international handbook* (pp. 9-12). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.), *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework* (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles: National Dissemination and Assessment Center.
- Day, C. (30 April, 2007). *A passion for teaching*. Public lecture: General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland. Retrieved from <http://arrts.gtcni.org.uk/gtcni/bitstream/2428/11439/1/A%20Passion%20for%20Teaching%20GTCNI%20final%20version1.pdf>
- Day, C. (2011). Uncertain professional identities: Managing the emotional contexts of teaching. In C. Day & J. C.-K. Lee (Eds.), *New understandings of teacher's work: Emotions and educational change* (pp. 45-64). Dordrecht; Heidelberg; London; New York: Springer.
- Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2007). Variations in the conditions for teachers' professional learning and development: Sustaining commitment and effectiveness over a career. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(4), 423 - 443.
- Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *The Educational Psychologist*, 26, 325-346.
- Department of Education (2002). *Revised national curriculum statement grades R-9. (schools)*. Pretoria: Government Press.
- Department of Higher Education and Training (DoHET).(2011).*The Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualification*. Pretoria: Government Press.
- DeSalvo, L. A. (2000). *Writing as a way of healing: How telling our stories transforms our lives*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). The kind of schools we need. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(8), 576-583.
- Evans, L. (2002). What is teacher development? *Oxford Review of Education*, 28(1), 123-137.



- Fairbanks, C., Duffy, G. G., Faircloth, B., He, Y., Levin, B. B., Rohr, J., & Stein, C. (2010). Beyond knowledge: Exploring why some teachers are more thoughtfully adaptive than others. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61, January, 161-171.
- Feldman, A. (2003). Validity and quality in self-study. *Educational Researcher*, 32(3), 26-28.
- Fraser, C., Kennedy, A., Reid, L., & McKinney, S. (2007). Teachers' continuing professional development: Contested concepts, understandings and models. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 33(2), 153-169.
- Galman, S. C., & Mallozzi, C. A. (2012). She's not there: Women and gender as disappearing foci in U.S. research on the elementary school teacher, 1995–Present. *Review of Educational Research*, 82(3), 243-295.
- Goldstein, L. S., & Lake, V. E. (2000). "Love, love, and more love for children": Exploring preservice teachers' understandings of caring. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(8), 861-872.
- Grant, C., Jasson, A., Lawrence. (2010). Resilient KwaZul –Natal schools: An ethics of care. *Southern African Review of Education*, 16(2), 81-99.
- Jansen, J. D. (2001). Image-ining teachers: Policy images and teacher identity and South African classrooms. *South African Journal of Education*, 21(4), 242-246.
- Hutchings, M. (2002). A representative profession? Gender issues. In Johnson, M. and Hallgarten, J. (Eds.), *From Victims of Change to Agents of Change: The Future of the Teaching Profession*, London, IPPR.
- Jurasaite-Harbisson, E., & Rex, L. A. (2010). School cultures as contexts for informal teacher learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(2), 267-277.
- 
- Kanjere, M. (2008). Challenges faced by women leaders as school principals in rural areas. Paper presented at the CCEAM 2008 Conference: Think Globally Act Locally: A Challenge to Education Leaders, International Convention Centre, Durban. Retrieved from <http://www.emasa.co.za/files/full/Kanjere.pdf>
- Kelly, P. (2006). What is teacher learning? A socio-cultural perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(4), 505-519.
- Knight, P. (2002). A systematic approach to professional development: learning as practice. *Teaching and Teacher education*, 18(3), 229 – 241.

- Kohl, H. (1984). *Growing minds: On becoming a teacher*. New York: Harper and Row.
- LaBoskey, V.K. (2004). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J.J. Loughran, M.L. Hamilton, V.K. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Vol. 2, pp. 817-869). Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Leach, F. (2003). *Practising gender analysis in education*. Oxford: Oxfam.
- Lieberman, A., & Pointer Mace, D. (2010). Making practice public: Teacher learning in the 21st century. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 77-88.
- Lumby, J., Azaola, C., de Wet, A.-M., Skervin, H., Walsh, A., & Williamson, A. (2010). *Women school principals in South Africa: Leading the way*. Retrieved from <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/196239/>
- Lunenberg, M., Korthagen, F., & Swennen, A. (2007). The teacher educator as a role model. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(5), 586-601.
- Makhanya H.D.B. (2010). *Preparing for the implementation of foundations for learning: A self-study of a subject advisor*. Unpublished Med dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.
- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research* (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Masinga, L. (2009). An African teacher's journey to self-knowledge through teaching sexuality education. In K. Pithouse, C. Mitchell & R. Moletsane (Eds.), *Making connections: Self-study & social action* (pp. 237-252). New York: Peter Lang.
- Mbatha, T. (2004). A beginning teacher's story of learning English in a South African classroom context. *English Quarterly*, 36(2), 9-11.
- Mlambo, S.C. (2012). *Supporting collaborative learning in the foundation phase: A self-study of a head of department*. Unpublished MED dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.
- Moletsane, R. (2004). Gender equality and teacher education in South Africa: A review of the history Retrieved 28 February, 2005, from <http://k1.ioe.ac.uk/schools/efps/GenderEducDev/Lebo%20Moletsane%20paper.pdf>

- Moreau, M. P., Osgood, J., & Halsall, A. (2007). Making sense of the glass ceiling in schools: An exploration of women teachers' discourses. *Gender and Education, 19*(2), 237-253.
- Morrow, W. (2007). What is teachers' work? *Journal of Education, 41*, 3-19.
- Nash, R. J. (2004). *Liberating scholarly writing: The power of personal narrative*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Ndalen, T. (2013). Teaching English oral communication to *IsiZulu*-speaking learners in a secondary school: A self-study. Unpublished MEd dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban
- Nel, N. & Muller, H. (2010). The impact of teachers' limited English proficiency on English second language learners in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education, 30*, 625-650.
- Nieto, S., (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* Teachers College: New York
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2010a). Analysing qualitative data. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research* (pp. 98-122). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2010b). Introducing qualitative research. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research* (pp. 46-68). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Pinnegar, S., & Hamilton, M. L. (2009). *Self-study of practice as a genre of qualitative research: Theory, methodology, and practice*. Dordrecht; Heidelberg; London; New York: Springer.
- Pithouse, K. (2011). "The future of our young children lies in our hands": Re-envisioning teacher authority through narrative self-study. In C. Mitchell, T. Strong-Wilson, K. Pithouse & S. Allnutt (Eds.), *Memory and pedagogy* (pp. 177-190). New York: Routledge.
- Pithouse, K., Mitchell, C., & Masinga, L. (2009). Living and lifelong learning. In C. Mitchell & K. Pithouse (Eds.), *Teaching and HIV& AIDS* (pp. 237-246). Johannesburg: Macmillan.
- Pithouse, K., Mitchell, C., & Weber, S. (2009). Self-study in teaching and teacher development: A call to action. *Educational Action Research, 17*(1), 43 - 62.
- Putnam, R., & Borko, H. (2000). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher, 29*(1), 4-15.

- Ryan, R.M., & Deci E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68–78
- Samaras, A. P. (2011). *Self-study teacher research: Improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Samaras, A. P., Hicks, M. A., & Berger, J. G. (2004). Self-study through personal history. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Vol. 2, pp. 905-942). Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Shulman, L. S., & Shulman, J. H. (2004). How and what teachers learn: A shifting perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(2), 257-271.
- Shulman, L.S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2) 4-14.
- Solomon, R. P., (1997). Race, role modelling, and representation in teacher education and teaching. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22(4), 395-410.
- The Media in Education Trust (MiET) Africa. (2009). Creating a caring school and classroom environment. In C. Mitchell & K. Pithouse (Eds.), *Teaching and HIV & AIDS in the South African classroom* (pp. 105-124). Northlands: MacMillan South Africa.
- Tight, M. (1998). *Key concepts in adult education and training*. London: Rout ledge.
- Varathaiah, B. A. (2010). *Exploring the relationship between teachers' experiences and evolving teacher identities in post-apartheid South Africa: A narrative inquiry*. Unpublished MEd dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.
- Waghid, Y., & Smeyers, P. (2011). Knowing ubuntu is a matter of acting with care. *Essay commissioned on the 2012 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting theme: Non satis scire: To know is not enough*. Retrieved from [http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/Annual\\_Meeting/Yusef\\_Essay%20ContributionAERA2012.pdf](http://www.aera.net/Portals/38/docs/Annual_Meeting/Yusef_Essay%20ContributionAERA2012.pdf)
- Walters, S. (1999). New challenges and opportunities for lifelong learning in South Africa. *Comparative Education*, 33(2), 217-224.
- Weber, S. (2008). Visual images in research. In J. G. Knowles & A. L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp. 40-53). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wood, D. R. (2007). Professional learning communities: Teachers, knowledge, and knowing. *Theory Into Practice*, 46(4), 281-290.
- Zembylas, M. (2004). The emotional characteristics of teaching: An ethnographic study of one teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20,185–201.

## APPENDIX A

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear Critical friend

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSIONS IN CRITICAL FRIENDS' MEETING**

#### ***Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department.***

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept lifelong teacher learning as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences, focussing specifically on the acts of lifelong teacher learning that I received from different teachers and parents from the first day I set my foot at school, to my high school years, my life and times at a college of education, my experiences as a novice teacher, as an experienced teacher learning continuously in different universities to keep up with the changes. These experiences have equipped me with expertise in my position as an Intermediate Phase Head of Department. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a teacher and a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 260 3460. In this study, I will also gather information through group discussions with critical friends. The critical friends meetings will take place during our group MEd supervision meetings and will not require any additional time from you. I will take notes during the discussions.

I hereby request permission from you to refer to our discussions of our critical friends' meetings in my study. I will only use this data if I receive written consent from you.

If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. My notes on your inputs to the discussion will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. Your name or any information that might identify you or your school will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of the study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher development.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to leave/withdraw from the study at any time if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Critical friends' discussions		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

## APPENDIX B

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear Sir

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

*Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning through my own practice as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences focussing specifically on acts of lifelong teacher learning I received from different teachers and my parents from my primary school years, to my high school years, my life and times at a training college, my experiences as a novice teacher, as a Head of Department continuously learning in different universities to keep up with today's changes. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 2603460.



In this study, I would like to use the school photographs as a data source. I will only use these photographs if I receive written consent from you. Copies of these school photographs will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. Names of teachers, learners or any information that might identify members of our school will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of the study. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher learning and professional growth.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photographs		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

## APPENDIX C

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear Sir

**REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS IN A RESEARCH STUDY**  
*Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning through my own practice as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences focussing specifically on acts of lifelong teacher learning I received from different teachers and my parents from my primary school years, to my high school years, my life and times at a training college, my experiences as a novice teacher, as a Head of Department continuously learning in different universities to keep up with today's changes. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 2603460.

In this study, I would like to use my mother-in-law photograph as a data source. I will only use this photograph if I receive written consent from you. A copy of my mother-in-law photograph will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. If I receive

your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher learning and professional growth. I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

## **INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

**I,** \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Photograph		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

## APPENDIX D

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear mom,

**REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS IN A RESEARCH STUDY**  
*Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning through my own practice as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences focussing specifically on acts of lifelong teacher learning I received from different teachers and my parents from my primary school years, to my high school years, my life and times at a training college, my experiences as a novice teacher, as a Head of Department continuously learning in different universities to keep up with today's changes. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 2603460.

I hereby request permission from you to use the family photograph in which my maternal grandmother features. I will only use this data if I receive written consent from you. A copy of my grandmother's photograph will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher learning and professional growth.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photograph		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

## APPENDIX E

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear -----

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE OUR FRIENDS' PHOTOGRAPH IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

*Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning through my own practice as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences focussing specifically on acts of lifelong teacher learning I received from different teachers and my parents from my primary school years, to my high school years, my life and times at a training college, my experiences as a novice teacher, as a Head of Department continuously learning in different universities to keep up with today's changes. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 260 3460.

In this study, I would like to use our school photograph as a data source. I hereby request permission from you to use the class photograph in which our class group of learners' feature. I have tried to get hold of other learners, however they cannot be reached. I will only use this data if I receive written consent from you.

A copy of my friends' photograph will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher learning and professional growth.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photograph		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

## APPENDIX F

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE OUR SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

*Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning through my own practice as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences focussing specifically on acts of lifelong teacher learning I received from different teachers and my parents from my primary school years, to my high school years, my life and times at a training college, my experiences as a novice teacher, as a Head of Department continuously learning in different universities to keep up with today's changes. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 260 3460.

I hereby request permission from you to use the photograph in which your daughter features as Dux recipient. I will only use this photograph if I receive written consent from you. A Copy of daughter's photograph will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and



privacy. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher learning and professional growth.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photograph		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....  
DATE

## APPENDIX G

K 2147  
Kwa Mashu Township  
P.O. Kwa Mashu  
4359

Cell: 082 433 0861  
Email: bongivil@webmail.co.za

30 June 2013

Dear Colleague,

### **REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE OUR SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH IN A RESEARCH STUDY**

*Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

The purpose of this study is to explore how I can learn from my own lived educational experiences to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning through my own practice as Intermediate Phase Head of Department (HoD) in a primary school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the journey of my educational experiences focussing specifically on acts of lifelong teacher learning I received from different teachers and my parents from my primary school years, to my high school years, my life and times at a training college, my experiences as a novice teacher, as a Head of Department continuously learning in different universities to keep up with today's changes. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. The data production methods include my reflective journal writing and artefact retrieval of photographs and a certificate.

Through re-examining and interpreting my educational life, I will explore how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better understand the concept of lifelong teacher learning and its impact on learning in my day-to-day practice as a HoD.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 260 3460.

I hereby request permission from you to use the school photograph in which you feature. I have tried to get hold of other teachers, however they cannot be reached. I will only use this photograph if I receive written consent from you. Copies of the photograph will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. If I receive your consent, I

will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher learning and professional growth.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely  
Bongiwe Carol Vilakazi

---

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Promoting Lifelong Teacher Learning in the Intermediate Phase: A self-study of a Head of Department*

I, \_\_\_\_\_

Hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photograph		

.....  
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE