

PIECING TOGETHER THE LEADERSHIP PUZZLE:  
A SELF-STUDY OF PRACTICE

By

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**Date submitted:** December 2014

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RESEARCHER: D. NAICKER



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Date: 1 December 2014

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“Love all, Serve all”

# DEDICATION

I offer my most loving salutations at the lotus feet of  
my beloved spiritual master  
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

In November 2002, Swami, you planted a seed in  
my being and this has blossomed into the work  
that I dedicate to you. I now have some idea on what you meant when you  
said the “Proper study of mankind, is man”

Words cannot express my gratitude and appreciation for your love, grace  
and inspiration that you showered on me as I journeyed within in search of  
who I was and what I was doing



## **ABSTRACT**

In today's rapidly changing world, educational leaders are swamped by competing priorities that make inordinate demands on their time, energy and focus. They are consumed with operational matters such as teaching and learning activities, school management and administrative tasks and extra-curricular programmes, which leaves them with little time for reflection. As a consequence they put themselves and their schools at the risk of doing more of the same and achieving the same results. Drawing from the literature that suggests the value of reflection for leaders, I decided to undertake a reflexive study that interrogated my leadership practice. I searched for meaning to understand who I am and who I am as a leader. I desired knowledge on how and why I enacted leadership in the manner I did. Questions of what should be improved and how it should be improved were considered as my leadership practice was critically examined. I used self-study as a methodology to critique my leadership practice and generated data using the personal history narrative and memory work methods. Interviews with research participants using artefacts in a digital memory box, served as prompts to remember, reconstruct and re-story events as I co-constructed my personal history narrative. The multiple viewpoints that a research mentor, critical friends and research participants offered, challenged my assumptions, reframed my perspectives and validated the data in co-flexive conversations. Using the puzzle metaphor I describe the complexity, uncertainty, messiness and challenges I experienced in discovering who I was and how I enacted leadership. This study has equipped me with knowledge and skills to effect leadership transformation and get closer to the goal of self-actualisation through authentic conduct. Reflexive practices provided rich insights into my personal and leader self/selves and my leadership practice became visible to myself/selves and others for critique. Tacit knowledge became explicit and I was able to recognise good leadership practices that could be strengthened. I also became acutely aware of the weaknesses and gaps in my leadership practice, which led to the formulation of improvement strategies. This research suggests that for school leaders to become effective, they should engage in deep reflexive practice in order to explore their multiple selves to uncover the complexities, contradictions and nuances that explains their practice and at the same time serve as a catalyst for transformed practice.

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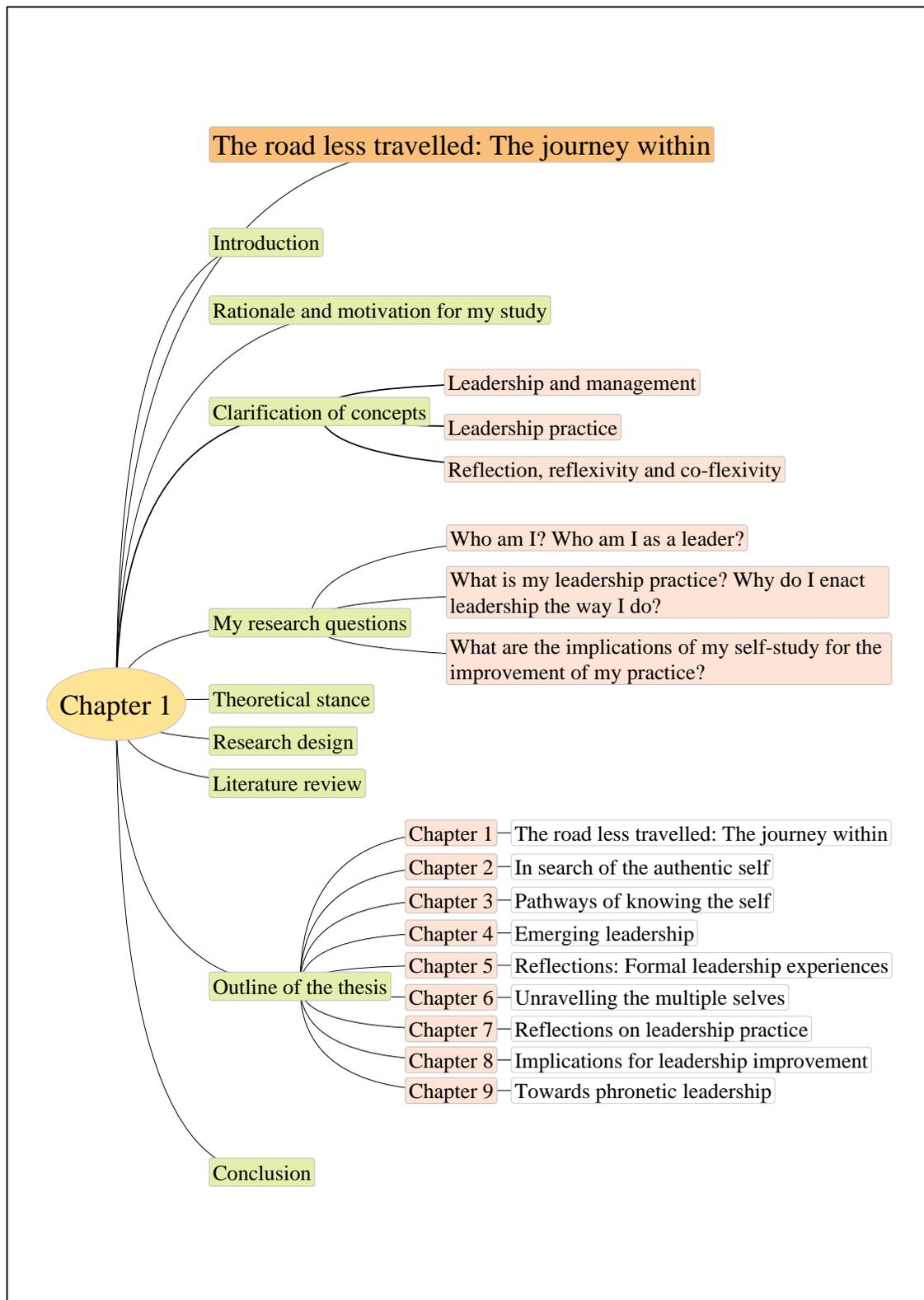
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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

CFG	Critical Friends Group
ETDP SETA	Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority
HVWSHE	Human Values in Water Sanitation and Hygiene Education
ISSE	Institute of Sathya Sai Education
MEC	Member of Executive Council
SAISSE	South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education
SEM	Superintendent of Education (Management)
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
SGB	School Governing Body
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSWF	Sathya Sai World Foundation
TAISSE	The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education

Figure 1: Outline of Chapter One



# CHAPTER 1

## ON THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED – THE JOURNEY WITHIN

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
I took the one less travelled by ... ”*

Robert Frost

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today’s rapidly changing world, educational leaders are swamped by competing demands that consume their time, energy and focus. The focus on operational matters such as teaching and learning activities, school management tasks, improvement programmes, performance linked agendas and change, leaves them with little time for reflection (Day, 2000; Rosenberg, 2010). School leaders put themselves and their schools at the risk of doing more of the same and achieving the same results. It is suggested that successful and effective principals engage in reflective practice (Day, 2000). A significant corpus of scholarship also reveals that there is a positive correlation between competent leadership and effective organizations (Bush, 2010). In the pursuit of improved teacher and learner performance and raising standards, school leaders need to be effective which “is as much about developing the self as it is about capacity building in others” (Day, 2000, p. 123). “We all have the capacity to inspire and empower others. But we must first be willing to devote ourselves to personal growth and development as leaders” (George, Sims, McClean & Mayer, 2007, p. 129). Educational leaders should become reflective practitioners (Lazaridou, 2007) as they engage with educational reform and find ways to facilitate and sustain school improvement. According to Wright (2009, p. 259) reflective practice enhances “the moral, professional and political autonomy of principals as they endeavour to improve the quality of educational opportunities for all students.”

Drawing from the literature that suggests the value of reflection for educational leaders, I decided to undertake a reflexive study of my leadership practice with the intention of acquiring insights for improvement. In this chapter I explain the motivation and rationale for my self-study. Thereafter I clarify concepts and constructs that I use in this thesis and I disclose the research questions that guided this study. I give an overview of the research methodology that I followed and a brief discussion on the manner in which the literature that I reviewed is presented. Introductory comments on the authentic leader self/selves

theoretical framework that underpins the study are made and this is followed with an outline of the chapters that constitutes this thesis.

I used the puzzle metaphor in this study to describe the complexity, uncertainty, messiness and challenges I experienced in discovering who I was and how I enacted leadership. The difficulty in solving the puzzle may be attributed to the following; I did not have a picture of the completed puzzle before me and I had no idea what the completed puzzle would look like; many of the pieces were lost in memory; some of the pieces are irregular and just did not fit or connect; it was frustrating as I did not have an idea where to start; and furthermore, in puzzles there are boundaries but in the real life enactment of leadership, there are no clear boundaries or straight lines.

## **1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION FOR MY STUDY**

Over the past 20 years I led and managed educators and school managers in various programmes and in different contexts. I served as a Superintendent of Education Management (SEM), leadership and management coach, deputy director of The African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (TAISSE) and founder chairperson of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled. At the end of 2009 I was asked to serve as the director of the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE), which has oversight of three independent schools, where secular education was integrated with an education in human values programme. It is in this leadership role that I experienced a critical incident or a trigger event that forced me to re-examine who I was and what I was doing. In my personal history narrative (see Chapter Five, p. 130) I related the events that forced me to withdraw from the hurly-burly, frenetic leadership activities I was immersed in and to look within for answers to questions that puzzled me.

My early notions of leadership were that leaders were in control and that leadership was associated with position. I also believed that leaders exercised power over others to accomplish organizational goals. However, my experiences have shown me that leadership is a complex undertaking embedded in intricate social constructions, hence it is very difficult to influence people to achieve defined goals. I was disturbed when I learnt that leadership “is a complex process of being and not being in control” (Karp & Helgø, 2009, p. 884). This paradox disturbed me as all the conventional leadership knowledge and skills that I

possessed, did not prepare me to cope with uncertainties, contradictions and tensions. I felt out of depth and began to doubt whether I had the requisite competencies to not only lead but also coach and mentor other leaders. It was this uncertainty that prompted me to examine my leadership practice through a self-study. I looked for ways to understand who I was and how I enacted my leadership practice. Questions of what should be improved, why it should be improved and how it should be improved were considered as my leadership practice was critically examined. Scharmer (2009, p. 7) argues that the “interior condition [and] inner place” of the leader must be examined to understand why he or she leads in the way he or she does. I wanted to find meaning in leadership through the issues experienced in order to be more effective. Shakespeare's "to thine self be true" and Aristotle's "know thy self", the Biblical expression “physician heal thyself” and Alexander Pope's "The proper study of mankind is man" provided the inspiration and motivation for this research.

I am aware that my worldview, my beliefs, assumptions and spiritual grounding have significantly influenced my leadership practice through the values I embrace. The values that I espoused and my lived values were sometimes in contradiction and this manifested as tensions within me. I have noted from experience that people are less likely to follow leaders whose values are questionable, who display incongruent behaviour and those who do not lead by example. Authentic leaders are those who are true to themselves and are transparent in their engagement and interactions with those that they lead (Sparrowe, 2005). I found that it was a challenge to live by my values especially in moments that were challenging, stressful and demanding. At times like these I found that it was very difficult to hold onto my values in the face of pragmatism and expediency. I discovered that living by truth and integrity to be a challenge as power and influence imperatives demanded otherwise. I often asked myself the question of whether my actions were politically motivated or whether they emanated from a spiritual source, which had the well-being of all. The situations that I sometimes found myself in were so intense that it disturbed my equilibrium and caused me to introspect and reflect as I agonized with my conscience. In this self-study, I explored the dynamics and tensions as I grappled with issues of authenticity, and integrity, as they impacted on my personal and professional self/selves. The dialectics of the actual self (images of the present self), ought self (others’ images of self) and ideal self (images of the future possible self) were studied to gain insights into my identities as a leader and how these identities have shaped and influenced my leadership practice. Through the processes of self-study, leadership issues that have challenged and puzzled me were reconstructed,

deconstructed and critically re-examined to generate a more complete picture as the pieces were put together.

### **1.3 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

In order to ensure uniform understanding of concepts used in this study, I present explanations of the key concepts.

#### **1.3.1 Leadership and management**

The concept of leadership, which is “arbitrary and subjective,” (Karp & Helgø, 2009, p. 880) is a contested concept that is used differently in different countries by different people (Grant, 2009). This is not surprising since leadership is contextual, that is structurally and culturally specific (Muijs, 2011). Many scholars make the assumption that leadership involves “a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by an appointed person over other people (followers) to facilitate activities in a group of people or in an organization” (Karp & Helgø, 2009, p. 880). This notwithstanding, I draw on Jwan and Ong’ondo (2011) who refer to leadership as a higher set of tasks encompassing goal setting, visioning and motivating.

Leadership, however, cannot be fully understood without reference to management. Management is viewed as an aspect of leadership concerned with the maintenance of performance through planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling (Jwan & Ong’ondo, 2011). The two processes complement each other and both are needed for an organization to prosper (Grant, 2009). To illustrate the close relationship between leadership and management, Schley and Schratz (2011) draw on the yin-yang metaphor to emphasise how these two terms are intertwined. It is accepted that leadership and management are associated constructs and that both are necessary to achieve organizational goals. They are used interchangeably but are not the same; managers administer whilst leaders innovate (Reynolds & Warfield, 2010). To be effective a leader must also be a good manager. Thus, in this study whenever the term ‘leadership’ is used, ‘management ‘ is subsumed in the discourse.

### **1.3.2 Leadership practice**

Leadership is a practical activity, which takes place in institutions all over the world. It is part of the social world of the institution and is intrinsically linked to the everyday interactions that take place there. In this thesis, leadership practice refers to the particular instances of leadership as they unfold in the moment-by-moment interactions in a particular place and time (Harris, Moos, Moller, Robertson & Spillane, 2007). It has to do with what leaders do and the moves they make as they execute tasks in their day-to-day work (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001). Thus a school principal encouraging a group of teachers at a staff meeting to improve learner performance is considered an example of leadership practice.

### **1.3.3 Reflection, reflexivity and co-flexivity**

Dewey (2007, p. 6) who was one of the first scholars to write on reflective practice defined it as "an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge". In order to effect improvement in teaching practice, Dewey advocated that teachers engage in critical reflection as a way of working through prejudices and out-dated modes of thinking. Donald Schön's (1995, p. 33) notion of 'reflection in action' and 'reflection on action' took reflective practice further when he demonstrated that it could be used as a developmental tool in various professional contexts. Reflective practice is a central feature of self-study and it refers to the process that practitioners engage in, studying how they plan, prepare and work so their observations leads to improvement. In my self-study, I use reflection as a tool to unveil hidden aspects of my leadership practice for growth, development and improvement.

Reflexivity can be described as the exploration of the "ways in which a researchers' involvement with a particular study influences, act[s] upon and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228). It is the practice of being cognisant of one's views, values and social position and of the effect that these may have on the research process and on those being researched. This consequently calls on researchers to reflect on their individual histories and theoretical stances, and on the way in which these influence their research (McCabe & Homes 2009; Vickers 2010). Heidegger suggests that reflexivity is concerned with understanding the grounds of our thinking by opening ourselves to the hidden nature of truth (as cited in Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). For Heidegger this means emptying

ourselves of acceptable ways of thinking and opening ourselves to other possibilities. In particular, it means engaging in the reflexive act of questioning the basis of our thinking, surfacing the taken-for-granted rules underlying our decision-making, and examining critically our own practices and ways of relating with others (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005).

Reflexive thinking provides researchers with the tools to open up spaces for alternative views thereby allowing them to find the voice of others; it is the recognition of the value of a plurality of views, perspectives, and responses (Vickers, 2010). Working with a research mentor, critical friends and research participants as dialogical partners allowed for alternate views to emerge as co-flexivity extended “conceptions of research reflexivity” (Pithouse-Morgan, et.al., 2014, p. 59). The reflexive process includes a continuous consideration of the spaces in which one locates oneself as well, as the positions one is placed by others, through constant enquiry, “listening [to] and [acknowledgement] of inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride” (Kirk, 2005, p. 233). In this dialogue, we question our core beliefs and our understanding of particular events (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In my study, my research mentor consistently interrogated the way I brought my beliefs and values into play as I researched my leadership practice.

## **1.4 MY RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The existential crises that I experienced prompted a search for meaning and purpose in life and this quest led me to initiate a self-study to answer the questions that disturbed me. My research goals extended beyond making sense of who I was and incorporated a desire to understand my leadership practice. However, I was not content with solely understanding my leadership practice. I earnestly desired to identify the gaps in my performance and acquire insights that would lead to growth, development and improvement. The critical research questions that directed this self-study are:

### **1.4.1 Who am I? Who I am as a leader?**

I desired to know who I was and how this knowledge would explain and shape notions of myself. Implicit in this question, is a search for both meaning and purpose of life. I wished to examine how notions of myself relate to the self/selves that I perceive as leader because I could not separate my personal self from my professional self.

#### **1.4.2 What is my leadership practice? Why do I enact leadership the way I do?**

I wished to critically explore what constituted my leadership practice and the way it was enacted in order to identify areas that could be improved. I also wanted to understand the influences that have shaped my practice and what motivated me to enact leadership the way I did.

#### **1.4.3 What are the implications of my self-study for the improvement of my leadership practice?**

As self-study is practice improvement oriented (Samaras, 2011) I planned to apply the insights that I had obtained from the first two critical questions to develop an improvement agenda that would lead to more effective ways to lead and manage people and organizations.

### **1.5 THEORETICAL STANCE**

I experienced difficulty in finding a theory that could adequately explain the issues that related to my personal and professional self. In the absence of a single cogent theory, I drew on elements of authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya theory of leadership and theories of the self to construct a theoretical framework to guide my research. Authentic leadership theory (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005), which stresses ethics and morality of leadership complemented the Mahavakya theory of leadership (Chibber, 2010), a theory of leadership practice articulated by my spiritual guide, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Theories of self (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Higgins, 1987; McConnel, Shoda & Skulborstad, 2012; Sai Baba, 2000) also offered me opportunities to not only explore and interrogate my leadership practice but also offered insights into who I was.

### **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN**

My research questions informed the choice of paradigmatic lenses that I decided on to view my study. I considered the interpretive paradigm to guide my research, not only because it sought understanding of phenomena but it also explained “actions from the participant’s perspective” (Scotland, 2012, p. 12). On deeper reflection I realised that I wanted more than an understanding as I wished to question and challenge the ideologies at play (Taylor & Medina, 2013) as I enacted leadership in various settings. Hence I decided to also add the critical paradigm as an overarching theory. As self-study seeks to improve both the personal

and professional self, I decided to use this approach as my methodology. I adapted Samaras' (2011) five foci framework to guide my self-study research using the methods of personal history narrative and memory work to generate data. An overview of the data generation process is given in Table 1 in the following page.

**Table 1: Self-Study data generation framework**

<b>Critical question</b>	<b>Self-study method</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who am I?</li> <li>• Who am I as a leader?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history</li> <li>• Memory work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership at school and university</li> <li>• On becoming a paraplegic</li> <li>• Ward Manager at Richmond</li> <li>• Consultant/ service provider</li> <li>• Director of South African Institute of Sathya Sai Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self</li> <li>• Research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with research participants</li> <li>• Artefacts</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Newspaper articles</li> <li>• Personal history narrative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discover the different selves and how they manifest</li> <li>• Discover who am I as a leader</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is my leadership practice?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history</li> <li>• Memory work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership in formal and non-formal contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self</li> <li>• Research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with research participants</li> <li>• Personal history narrative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe leadership practice</li> </ul>

<b>Critical question</b>	<b>Self-study method</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do I enact leadership the way I do?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history self-study</li> <li>• Memory work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership in formal and non-formal contexts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self</li> <li>• Research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history narrative</li> <li>• Interviews with research participants</li> <li>• Emails, reports and minutes of meetings</li> <li>• Artefacts (photographs, newspaper articles)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe leadership practice</li> <li>• Obtain different perspectives on my leadership practice</li> <li>• Establish reasons for manner in which practice is enacted</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the implications of my self-study for improved leadership practice?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history</li> <li>• Memory work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership coach &amp; mentor</li> <li>• Community service projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self</li> <li>• Research participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal history narrative</li> <li>• Interviews with research participants</li> <li>• Reflection on and reflection in practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas of weakness and how to improve practice</li> <li>• Identification of good practice</li> </ul>

## **1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW**

A literature review is an integral part of research which gives “credibility and legitimacy” to the study by showing that the researcher has sound knowledge of key “theoretical, conceptual [and] methodological” issues in the field (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 112). In the “traditional” type thesis, the literature review is “presented in more detail and earlier on” in the study report (Paltridge, 2002, p. 134). However, I decided to deviate from the traditional approach and demonstrate my engagement with the literature within the narrative of my self-study similar to other scholars (see Masinga, 2013; Naidoo, 2013; Pithouse, 2007). This allowed me the space to “highlight the temporal, contextual and dialogic nature of my interactive reading of the work of scholars and researchers” (Pithouse, 2007, p. 22). This approach enhanced reflexivity as I reflected on my experiences and drew from the experience of other scholars “as part of a conversation in progress” with understanding and transformation in mind (Badley, 2009, p. 107).

## **1.8 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS**

In this section I present an overview of the thesis and give an outline of the chapters that follow. At the beginning of each chapter a mind map as an advance organiser showing the different sections is presented to orientate the reader and “enable deeper and more meaningful” engagement with the knowledge (Cutrer, Castro, Roy & Turner, 2011, p. 1018). As an educational tool the concept map is effective as a “visual representation of how the knowledge is organised” (Torre et al., 2007, p. 949). It facilitates “critical or in-depth thinking through connecting topics” (Torre et al., 2007, p. 952).

### **1.8.1 Chapter One**

Chapter One provides an orientation to my self-study as well as an overview of the thesis. I discuss the rationale of this study as well as the motivation that prompted a journey within as I sought answers for issues that disturbed me about my leadership practice. I describe the approach I followed for this enquiry, which includes the research design as well as the research methods that I employed. I provide a motivation for the integration of literature within the study. Thereafter I clarify the key constructs, concepts and terms that I use in my study. I discuss leadership and management as well as the position I take with regards to the usage of these constructs and explain what is meant by leadership practice. This self-study is grounded in reflection, reflexivity and co-flexivity; these terms are clarified. I then disclose

the critical questions that guided my enquiry and offer a short account of the theoretical stance I adopted. I then conclude this opening chapter with an overview of how this thesis is organised.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Two**

Chapter Two is a discussion of the theoretical framework that underpins this study. I discuss my scholarly journey in identifying an appropriate leadership theory and then advance an explanation for the decision to take an eclectic approach which resulted in a theoretical framework made up of authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya leadership theory and theories of self. A discussion of the key elements of authentic leadership theory is then presented. The Mahavakya theory and its constituents are thereafter explored and I make known its relevance to my self-study. I then discuss theories that relate to the self. I finally share a hybrid model of “The Authentic Leadership Self”, which is constituted from the elements of the theories that were described earlier.

### **1.8.3 Chapter Three**

In Chapter Three, I describe the research design and methodology that I followed in my study. I begin with a discussion of the research paradigms and show how my study uses the lenses of the interpretivist paradigm that seeks to understand phenomena as well as the critical paradigm which looks beyond understanding as power and oppression are interrogated in the pursuit of equity, redress and transformation. I then describe self-study as the research design that I settled on after surveying other methodologies. A description of the five foci framework that I adapted for my self-study follows. Thereafter I discuss the personal history narrative and memory work self-study methods that I used to generate data. I also highlight the role that digital memory boxes with artefacts, played in helping my participants and me to recollect nodal leadership experiences. Trustworthiness, ethical considerations, a description of my research participants, research mentor and the role played by critical friends is considered.

### **1.8.4 Chapter Four and Chapter Five**

Chapter Four and Chapter Five is a representation of the data that I generated with my research participants and from memory work using digital memory boxes, in a personal

history narrative form. In these chapters I trace the early influences on my leadership as well as leadership roles that I assumed as an emerging adult. I describe the impact of spirituality on my life and how it shaped my leadership practice. As an offshoot of spirituality I describe my leanings towards selfless service work and the opportunities this granted me to acquire and later demonstrate leadership. I narrate the events that rendered me a paraplegic and how this affected me as a person and as a leader. I then describe nodal leadership experiences that were reconstituted with my research participants; The Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled; on becoming a SEM in Richmond; working in the capacity as an educational management development consultant and finally as the director of SAISSE.

### **1.8.5 Chapter Six**

In Chapter Six I engage with the data from my personal history narrative to answer my first critical research question which seeks insights into “who I am and who I am as a leader?” I present the themes that emerged from the data and through analysis I produced evidence to reveal childhood influences, spiritual and servant leader aspects, the paraplegic self-aspect, and leadership self-aspect that shaped my personal and professional self/selves. The close examination of the multiple selves that makes up who I am provided rich insights into my leadership practice as I tried to fit the pieces of my leadership puzzle together.

### **1.8.6 Chapter Seven**

Chapter Seven interrogates my leadership to answer the second critical research question; “what is my leadership practice and why do I lead in the way I do?” In this chapter I critically examined the nodal leadership experiences and engaged with the following leadership themes that provide insight into my leadership practice; vision setting; emotional intelligence; change management; decision-making; developing people; leading and managing people; organizational culture and climate and conflict management. The analysis not only offered a description and explanation of my leadership practice but also brought to the surface key insights that have implications for the improvement of my leadership practice.

### **1.8.7 Chapter Eight**

Chapter Eight draws from the inferences and deductions that I made in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven to respond to the research question of “What are the implications of my self-study for the improvement of my leadership practice?” Drawing from the insights that were brought to the surface, I use the knowledge to identify gaps and weaknesses in my leadership practice. In this chapter I consider strategies to improve leadership practice in the areas of authenticity, change management and conflict management. I also noted certain aspects of my leadership that are worthy of building on and will consider them in my improvement agenda.

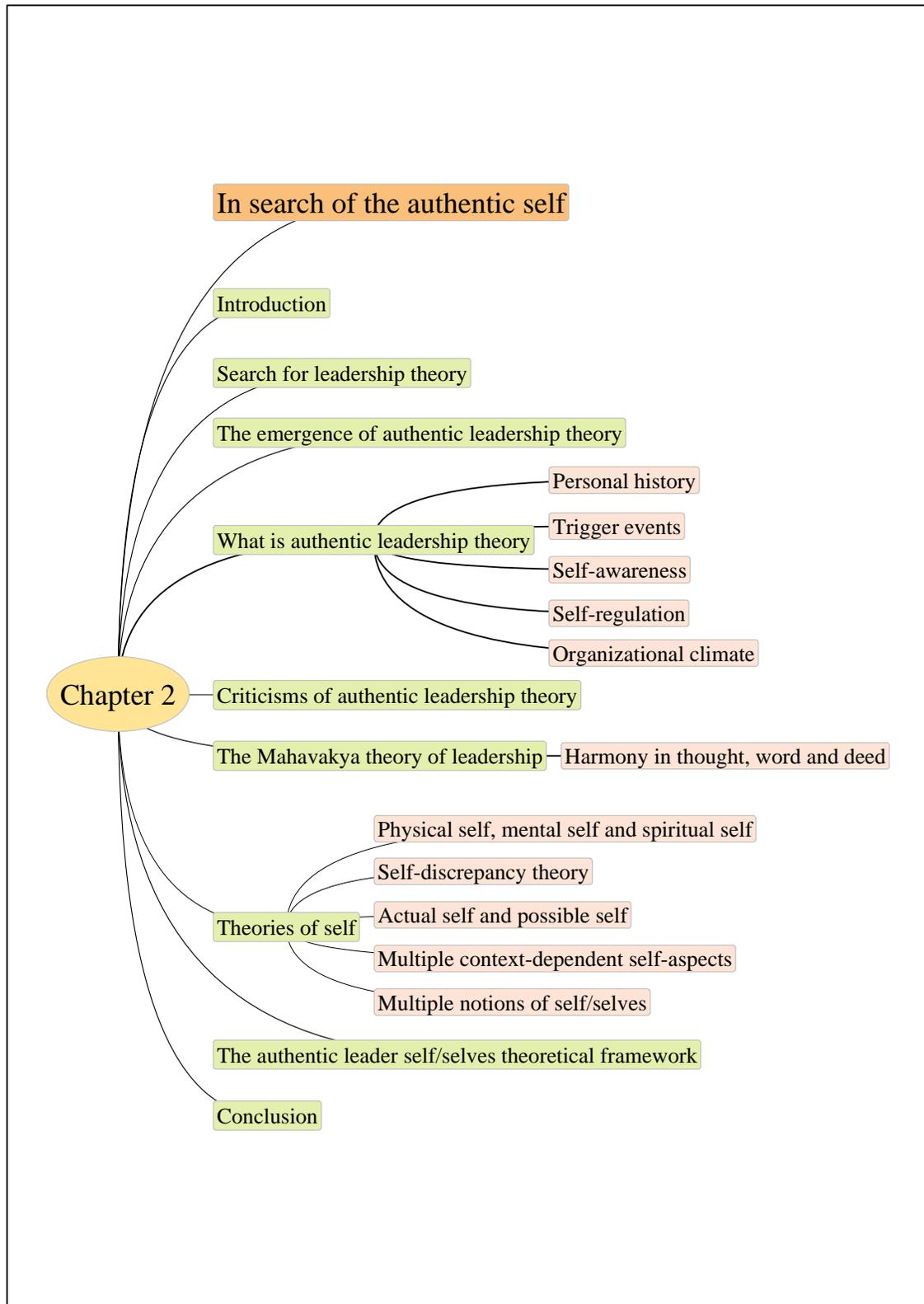
### **1.8.8 Chapter Nine**

In this concluding chapter I present an overview of my research and discuss the personal and professional implications of my self-study. I make visible the insights that surfaced and the consequences of this knowledge for my leadership growth and improvement. I reflect on my experience using self-study as a methodology together with the attendant issues of ethical considerations and trustworthiness. I bring this chapter and study to a close by discussing how it has contributed to the field of leadership and management and its implications for leaders and managers.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

In this introductory chapter I discussed the gap in educational leadership, which is the lack of attention to reflective practices for personal, professional and organizational growth. I explained the rationale and motivation for my study, the research approach and theoretical stance that I adopted. The research questions that guided this study were made explicit and I clarified key concepts and the way I use them in this thesis. An explanation was given for the departure from the traditional manner in which the review of literature is presented and the way I engaged with in my self-study. A global overview of the way this thesis is structured is presented and a note on the concept map, which is used as an advance organiser preceding each chapter, is presented. In Chapter Two, that follows I discuss the theoretical framework, which underpins this study.

Figure 2: Outline of Chapter Two



# CHAPTER 2

## IN SEARCH OF THE AUTHENTIC SELF

*“The authentic self is the soul made visible”*

Sarah Ban Breathnach

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I narrated that I had reached a point where I wished to critically examine my leadership practice as I encountered difficulties that forced me to take a step backwards and reassess how I led. In this self-study I searched for meaning and purpose through understanding who I am and what is my leadership practice. I wished to understand why I led in the way I did and desired to improve my practice. In this chapter I discuss the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The theoretical framework I use is a hybridisation of Gardner’s et al. (2005) authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya leadership theory (Chibber, 2010) and theories of self/selves (Avolio and Luthans, 2006; Higgins, 1987; McConnel et al., 2012; Sai Baba, 2000).

### 2.2 SEARCH FOR LEADERSHIP THEORY

I have offered leadership in different contexts throughout my life and I narrated this in my personal history in Chapter Four and Chapter Five (see pp. 77-139). In spite of this vast experience I could not claim that my practice was ideal and that I was satisfied with the outcomes of my leadership practice. A series of crises in a group of independent schools of which I was the director forced me to re-examine who I was in terms of my values, ethics and leadership competencies. On surveying the literature for theories that could help me understand and critique my practice, I leaned towards those theories that embraced spirituality and embodied ethics and values. I did this because I was always drawn towards these phenomena since I was a young adult. I read with keen interest the works of authors like Stephen Covey (*7 Habits of Successful Leaders, Principle Centred Leadership*), M. Scott Peck (*The Road Less Travelled*), Robin Sharma (*The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*), John Kehoe (*The Practice of Happiness*), M.L Chibber (*Sai Baba’s Mahavakya on Leadership*), Jack Hawley (*Reawakening*

*the Spirit in Work: The Power of Dharmic Management*) and Arun Wakhlu (*Managing from the heart: unfolding spirit in people*).

Early in my study I read Otto Scharmer's (2009) Theory U and I saw the possibilities of using it to engage with my research questions. Theory U provides a framework to guide leaders to operate from deep within so that they learn from the future as it emerges instead of relying on past experiences. Theory U encourages leaders to be freed of old paradigms, former ways of knowing and to let go. When leaders let go, open their minds and hearts, they become open to new possibilities as they co-create with followers. Scharmer (2009, p. 40) suggests that Theory U accesses the spiritual nature of human beings and asks the esoteric questions of "who is my self" and "what is my work" and provides a framework for answering these questions. Theory U offered me a new way of leading but did not offer the understanding and insights I yearned for in relation to my past and current practice. Consequently, I began afresh exploring other theories to understand my leadership practice.

A number of theories on educational leadership have been formulated to find meaning in the issues that school leaders experience (Prince, 2006) and new theories have emerged in response to the context of advances in technology, changes in demographics and the advent of globalisation (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). These theories range from the complexity and chaos theory, cognitive theories on leadership, social and cultural theories of leadership, contingency theories of leadership, team or relational leadership and transformational leadership theory. The shift in the way leadership is conceived has "resulted in the emergence of new leadership concepts that are now a major focus of research – ethics or spirituality, collaboration or partnering, empowerment, social change, emotions, globalization, entrepreneurialism, and accountability" (Kezar, 2006, p. x). Moreover leadership has also moved away from the traditional way it is understood as strong individuals exercising power over others towards "process centred, collective context bound nonhierarchical, and focussed on mutual power and influence" (Kezar, 2006, p. 33).

The hegemonic role of power and influence in leadership and management (Karikan, 2011) led me to explore transformational theory, which is defined as a power and influence theory where morality and ethics play a central role (Kezar, 2006). Bass (1999) contends that for leadership

to be transformational it must be grounded in morality, which provides the moral compass serving both personal development and common good. I also examined servant leadership theory, which argues that one must first be a servant before becoming a leader. According to Greenleaf (1998, p. 123) “It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. Such a person is sharply different from one who is a leader first, perhaps because of a need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.” In my early adulthood I undertook community service because I was inspired by Sri Sathya Sai Baba who constantly urged his followers to alleviate poverty and suffering and popularised this in aphorisms like “The best way to love God is to love all and serve all, ” “The service of man is the only means by which you can serve God” and “Hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray” (Sri Sathya Sai, n.d., His Teachings, Love and Service section). I was influenced by the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba who stressed exemplary leadership that was selfless and values based. The Mahavakya leadership theory, which I was exposed to in 1992, became the cornerstone of my leadership practice. It is based on Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s leadership theory that emphasizes character, self-knowledge and skill with import on harmony in thought, word and deed (Chibber, 2010).

On reading Gardner’s et al. (2005) exposition of authentic leadership I saw that it was compatible with the Mahavakya Theory as it was grounded in ethics and values. I discovered that the elements of authentic leadership theory, which included personal history, trigger events, self-awareness, self-regulation and organizational climate, also sought to explain identity, leadership practice, ethics and values. The elements of personal history and trigger events dovetailed into my self-study research design. Authentic leadership emphasizes personal history and trigger events, which are the genesis of authentic leadership development and in my self-study I use personal life history narrative and critical incidents in nodal life experiences to generate data to inform developmental plans for practice improvement. Authentic leadership theory includes self-awareness as a major component, which resembles reflexivity in self-study.

As the self is centrally located in my study I surveyed the literature for theories that explained this phenomenon. Higgin’s (1987) self-discrepancy theory of the actual self, ought self, and ideal self offers another perspective to the description of authentic leaders that Chibber (2010)

offers. The self-discrepancy theory also provides a complementary way to examine the multiple selves that McConnell et al. (2012, p. 381) posit as an alternative to the notion of a stable and unitary self. Sai Baba's (2000) discussion on the physical self, mental self and spiritual self, together with Avolio and Luthan's (2006) identification of the actual self and possible self offered me further possibilities to explore in understanding who I was. However, none of the theories that I explored on their own helped me to come to know who I was and understand my leadership practice. They offered partial knowledge like pieces from different puzzles but were not embodied in a single coherent theory. In spite of this I could not discard their relevance, as they were significant pieces in the grand puzzle that helped make meaning of my leadership practice and my identity. When I put certain elements of authentic leadership, the Mahavakya theory and theories of the self/selves together, I observed that when combined into a framework they became the lens I was looking for to interrogate my leadership practice. In the following sections I discuss the elements of what I call the authentic leader self/selves theoretical framework.

### **2.3 THE EMERGENCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY**

Authentic leadership emerged in the mid 1990's and gained considerable attention in the wake of corporate and government malfeasance, economic meltdowns and global challenges such as HIV/AIDS and environmental issues (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cooper, Scandura & Schresheim, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011; Wong & Cummings, 2009). These crises precipitated renewed scholarship in leadership and in particular what "constitutes genuine leadership" (Avolio and Gardner 2005, p. 316). Arising from this is the view that authentic leadership fosters hope, trust and confidence (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005). Bill George succinctly articulates the call for a different type of leadership when he says, "we need leaders who lead with purpose, values, and integrity" (George, 2003, p. 9).

Authentic leadership focuses on the personal values that inform leadership and the high levels of self-awareness and ethics that guide authentic leadership practice (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May, 2004; Branson, 2007; Cooper et al., 2005; George & Sims, 2010). Eagly (2005, p. 460) is of the view that leadership practice can be transformed and authentic leadership can be developed as "theorists and researchers hope to

shape this concept to articulate the qualities of leadership that can foster hope and optimism concerning collective goals.” Authentic leadership developmental programmes seek to promote authentic leadership behaviours through self-awareness and self-regulation (Avolio, 2013). This inward focus, self-examination and self-control is similar to the emphasis that self-study places on reflexivity.

The Greek word “*authentikos*” has its origins from “*authentēs*” which means acting on one’s own authority (“*Authentic*,” n.d., para 1). From a philosophical view authenticity can be traced back to the ancient Greek aphorism “*know thyself*” found inscribed at the temple of Apollo at Delphi (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 1994). Socrates emphasized self-enquiry and said that a life “*unexamined is not worth living*” (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 1994, p. 201). Socrates was convinced that through philosophical examination of the self it would be possible to become aware of a “*variety of psychological states we possess and a variety we lack*” (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 1994, p. 85). To Socrates the Delphic aphorism “*know thyself*,” meant that one should not only be aware of one’s ignorance but also introspect and examine one’s life to recognise one’s most deeply held thoughts and feelings. He was convinced that without an examined life what is importantly true will remain obscure and advocated inquiry to reveal the true self.

Through reflective introspection, knowledge of the true and only self emerges from the superficial psychological states that we are aware of (Brickhouse & Smith, 1994.) Aristotle in his works on ethics and self-realization argued for a life that sought virtue and excellence. He described this as *eudemonia*, a state of happiness that was experienced as people successfully pursued activities that were aligned to their higher calling rather than their pursuit of hedonistic pleasures (as cited in Gardner et al., 2011). Existentialist philosophers such as Sartre and Heidegger have also included authenticity in their work (as cited in Golomb, 2005). Existentialists view authenticity as a state of being where individuals remain true to themselves in spite of external pressures to conform (Golomb, 2005). For Heidegger “*dasein*” which explores notions of self, identity and being, is inextricably bound to states of authenticity and inauthenticity (as cited in Tietz, 2001).

## **2.4 WHAT IS AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY?**

Scholars have varying perspectives on authentic leadership and in their survey of literature in authentic leadership, Gardner et al. (2011) advance some of the viewpoints that are prevalent. In all of these perspectives there are common elements that relate to the core self of the leader and these include morals, values, self-awareness, self-regulation, reflection and character. Authentic leaders know “what they believe and value, and they act upon those values and beliefs while transparently interacting with others” (Avolio et al., 2004, p. 802). Illies, Morgeson & Nahrgang (2005, p. 374) are of the similar view that “authentic leaders are deeply aware of their values and beliefs, they are self-confident, genuine, reliable and trustworthy.” Authentic leaders have a very good idea of who they are and they lead purposely so that actions are aligned to their true selves. Authentic behaviour manifests as action based on core values and beliefs rather than “environmental contingencies or pressures from others” (Gardner, et al., 2005, p. 347). Their conduct is free from external influences and pressures (Golomb, 2005) and they are more concerned about offering service rather than striving for personal success (George & Sims, 2010).

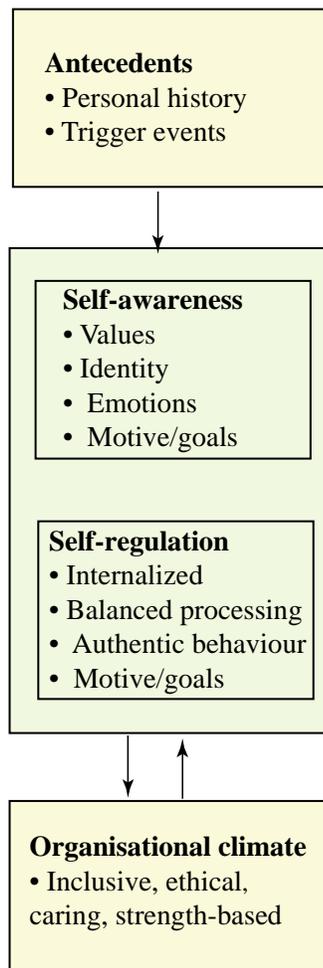
Avolio and Luthans (2006, pp. 35-36) are of the view that authentic leaders are

transparent about their intentions and desires. Authentic leaders are also characterised as saying exactly what they mean and go beyond self-interest for the good of the organization. Further, they consider the moral and ethical consequences of their decisions, and readily admit when mistakes are made.

Authenticity or genuine leadership manifests as “transparency, trust, integrity, and high moral standards” when leaders act in ways that are true to themselves (Gardner et al., p. 344). Authentic leaders convey and communicate what they really believe and think without fear of censure. Furthermore authenticity is not an either or condition but operates in a continuum where leaders are described as being “more or less authentic or inauthentic” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 345). “Authentic leadership may be thought of as a metaphor for professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration. This is leadership that is knowledge based, values informed, and skilfully executed” (Begley, 2001, p. 353).

Emerging from the various scholars understanding of authenticity, it is evident that personal and leadership values feature prominently (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Gardner et al., 2005; Illies et al., 2005). In Chapter Four (see p. 77) in my personal history narrative I recounted the formative influences in my life as well as the key nodal experiences that have shaped my self and my leadership practice. The values that I espoused were inextricably interwoven in the “living [and] telling,” re-telling [and] re-living represented in my personal history narrative (Caine, Estefan & Clandinin, 2013, p. 574). I have explained in Chapter One (see p. 3) that this study emerged from the existential questions that troubled me and in particular I wanted to critically examine my leadership practice so that I could not only improve my practice but also develop as an authentic being. This search led me to Gardner’s et al. (2005) model of authenticity, which I found to be appropriate to work with my research questions as this embraced certain features that resonated with self-study.

Self-awareness and self-regulation are integral components of the authentic leadership model that Gardner et al. (2005) have proposed. Personal histories and trigger events are seen as necessary precursors for authentic leadership development, which also requires an organizational climate where inclusivity, ethics and strength-based practices, occur (Gardner et al., 2005). The elements of personal history and trigger events complemented my self-study methodology where I used personal life history narrative and memory work in nodal experiences work to generate data. In analysing the data I used the concepts of self-awareness and self-regulation to explore the critical areas of identity, leadership practice, ethics and values. A diagrammatic representation of authentic leadership theory follows (see Figure 3). An explanation of the key components of Garner’s et al. (2005) authentic leadership development model follows thereafter.



**Figure 3. Authentic leadership model (adapted from Gardner et al., 2005)**

### **2.4.1 Personal history**

According to Avolio and Luthans (2006) personal histories are the repositories of leadership experience that explains how authentic leadership develops. This perspective on personal history is similar to the explanation that I offer in Chapter Three (see p. 51), which explores the research design and methodology of my study. In Chapter Four and Chapter Five (see pp. 77-139), I narrate my personal history in which I revealed the formative experiences and nodal incidents that have shaped my being and my leadership practice. Personal histories such as family, education and work experiences are the cumulative influences on authentic leadership

development (Gardner et al., 2005). This includes significant others and role models who contributed to shaping character as well as important life challenges, milestones and critical incidents. Personal histories are a record of how life experiences have shaped character and developed authenticity (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; George et al., 2007). Biographical anecdotes, which make up personal histories, are the building blocks of the personal theory or implicit theory that guides leadership behaviours and activities (Avolio & Luthans, 2006).

Implicit theory is viewed as a road map, an architectural blue print or compass that guides authentic leadership development (Avolio & Luthans, 2006) and is used to make sense of what happened, what is happening and what is about to happen. This sense making opens up possibilities of challenging the implicit theory and revising it (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). The implications are that for authentic leadership development to occur, leaders must be cognisant of “moments that matter in order to move the future to the present” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 19). Authentic leadership is developed when the “theory of one's leadership” or what is described as one's “implicit theory” is reviewed and challenged through the process of reflection (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 13). “We must positively challenge the theory, model, and script that guide[s] your leadership style” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 13). It is this personal theory, which arises from the leaders life story that is used to influence people. In my instance I developed personal theories on how to lead and manage people when I became a paraplegic, achieved the position of SEM, established a training and development company that developed the capacity of school leaders and managers and became the director of a group of independent schools.

I was influenced by the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and I made a concerted effort to lead by the Mahavakya theory on leadership that he enunciated. I was acutely aware of the values that I led by and strove to be ethical and to be of service to others. In Chapter Five (see pp. 130-139) I narrate the difficult and invidious situations that I found myself in, and how through reflection I planned to revise my implicit theories (see Chapter Eight, pp. 191-206). Through self-awareness authentic leadership grows as these moments forces you to “deepen your understanding of your self, who you are, what you fear, and what you believe is possible” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 15). Gardner et al. (2005, p. 347) argue “by learning who they are

and what they value” authentic leaders develop a self-awareness that questions and examines their values, goals, motives and actions and they repeatedly ask themselves “Who am I”?

My self-study is one of the most difficult journeys that I have ever undertaken as I came to face “the truths that hurt” (South African History Archive [SAHA], n.d., Media section). I agree with George and Sim’s (2010, p. xxxiii) view that, “First, you have to understand yourself, because the hardest person you will ever have to lead is yourself.” In this study through interrogation of my practice, awareness of my self/selves has heightened and I am optimistic that I will advance on the continuum of authentic leadership. Toni Morrison, a Pulitzer Prize winner and Nobel Literature Laureate captures the value of the past in her insightful observation. “Contrary to what you have heard or learned, the past is not done and it is not over, it’s still in process, which is another way of saying that when it’s critiqued and analysed, it yields new information about itself” (The Humanity Initiative, n.d., Be your own story section).

#### **2.4.2 Trigger events**

Together with personal history, trigger events are seen as necessary antecedents that precipitate authentic leadership development (Gardner et al., 2005). The trigger events that Gardner et al. (2005) describe are similar to the nodal moments that I referred to in Chapter Three (see p. 56). In Chapter Four (see p. 77) and Chapter Five (see p. 108) I narrated the nodal moments that shaped who I was as well as my leadership practice. In self-study, nodal moments are seen as difficult times, crises, or critical incidents that represent a turning point (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2006). The trigger events that affected and shaped my being included the life changing event when I became a paraplegic, when I was promoted to lead and manage schools in an area that was plagued with political violence, when I had to be medically boarded and then became a private service provider and finally when I was appointed the director of a group of independent schools and then resigned because of micro-politics that bedevilled one of the schools.

Trigger events are catalysts for reflection, ideas, emotions and behaviours that facilitate authentic leadership development. They force leaders to respond in unconventional and innovative ways thereby laying ground that is fertile for authentic development and growth. It is

in the intensity of trigger moments that makes leaders stop and reflect on what is going on inside themselves leading to “heightened levels of leader self-awareness ... [that] can be either perceived positively or negatively” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). In Chapter Four (see p. 77) and Chapter Five (see p. 108) I narrate the shifts in consciousness I experienced as each trigger event precipitated moments of deep reflection. When a trigger event is processed they become accelerants for authentic leadership development, as “brief moments in life seem to have a lasting positive impact on a leader's development, if the leader has taken the time to reflect and learn from those moments” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 62). The duration of a trigger moment varies and they can manifest over a few moments or unfold gradually over time and these could be triggers, jolts or dilemmas.

Trigger moments maybe positive or negative and they may cause leaders to think about who they are and what they do (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Some of the positive trigger moments that I experienced included meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba, on being appointed as a senior education specialist and later on being promoted as a SEM. The exposure to senior leaders, administrators and experts in UN: HABITAT in a variety of settings in Africa and Asia stimulated me and accelerated my leadership development. The extensive travel to different countries with diverse cultures inspired positive growth. Reading books by authors such as Steven Covey, Robin Sharma, John Kehoe and Jack Hawley encouraged me to pursue a values-based leadership practice. Luthans and Avolio (2003) describe negative events that have the potential to trigger leadership development. In my case after I met with a horrific accident that led to paraplegia, my worldview changed. Together with a few others I was instrumental in establishing a sports club for people with disabilities and this provided me with another platform to demonstrate leadership. The crises that I experienced as director of a group of independent schools has led to this self-study which is pushing me further along the continuum of authentic leadership.

### **2.4.3 Self-awareness**

Self-awareness, knowledge of one’s self, and personal insight is fundamental to authentic leadership development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Ilies, et al., 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). In Chapter Three (see p. 45) I present the methodology of my research in which I disclosed that

self-awareness is an essential component of self-study as practitioners continuously engage in reflective exercises to unveil elements of themselves and their practice that have been previously obscured (Allison-Roan & Michael, 2012). Critical friends involved in my self-study have enhanced and heightened my self-awareness as they challenged my interpretations of my self/selves and the events in my personal history. The research participants that I interviewed also helped to illuminate my blind spots as they brought hidden dimensions of myself/selves to the surface. Avolio and Gardner (2005, p. 324) argue there is consensus amongst scholars that self-awareness is an “appropriate starting point for what constitutes authentic leadership.”

The cycle of authentic leadership development begins and ends with self-awareness (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). The growth cycle is iterative and self-awareness grows incrementally each time the leader does something different (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). Gardner et al. (2005) are of the view that self-awareness is associated with self-reflection and is the process that leaders use to gain understandings of themselves and how they relate to the world. Through this conscious state, a sense of self emerges “that provides a firm anchor for their decisions and actions, and we would argue a more authentic self” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). Through introspection and self-examination leaders reflect and “gain clarity and concordance with respect to their core values, identity, emotions, motives and goals” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). It is through the conscious awareness and analysis of the present moment that leaders examine their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. It is in this enquiry mode that challenges, problems and issues are analysed as opposed to taking a standpoint without considering other alternatives (Avolio & Luthans, 2006).

My quest to discover who I am is consistent with Gardner’s et al. (2005, p. 347) observation that authentic leaders continually ask themselves, “Who am I?” When leaders reflect on themselves, different understandings may emerge as perceptions change with time, new information and changed perspectives. Multiple reflections may lead to deeper understanding of events and looking backwards could mean going forward (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). By asking questions of what happened, why and how it happened, what was learnt and what could be done differently facilitates self-awareness (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). New insights emerge with the benefit of time and this helps prevent repeating same behaviours as recognition of alternate

options that were previously obscure become apparent. “Some of the biggest learning cases for leadership development come from reflecting on one’s own past successes and failures” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 68).

Gardner et al. (2005) assert that leaders’ awareness of their emotions and its effects on others has implications for authentic leadership development. This view is consistent with Goleman (2003) who advances a framework of emotional intelligence, which consists of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relational management. Self-awareness is being cognisant and attentive to emotions so that they can be sensed, articulated and reflected upon (Goleman, 2003). Emotionally intelligent leaders therefore have a heightened sense of self-awareness, which gives them the capacity, and ability to be cognisant of not only their emotions but also those of others and this understanding curbs impulsive reaction to feelings (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Gardner et al., 2005). In Chapter Seven (see p. 172) and Chapter Eight (see p. 198) I critically reflect on the state of my emotional intelligence and how it impacted on my leadership practice.

#### **2.4.4 Self-regulation**

Self-regulation is an integral component of authentic leadership theory and Gardner et al. (2005) describe certain features that characterise self-regulation. These include “internalized regulation, balanced processing of information, authentic behaviour, and relational transparency” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). Leaders who internally govern or control themselves and who are less dependent on external influences are grounded and centred (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). They are directed by their “core self, as opposed to external forces or expectations” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). Authentic leadership development is a process that starts from the inside that moves outwards and authentic leaders are more inclined to be intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated (Avolio & Luthans, 2006).

Balanced processing occurs when authentic leaders consciously strive to objectively make sense of information related to the self through multiple perspectives and critical self-enquiry irrespective whether they are positive or negative. “That is, the leader does not distort,

exaggerate, or ignore externally based evaluations of the self nor internal experiences and private knowledge that might inform self-development” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). In acting authentically they display relational transparency when they listen to others more carefully and are open to other views. Authentic leaders are also transparent in their actions with people that they work closely with and are open. They display high levels of trust and self-disclosure (Gardner et al., 2005).

Self-regulation is a concept that is also linked to emotional leadership. Emotional self-management is the capacity to regulate stressful emotions such as anger and anxiety as well the ability to restrain oneself from displaying impulsive emotions (Goleman, 2003). In answering the critical research question of what is my leadership practice, why I lead the way I do and how my leadership practice can be improved, authentic leadership and emotional intelligence are used to examine the data that I have generated.

#### **2.4.5 Organizational climate**

The organizational climate plays a significant role as it provides the context and space for authentic leadership to emerge (Gardner et al., 2005). This dynamic and evolving environment when it is positive, impacts on authentic leadership development as it provides a climate that is conducive to growth. The changes, uncertainty and turbulence in some organizational contexts also provide opportunities for leaders to engage in self-awareness and demonstrate self-regulation (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The forces and dynamics that operate within an organizational climate not only shape leaders but also provide leaders with opportunities to also shape the organization. This influence is accentuated when there is inclusivity, ethics and respect for the worth of members of the organization. In such environments there is openness, transparency, easy access to information, available resources, equal learning opportunities, which makes it possible for leaders and followers to work effectively (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

### **2.5 CRITICISMS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP THEORY**

The definition of authenticity is not only contestable but is also broad in the sense that it is multi-dimensional and this poses difficulties in defining and measuring it as a construct (Cooper

et al., 2005). The definitions include elements that relate to the core self of the leader and include the constructs of morals, values, psychological traits, behaviours, attributions, self-awareness, reflection and character. These diverse elements are also found to operate on the multi-levels of the individual, team and organization. The complex nature of the definition makes it difficult to measure and determine whether developmental programmes have actually succeeded in enhancing authentic leadership behaviours (Cooper et al., 2005). Whilst this maybe the case, this self-study is a critique and analysis of my leadership practice as I have come to know it and I have not set out to measure how authentic my leadership practice is. In this study the accepted definitions of authenticity will be used cautiously to examine authentic leadership theory mindful of the limitations that this definition poses.

Authentic leadership theory has sought legitimacy by drawing on the work of Heidegger's concept of "dasein," which discusses in part authenticity (as cited in Golomb, 2005). Gardiner (2011, p. 100) is of the view that theorists have taken "sound bites" of Heidegger to establish empirical and theoretical credibility. Heidegger's argument is that individuals experience more inauthenticity as they spend their "time fitting in with the desires of others" (as cited in Gardiner, 2011, p. 100). Heidegger refers to "authenticity as resoluteness", which is the individual's "response to the call of conscience" when guilt is experienced (as cited in Gardiner, 2011, p. 101). In spite of Gardiner's (2011) criticism that theorists feebly draw on existentialist philosophers like Heidegger, I do not believe that this is significant enough to detract from authentic leadership theory. Heidegger's reference to "*Das Man*" translated as "*the they*" highlights the tensions within the self as the self tries to negotiate between itself and the competing interests of others (as cited in Gardiner, 2011, p. 100). I am of the view that Heidegger's reference to the conscience and feelings of guilt strengthens the existential foundations of authentic leadership theory rather than detracting from it.

Authentic leadership is founded on the belief of the self-worth and self-confidence of the individual, which privileges the notion that self-made leaders are strong and achieve goals through sheer will power to the exclusion of the involvement of others. According to Gardiner leadership "theories of the self are never neutral, that is they always take place within systems of power" (Gardiner, 2011, p. 100). Another criticism that is levelled is that authenticity does not

explain how personal history and social circumstances affect a person's ability to lead. Authentic leadership theory states that personal history is a necessary antecedent for authentic leadership development but for Gardiner (2011) this backdrop remains invisible even though individuals carry this knowledge it is inconspicuous and its impact is not discernible. However, in this self-study, nodal experiences and trigger moments are critically examined and its influence in leadership development and practice is brought into the foreground. In this self-study authenticity is explored in a dialogical partnership with a research mentor, research participants and in a group of critical friends to reveal how my personal history has influenced my leadership practice.

One of the more significant criticisms of authentic leadership theory is that it does not address issues related to power and privilege and does not probe the level at which silence operates (Gardiner, 2011). Gardiner's criticism is that "authenticity manifests itself differently as a result of a person's spatial and temporal position" (Gardiner, 2011, p. 100). This failure to consider power, influence and privilege is acknowledged and in this study the critical paradigm is used to critique power relations and interrogate my leadership practice to bring to the surfaces aspects that lie hidden and to open up spaces for transformation of practice.

## **2.6 THE MAHAVAKYA THEORY OF LEADERSHIP**

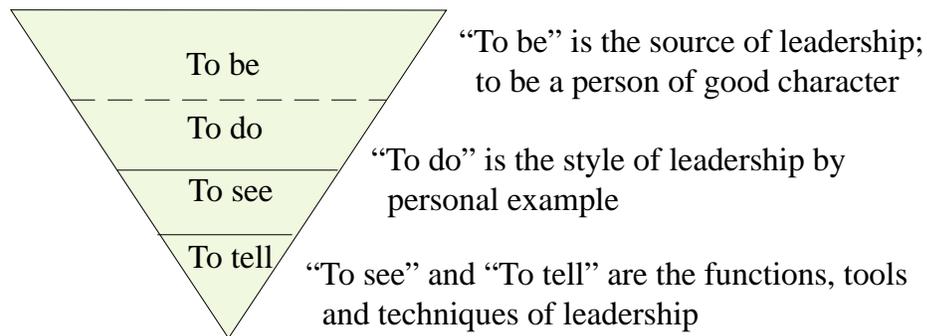
In my personal history in Chapter Four (see p. 87), I explore my interest in spirituality and in particular my engagements with the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. As an emerging leader I was inspired by his teachings on alleviating suffering through serving humanity and took him as my role model when I saw him demonstrate extraordinary leadership wisdom. Sri Sathya Sai Baba who is revered and respected as a world teacher, made substantive contributions to alleviate poverty and suffering in India (Aitken, 2006). He led massive projects that delivered world class health care free of charge to the patients at two huge super speciality hospitals, provided drinking water to over 700 villages and to the city of Chennai in India and built a complete system of education that started at the primary school and went all the way through to university. His followers regard him as a leader par excellence.

By sheer conviction and by outstanding personal example, he guided and spearheaded all the initiatives to fruition and enabled them to reach the exalted state that they have achieved today, thereby carving a special niche for India in the field of socio-spiritual activities (SSIHL, n.d., Our founder chancellor section.).

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has delivered numerous discourses on the theme of leadership and at a world youth conference of the Sathya Sai Organization, which was held on 19 July 1997 he said, “We should always be servants ... men of service. It is only in servitude lies leadership ... In fact there is lots of respect when you serve” (Saicast, n.d.). Sri Sathya Sai Baba interacted with the students following the masters in business administration degree at the Sri Sathya Institute of Higher Learning where he stressed the importance of ethical business management. His treatise on leadership is distilled in the following eight words, “To be, To do, To see, To tell” (Chibber, 2010, p. 17). This utterance has come to be known as the Mahavakya or “eternal truth” on leadership (Forde, 2010, p. 42). In the Upanishads, which is the foundational philosophical text of Hinduism, Mahavakya’s are the great sayings or aphorisms by which profound subject matter become known. As a follower of Sri Sathya Sai Baba I was exposed to the Mahavakya leadership theory in my young adult years and because it made an impression on me I consciously tried to lead by this theory.

The Mahavakya leadership theory emphasizes self-awareness, self-knowledge, awareness of the social environment and work environment. It also highlights the importance of practicing what one preaches and communicating in an authentic manner, which demonstrates consistency in thought, word and deed (Chibber, 2010). ‘To be’ is the source of leadership which is represented by the leader’s character (Forde, 2010). It is the first component and is the largest component in the conceptual model (see Figure 4). It is the embodiment of the leader’s value system, beliefs, personal attributes and worldview and is thus an aggregate of all that there is in a leader (Karmakar & Datta, 2012). The leader’s identity and character underpins the leadership practice (Chibber, 2010) and therefore “To be” represents the “beginning and the end of leadership” (Karmakar & Datta, p. 218). “To do” is the leadership style, which is grounded in leading through role modelling and by being exemplary (Karmakar & Datta, 2012). According to Chibber (2010, p. 18) “it is the most potent technique of influencing people.” Authenticity and leading by example emanate from the leader’s character hence the broken lines in the model

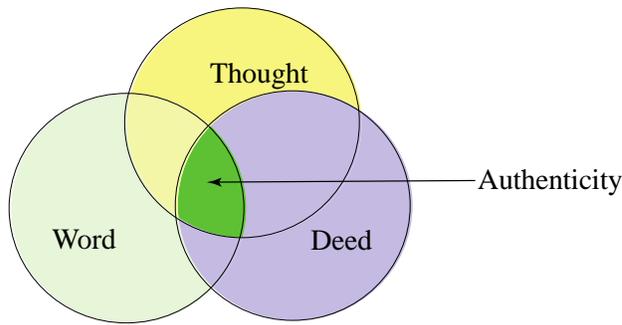
illustrate this permeability and bidirectional influence (Chibber, 2010). “To see” refers to the leaders awareness and thorough knowledge of the context, environment and realities in which he or she is operating in. The quality of information influences decision making as the leader evaluates different options before implementing a plan to achieve the vision (Chibber, 2010). ‘To tell’ is the channel of communication that a leader uses to convey what needs to be done. Effective leaders do this in inspiring ways that reflect their character (“To be”) and leadership style (“To do”), which results in the leader using fewer words to communicate what needs to be done. Hence, this component is last and is the smallest in size (Chibber, 2010).



**Figure 4: Mahavakya theory of leadership (Chibber, 2010, p. 19)**

### **2.6.1 Harmony in thought, word and deed**

Consistency between thoughts, words and deeds and the extent to which they are congruent, influences followers’ perceptions of leaders (Chibber, 2010; Sankar, 2013). When there is congruency in what the leader thinks, what he says and does, authentic leadership manifests (see Figure 5). The net effect is trustworthiness, which facilitates better working relationships and a positive organizational climate in which the self-worth of all individuals are respected and valued (Chathury, 2008; Chibber, 2010). When leaders are sincere, transparent and forthright, trust is earned as the consistency between thought, word and deed demonstrates a state of completeness and uprightness of character (Chibber, 2010). When there is a misalignment in a leader’s thoughts, words and deeds, the converse applies as inauthentic behaviour promotes mistrust and poor working relationships. When leaders show double standards, they are hypocritical and insincere and consequently their followers deem them to be untrustworthy (Sankar, 2013).



**Figure 5: Model of a trustworthy person (adapted from Chibber, 2010).**

## **2.7 THEORIES OF SELF**

In my study I pose the question of who am I in order to understand how notions of self influence my leadership practice. In the following section I discuss the theories, which informed my understanding of the self.

### **2.7.1 Physical self, mental self and spiritual self**

Again I draw on my relationship with Sri Sathya Sai Baba in finding out who I am. Sai Baba (2000) in a discourse explained the multiple selves that we become known by. The first being the one that we think we are, second, the one that others think we are and third, the one we really are. These states refer to the identification of the physical self, mental self and spiritual self, which are constructed by the self and others (Sai Baba, 2000). The physical self represents the individual's notions of self as the body whereas the mental self is a construction of the self's awareness of itself and through interaction with others. The real self according to Sai Baba (2000) is the individual's true self, which is spirit or the embodiment of divinity.

### **2.7.2 Self-discrepancy theory**

Sai Baba's (2000) account of the self is in some ways similar to Higgins (1987) portrayal of the three basic domains of the self, which are the actual self, ought self and ideal self. According to Higgins, the actual self is the self's representation of itself and the way it conceives its attributes either by itself or with others (Higgins, 1987). These are the images of the present self. The ideal self is a representation that the self or others would ideally like the self to possess and these

represent the dreams, hopes and aspirations, which are the images of the future possible self. The ought self is the representation of the attributes that the self or others think that the self should have. These include a sense of duties, responsibilities and obligations (Higgins, 1987).

### **2.7.3 Actual self and possible self**

Avolio and Luthans (2006) propose that the two states of self, the actual self and possible self are integral facets of authentic leadership theory. Their position is that multiple selves make up what we describe as our self and the many roles that we play as children, parents, spouses, men, women, employees, employers, managers and leaders are fragments of the self. “There is no such thing as a single self” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 82). In each of the states of the self two possibilities exist, that is the actual self, which is the current position of the self and the possible self, which is the position that the self is striving toward. The selves are dynamic and respond to challenges by changing over time. Authentic leadership development is facilitated as the gap between the actual self and ideal self is narrowed. Leaders sometimes are unaware of this gap, as they “have become too comfortable with their actual self” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 83).

### **2.7.4 Multiple context-dependent self-aspects**

McConnel et al. (2012, p. 380) in a similar vein argue that the self is “composed of multiple, context-dependent self-aspects represented in an interrelated memory network” rather than a single unitary self. A self-aspect comes to the fore to realise the motive that the self is desirous of achieving in a particular context. Each self-aspect may possess different attributes, which in some instance may overlap with other self-aspects. However, the different selves are connected through an elaborate network of episodic memory and semantic memory (McConnel et al., 2012). Episodic memory refers to the memory of particular instances in life contextualised in time and space whereas semantic memory is the system of meanings, ideas and concepts that are general and does not require the original context or stimulus to be remembered (Tulving, 1987).

### 2.7.5 Multiple notions of self/selves

The following diagram is a representation of the way I conceive the notions of the self that I have described in this section. This is a synthesis of Sai Baba's (2000), Higgins' (1987) Avolio and Luthans' (2006) and McConnel's et al. (2012) discussion of what the self is. The framework of the self/selves is used to explore how it has shaped and influenced my leadership practice.

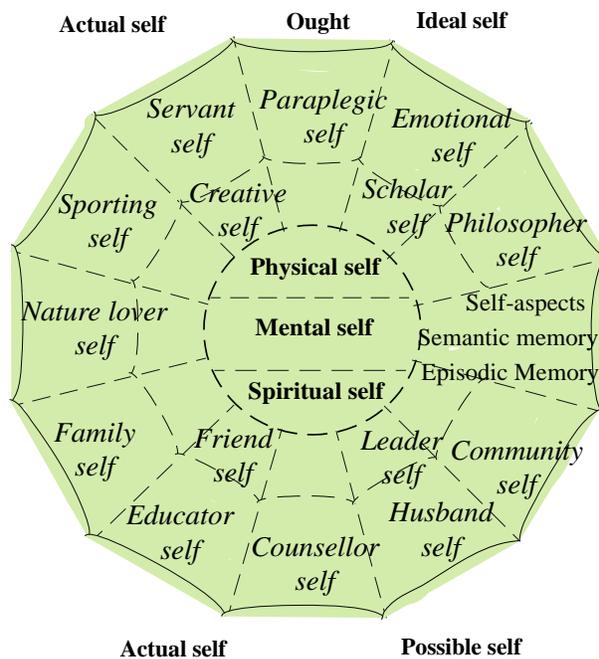


Figure 6: Representation of the self/selves

## 2.8 THE AUTHENTIC LEADER SELF/SELVES THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

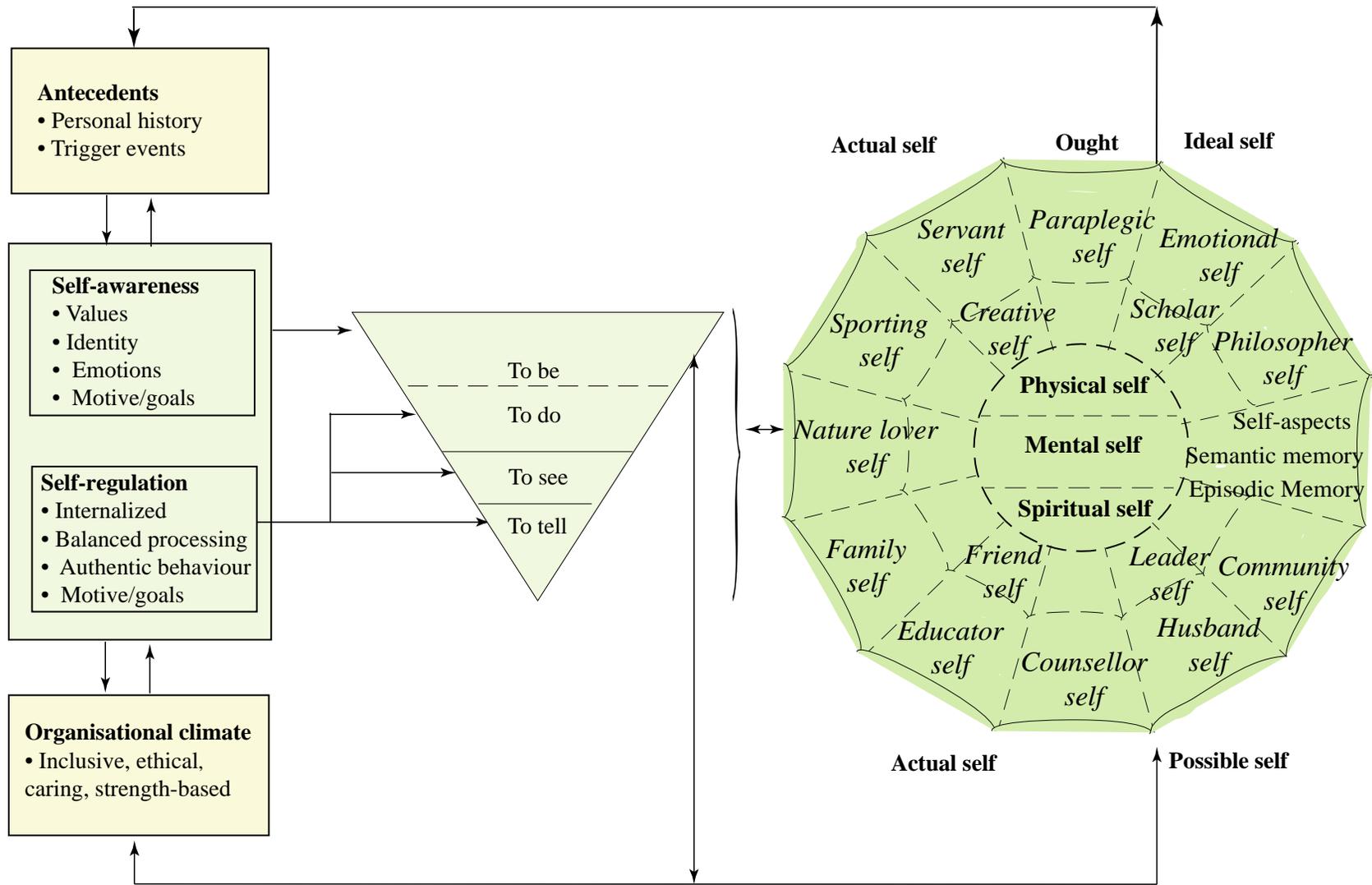
I found that I had to take aspects of authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya theory of leadership and theories of the self as a framework to guide this research as no theory by its self offered a comprehensive framework to engage with my self-study (see Figure 7). The integration of certain features of authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya leadership model and theories of the self therefore presents a framework that coheres with the rationale and focus of my self-study, the research questions, and research design. Self-awareness and self-regulation are significant elements in both authentic leadership theory (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) and the Mahavakya theory of leadership (Chibber, 2010). "To be", which embodies self-knowledge in

the Mahavakya theory of leadership, suggests that the leader is self-aware and is cognisant of the values, ethics and morality that guide leadership practice (Chibber, 2010). In a similar manner authentic leadership theorists argue that self-awareness is fundamental in developing leadership as reflection, introspection and balanced processing stimulates knowledge of the self (Avolio & Luthans, 2006).

Self-regulation, self-control and self-governance characterise authentic leaders who through reflection consciously adhere to the norms and values that they espouse (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This is reflected in their actions, which is aligned to the “To do” component of the Mahavakya theory. It is through their actions that internal self-regulation is evident as leaders demonstrate self-control to ensure that their behaviours are consistent with the value systems that underpin their character (Gardner et al., 2005). Balanced processing in authentic leadership theory closely approximates to the “To see” element of the Mahavakya theory as inputs from all relevant stakeholders are sought and an all round perspective of the issue on hand is sought. Authentic behaviour, which emerges from self-regulation, manifests not only in actions but in speech as well and this is correspond with the “To tell” component of the Mahavakya Theory. Consequently authentic behaviour emerges in the Mahavakya Theory at the “To do”, “To see” and “To tell” levels.

The organizational climate, which nurtures authentic leadership development relates to the “To be” component of the Mahavakya theory where ethics, caring and validation of other beings is rooted in the source of leadership. The self and the organizational climate share a symbiotic relationship as they influence and shape each other. The self is capable of influencing the organizational climate through authentic behaviours and is similarly predisposed to the benign influences in the environment of care and respect (Gardner, et al., 2005). Personal history and trigger events (Gardner et al., 2005), which are necessary for authentic leadership development, relate to the self. Life experiences and trigger events shape the actual, ought, possible and ideal self (Higgins, 1987) as the self takes on multiple roles and dynamically changes according to varying contexts (McConnel et al., 2012). The congruency in thought, word and deed (Chibber, 2010) also has a bearing on the domains of the self as authenticity emerges when there is balance and harmony, which is reflected in an integrated authentic self.

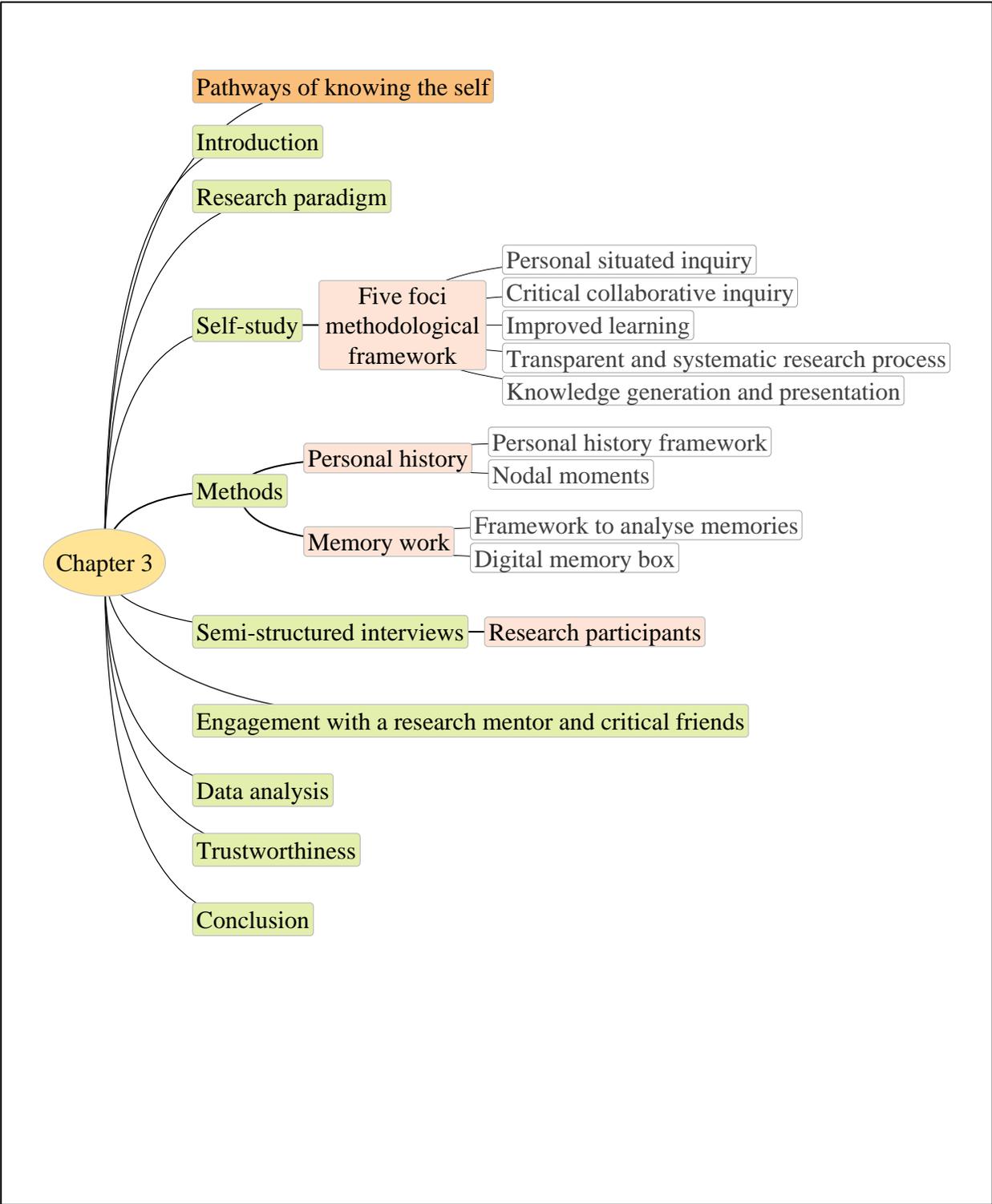
Figure 7: Authentic leader self/selves theoretical framework (adapted from Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Chibber, 2010; Gardner et al., 2005; Higgins, 1987; McConnel et al., 2012; Sai Baba, 2010)



## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I stated that in spite of extensive reading, I was unable to identify an adequate theory to underpin my self-study. I therefore drew on elements of authentic leadership, the Mahavakya theory of leadership and theories of the self to constitute the authentic leader self/selves framework to guide my study. I used this framework as a tool to piece together the leadership puzzles of my personal and leader self. Each of the components of the authentic leader self/selves framework served a purpose in analysing the data as I tried to solve the problems posed in my research questions. Authentic leadership resonated with my quest of being true to myself and discovering who I am. It also provided a useful framework to critically examine my leadership practice and illumined pathways that lead to improvement. The Mahavakya theory of leadership that I was exposed to as an emerging leader also offered me an opportunity to not only interrogate my leadership practice but also reveal who I am. Together with the theories of the self/selves I was better positioned to explore the existential issues as well as the leadership dilemmas that spurred this study. In the following chapter I discuss the research design and methodology that I use in my self-study.

Figure 8: Outline of Chapter Three



# CHAPTER 3

## PATHWAYS OF KNOWING THE SELF

*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.*

Samaras, Hicks & Berger (2007, p. 910)

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This self-study seeks to explore my identity and leadership practice with the intention of discovering ways of improving the way I lead. It represented the search for meaning of who I am in the context of educational leadership and seeks to critically examine my leadership practice to bring hidden knowledge to the surface for interrogation, deconstruction and re-interpretation (Samaras, 2011). Herein lies the hope that my leadership practice will improve as new insights surface, allowing me to transform the way I lead. In the previous chapter I explained authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya leadership theory and theories of self that I use to understand and interrogate my leadership practice. In this chapter I discuss the research design and methodology that I followed to generate and analyse the data in my self-study. The research paradigms that I used are explored and self-study as a methodology is described. I explain the five foci methodological framework and the personal history narrative and memory work methods that I used in this study. An exposition on how I engaged with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends follows thereafter. Finally, I discuss trustworthiness in self-study and the measures I adopted to ensure academic integrity.

### 3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

I argue that the interpretive research paradigm is best suited as a research paradigm because I am searching for meaning and understanding of my practice, which is a subjective construction of my lived experiences in leadership. The interpretive paradigm, which seeks to understand phenomenon from an individual standpoint acknowledges that it can't be epistemologically value free. I gravitated towards the interpretivist paradigm because it seeks to understand phenomenon from the interaction between the individual, the social and historical contexts at play (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, & Morrison, 2008). Scotland (2012, p. 12) states, "Interpretive

methods yield insight and understandings of behaviour, [that] explain actions from the participant's perspective". He explains that reality is subjective, relative and meaning is constructed on an individual level and through consensus common understandings are mediated (Scotland, 2012). Taylor and Medina (2013, p. 4) are of similar view and state that the "epistemology of this paradigm is inter-subjective knowledge construction" validated by the quality standards of trustworthiness and authenticity. The interpretive paradigm appealed to me as I sought to understand and interpret my experiences in search of meaning of who I was as well as my leadership practice. Interpretive research methods embrace narrative inquiry and autobiographic auto-ethnographic methods (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Taylor & Medina, 2013). In my self-study my personal history narrative in the form of an autobiography is used to represent the data that I have generated and co-constructed with my research participants.

However, on deeper reflection, I realised that I was looking for more than understanding and wished to question and challenge the ideologies at play as I enacted leadership in various settings (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Whilst interpretivism accepted ideologies at work it did not challenge or question these (Scotland, 2012). My research goals included transformation of my leadership practice and I realised that understanding alone would not necessarily result in practice improvement. Hence this research also used the critical paradigm as a lens to examine power hegemonies as I critiqued my work in the search for self-transformation and emancipation (Karikan, 2011; Scotland, 2012). According to Taylor (2014) methods and quality standards from the interpretive and critical paradigms may be combined and they become powerful means to further transformative professional development.

In this self-study I explore historical realism, which is the social, cultural, and political context and its influence on my being and the way I led (Scotland, 2012). According to Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011, p. 102) the nature of reality for critical researchers is that

human nature operates in a world that is based on a struggle for power. This leads to interactions of privilege and oppression that can be based on race or ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, mental or physical abilities, or sexual preference.

Scotland (2012) extends this further and states that for critical theorists, knowledge is not only socially constructed but it is also influenced by power relations as they manifest in culture, race, gender and location. In this study I critically examine my leadership practice, which is inextricably linked, to power. According to Karikan (2011, p. 37) the literature in school leadership predominantly focuses on power “with a strong focus on political power and positional power.” Manke (2007) takes a similar position and encourages school leaders and managers to explore issues of power and community, which are inextricably linked, to their work.

My research goal was to uncover through interrogation the realities that I have constructed about myself and expose hidden dimensions that come in the way of effectiveness. Scotland (2012, p. 13) describes realities as meanings constructed in social contexts which are “under constant internal influence” as language shapes and moulds reality. Language is viewed as a means to empower or disempower because of inherent power differentials that manifest. Thus critical theory moves beyond understanding and interpreting phenomena but seeks to change them through emancipating the disempowered, redressing inequality and promoting “individual freedoms within a democratic society” (Scotland, 2012, p. 13). In this self-study I interrogated the factors that shaped my leadership and discovered ways to transform my practice. According to Scotland (2012, p. 13) critical researchers accept the position that no research methodology is value free and “change is the underlying aim”. “Critical methodology is directed at interrogating values and assumptions, exposing hegemony and injustice, challenging conventional social structures and engaging in social action” (Scotland, 2012, p. 13). The critical paradigm not only problematises and questions the taken for granted assumptions it also seeks to uncover situations and processes where interests and power are hidden and remain obscure to empower those who have power and disempower the powerless (Taylor & Medina, 2013). The intentions of critical theory resonated with my research goals as I was determined to not only explore the notions that I have of myself and my leadership practice but to critically engage in deconstructing the knowledge I have of myself to allow insights to emerge that will emancipate and transform me.

Critical theorists seek to expose the contradictions and dilemmas and provide alternative ways of understanding reality. Self-study and the critical paradigm theorists both look at issues from

multiple angles and this corresponded with my research goals. Reflective practice, which is inherent in critical theory and embodied in ideology critique, strives to interpret, explain and understand issues so that agendas for transformation are examined and enacted to bring about equality and social democracy (Cohen et al., 2008). I identified with the elements of critical theory, which suggest that critical awareness, action and reflection brings about change. Furthermore, researcher awareness of position, worldview, theoretical stance and personal history is the reflexivity for analysing events and ideas, and recognition of the researchers biases (McCabe & Holmes, 2009). The notion that reality is alterable and that through exposing power relations, emancipation and transformation is possible, provided the impetus and encouragement for me to undertake revealing work. Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011, p. 164) state that “critical research can be understood best in the context of the empowerment of individuals” and McCabe (2009) views emancipation as the unveiling of forces that prevent individuals and groups from making decisions that limits their autonomy and agency. The emancipatory goal of critical paradigm corresponded with my research goals and self-study methodology as I sought to interrogate the dominant discourses that act on my leadership practice.

### **3.3 SELF-STUDY**

In 2011, I experienced serious challenges as the director of SAISSE and the resulting existential angst inspired a search for meaning of who I was and what I was doing as a leader (see Chapter Five, pp. 130-139). Initially I thought that an autoethnographic route would best suit my research, but I soon had a rethink when I became aware that the wider social, cultural and political context would be accentuated and that my search for practice improvement may not be met as explicitly as I would have liked. Action research as a methodology was also discounted because it looks at current practice. I am of the view that I needed to understand my past in order to improve my practice. Feldman, Paugh and Mills (2004, p. 971) argue that action is emphasized in action research whereas in self-study the stress is on the self as practitioners “problematise their selves in their practice situations.”

The past in the form of personal history narrative is viewed as an antecedent to authentic leadership theory, which I discussed in Chapter Two (see p. 24). “The older we get, the more information we have to reflect on, if we choose to do” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 66). Self-

study looks at both past and present practice to improve current and future performance. Samaras and Freese (2009) add that self-study improves both personal and professional selves which led me to believe that it was better suited as a methodology for my study because it focused sharply on the self/selves; the personal self/selves and leader self/selves which I wanted to understand. By putting my leadership practice under the magnifying glass through self-study, I was hopeful that I would become aware of gaps in my practice and become sensitive to the ways I use power. I was attracted to self-study because it had the potential of helping me to gather and assemble the different puzzle pieces of my personal and leader self/selves to create a fuller picture of who I was and what I was doing.

Self-study as a research methodology emerged in the early 1990's as educational researchers sought to examine teacher education practice and looked for ways to improve professional teacher development. Samaras et al. (2007, p. 468) observe that in spite of the abundance of self-study teacher research "there are few examples available that demonstrate its usefulness to practitioners outside of the teaching profession." A review of the literature in educational leadership, management and administration also shows that self-study, as a research genre has not been widely used in spite of the awareness that reflective practice can be effective in improving leadership (Frick & Riley, 2010; Roose, 2010; Samaras et al., 2007; Wright, 2009). Frick & Riley (2010) are of the view that educational leadership practitioners can benefit from self-studies after noting its efficacy in teacher and teacher educators' development. "Self-studies in particular are certainly less common, even though they offer similar potential for revealing the nuances within both leadership education and practice" (Frick & Riley, 2010, p. 310). Samaras et al. (2007, p. 477) are of similar view and state that self-study is useful for those "interested in studying their practice within the wider enterprise of educational reform." Manke (2007, p. 1389) concurs with this assessment and urges "self-study practitioners who are leaders, managers and administrators to continue their revealing work" so that issues of power and community, which are central to leadership, are explored. Drawing from these insights I too recognised the potential of self-study to transform my practice through deep self-reflection.

I have since learnt that self-study is a paradoxical methodology because it is not totally about the self (Samaras & Freese, 2009). It is the study by the self, for the self but with other selves.

“Self-study researchers are, therefore, not only the selves doing the research, they are the selves being studied, which does not mean the self is the sole focus” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 843). Critical friends, colleagues and collaborators work together with the researcher to challenge assumptions, reframe perspectives and validate data (Samaras & Freese, 2009). A variety of ways are used to identify assumptions many of which are hidden, and to examine and recreate these assumptions, which are likely to lead to improvement and development. Central to self-study is the “practice of reflection on context and practice” (Manke, 2007, p. 1370). The practitioner examines past experiences, events and ideas to make sense of current contexts and practices. It is not simply a description of the past but is a deeper understanding of context and practice through interacting with collaborators such as critical friends and research participants.

As with other methodologies self-study too has been criticised and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2004, pp. 625-631) raise five issues in the form of critique. The “knowledge critique” questions the kind of knowledge that practitioner’s produce as they research their practice and the “methods critique” queries whether practitioners have the skill to research their own work. “The science critique” examines issues of quality and validity whilst “the political critique” looks at the ideological purpose of the practitioner research. The “personal/professional development critique” probes whether the practitioner inquiry goes beyond the self and extends the knowledge base of the field. At the core of the criticism levelled against self-study are the notions that self-study practitioners are narcissistic solipsistic navel gazers who “do not generate knowledge for the field at large” (Samaras, 2011, p. 63) as they are preoccupied with themselves, in an ego centric and self-indulgent manner. Self-study practitioners are also cautioned of the temptation to romanticise, exaggerate or embellish their work so that they are only seen in good light. Self-study scholars responded to these criticisms and developed guidelines “that refined the scholarship of self-study and [claimed] its position as legitimate research and as a genre of qualitative research” (Samaras, 2011, p. 63). To mitigate these criticisms I followed the guidelines that self-study scholars developed to enhance quality, trustworthiness and demonstrate robust scholarliness. My research participants, critical friends and research mentor challenged my interpretations and made me conscious of solipsism and narcissism whenever it reared. As an output of this research I made a presentation at a university research colloquium and published an article in a peer reviewed journal to advance knowledge in the field of educational leadership (see Appendix 1, p. 245).

In the next section I discuss the five foci methodological framework of this study.

### **3.3.1 Five foci methodological framework**

Laboskey (2004) developed a research design for self-study practitioners, which consisted of five elements, namely it is self-initiated and focused, improvement-aimed, interactive, multiple primary qualitative methods are used and it is exemplar-based validation. Samaras (2011) built on this design and proposed a five foci methodological framework for self-study. Whilst this framework was developed for teachers and teacher educators, it is relevant and can be used in other settings; hence I have adapted it to examine my leadership practice. The five foci are “personal situated inquiry,” “critical collaborative inquiry,” “improved learning,” “transparent and systematic research process,” and “knowledge generation and presentation” (Samaras, 2011, p. 86). The five foci were the guiding principles that helped me to gather and connect the different pieces of my leadership puzzle together. It helped me to cluster the self and leadership pieces that were of similar shape, size and colour in a scholarly manner in order to generate a more discernible picture of who I was.

#### ***3.3.1.1 “Personal situated inquiry”***

Self-study practitioners institute their own inquiry in educational settings and select methods that are aligned with this inquiry (Samaras, 2011). I chose my practice in leadership settings to generate knowledge about the way I led (LaBoskey, 2004). In this study I focused on nodal leadership and management experiences in educational and non-educational settings and sought to illumine practices that highlighted the tensions between my lived values and those that I espoused. These gaps led to new understandings of practice and my implicit or personal theory of leadership was exposed for its merits and shortcomings.

#### ***3.3.1.2 “Critical collaborative inquiry”***

Self-study leadership practitioners work in learning communities that are non-threatening, open and supportive. In this environment spaces are created for critical engagement and for multiple interpretations as issues are presented (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). At the beginning of the research I joined the Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) group, which is an inter-

university support group for academics and students interested in self-study and this group worked with me as my critical friends as they critiqued my study and offered insights that led to my seeing issues differently. A discussion on the shifts that I made as a result of engaging with my critical friends follows later in this chapter in Table 2 (see p. 66). My research mentor Inba Naicker also challenged my assumptions, values, beliefs and attitudes in reflexive dialogues as I progressed with my study (see Section 3.6, p. 64). LaBoskey (2004) introduces the interactive dimension of self-study to show that in addition to critical collaborators self-study researchers interact with others as informants. Likewise I extended collaboration to include my research participants who helped me to co-construct memory of nodal moments, revisit issues and to critique my leadership practice.

### ***3.3.1.3 “Improved learning”***

Self-study leadership practitioners question the status quo of their practice and the politics of education so that there is an improvement in their practice (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). The improved educational leadership that I seek is to become more effective in supporting the school managers so that their learners and teachers would achieve better results. This self-study was initiated because I questioned my leadership knowledge and skills since I had reached a point where I doubted my capabilities. It is through self-study and critical reflection that good practices, strengths, gaps in performance and weaknesses are brought to the fore. Herein lies the possibility that my leadership practice would be transformed as I lead differently because of the new found insights that I have.

### ***3.3.1.4 “Transparent and systematic research process”***

“Self-study requires a transparent research process that clearly and accurately documents the research process through dialogue and critique” (Samaras, 2011, p. 221). I presented a table, which documents the processes I followed to generate data (see Table 1, p. 10) and recorded my engagements with my critical friends as my study progressed, in Table 2 (see p. 66). After my research proposal was critiqued I found myself less comfortable with autoethnography and I gravitated towards self-study. Initially I was determined to foreground the influence of spirituality in my leadership practice and I then realised that this influence would come through in my study when my critical friends argued that spirituality was a strand that ran through the

multiple selves that made my identity. It was the questioning, prodding and probing by my research mentor and critical friends in the TES group that repositioned this study and reframed issues, which lead to several conceptual shifts. These include the de-emphasis of spirituality, revisions to my research questions, change in my thesis title, the methods I chose for my self-study and ways to generate data that exposed my leadership practice for what it was.

### ***3.3.1.5 “Knowledge generation and presentation”***

Self-study research generates knowledge that is made public through presentation and publication. According to Samaras (personal communication, 21 July 2014) reviewers offer “valuable insights to improve your writing and research ... consider how fortunate you are to receive feedback on your work.” I presented a paper, “The search for authentic leadership: A self-study of practice” at the College of Humanities Annual Postgraduate Conference and Staff Research Colloquium at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. After the paper was presented several questions were asked about self-study, the involvement of critical friends and trustworthiness. The delegates also undertook a peer review process of the paper and completed an evaluation instrument to give me feedback on the paper I presented. I subsequently wrote a paper “Digital memory box as a tool for reflexivity in researching leadership practice” which was published in the Educational Research Journal for Social Change, a peer reviewed journal (see Appendix 1). These contributions have been put out to expand the knowledge base in educational leadership and will offer an alternative way for scholars to research and explore this discipline. These public offerings will encourage debate and open up alternate pathways in leadership discourse.

In the next section I discuss the methods that I used to generate data.

## **3.4 METHODS**

I used the self-study methods of personal history narrative and memory work to generate data in the form of the myriad puzzle pieces that made up who I was and what I was doing as a leader. This is consistent with Samaras’s (2011) view that the methods that are chosen depend on what is being understood and how the method used will result in that understanding. These methods

were used to explore how my personal experience, history, culture and leadership practice have shaped my identity as a leader.

### **3.4.1 Personal history**

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 14) suggest, “problems must prescribe methods.” In this study I used personal history self-study narrative approach to “reconstruct significant life events” and explored who I am and how I have come to be who I am (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 906). Personal history is concerned with the personal and historical life experiences that relate both to personal and professional meaning and I take these to be “those formative, contextualized experiences” that have influenced my thinking about leading (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 909). This approach has helped me to understand my professional identity and has given me the impetus to engage in reflection and thus explore events and experiences while at the same time promoting a deeper learning of my self and my work. Samaras (2007) believes that personal identity influences practice and the hidden narratives embedded in personal history can “awaken and educate the self” (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 909).

Gadamer (2008) argues that our past significantly impacts on our future and it has an influence in “everything we want, hope for, or fear in the future” and goes on to say that because we are “possessed” by the past “we are opened up for the new, the different, the true” (Gadamer, 2008, p. 9). Krall (1988) in justifying that personal history is an effective research method, is of the view that it enhances analytical and interpretive skills to advance self-awareness. I believed that by exploring my personal history I would be able to gain insights into the person I have become and by critically examining the experiences and influences I would be able to transform my practice. However, Sharkey (2004) observes that this approach can be problematic if it does not move beyond the uncritical celebration of stories and if the narrative enquiry does not question assumptions but continues to reinforce the dominant oppressive ideologies. Sharkey (2004) and Ezer (2009) therefore look at personal history as a critical autobiography, which in the form of self-study transforms the researcher through the interpretation of lived experiences.

By addressing the “multiple selves, the never-ending, complex, and incomplete self” my personal history explored the “surprises, failings, contradictions and desire to know relevant to a particular space and time” (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 911). This approach forced me to interrogate

“insecurities, revealing bad habits and dangerous biases, recognizing [my] own mediocrity, immaturity, [and] obsessive need to control” (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 911). I agree with Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2001, p. 20) conclusion that self-studies “provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle”. In writing my personal history I was challenged to move away from romanticism, narcissism and solipsism and looked for explanations about my practice from different perspectives and through a critical lens. This was difficult as I was conscious that the story had to be credible and that my weaknesses, lapses, and errors in judgment would surface. However I took comfort from the fact that the past would serve me well and that this awareness may lead to improvement.

I co-constructed my personal history narrative with research participants in a collaborative inquiry. This allowed for multiple perspectives and multiple interpretations to surface and gave me the opportunity to “disrobe, unveil and engage in a soul-searching truth about the self” as I sought alternative viewpoints (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 910). The self-knowing process of writing up my personal history narrative allowed for personal and professional growth to occur in conversations with my research mentor, research participants and critical friends. In writing up my personal history I moved beyond introspection and self-contemplation and engaged with research participants and critical friends in reflecting on the various experiences that constituted my practice. Co-flexive dialogues opened up my personal history to different interpretations. This public process of retelling, reframing and reinterpreting the past made me acutely aware of my practice. The hidden narratives of my personal history were uncovered and I was able to reconstitute the past with greater clarity and mitigated the self-bias, which could have slipped into narcissism.

In this study I examined my leadership practice through personal history narrative and memory work in different contexts and time periods where the experiences challenged me and stimulated leadership growth. I explored my practice in relation to others and closely looked at the political, social and cultural contexts in which we worked. Samaras (2007) cautions against mere story telling and urges researchers to be mindful of social, historical and cultural contexts whose influence has a strong bearing on the construction of the self. I was mindful of this as I wrote up my personal history narrative and highlighted the tensions, ambivalences, dilemmas and

mistakes that I made in enacting leadership. I problematised and interrogated the issues to unveil hidden dimensions and allowed for these new reframed perspectives to stimulate growth in my practice.

### ***3.4.1.1 Personal history framework***

In writing up my personal history narrative I followed Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001, pp. 16-20) "Guidelines for Quality in Autobiographical Forms of Self-Study Research".

#### "Guideline 1: Autobiographical self-studies should ring true and enable connection"

An affinity must develop between the reader and writer as they engage with issues. In my self-study I share my trials and tribulations and moments of joy as I explore my leadership practice and in doing so difficult and complex situations are revealed. I anticipate that the reader will not only find the story line interesting but will draw some inspiration to examine their practice in a similar way.

#### Guideline 2: Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation

In my personal history narrative I tried to move beyond the story and critically reflected on my practice through co-constructing my narrative (see Chapters Four and Chapter Five, pp. 77-139), deconstructing and re-interpreting texts (see Chapters Six, Seven and Eight) in my nodal moments. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 16) observe, "this pattern must be portrayed in a way that engages readers in a genuine act of seeing the essential wholeness of life, the connections of nodal moments." My intention was not only to recognise patterns but to disrupt them if they came in the way of effective leadership.

#### "Guideline 3: Autobiographical self-study research must engage history forthrightly and the author must take an honest stand."

Challenges, self-efficacy questioning and dilemmas in my leadership practice led to an existential crisis as I grappled with issues of authenticity and integrity. The impetus for this study came from a very trying time in my leadership practice and I was looking for explanations

as well as solutions to lead more effectively. Contradictions, dilemmas, tensions, and disappointments surfaced; a risk that made me feel uneasy. In this study personal history narrative gave me the opportunity to honestly reflect on my leadership practice and soul search for truth “while also engaging in critical conversations, and most importantly, continuing to discover the alternative viewpoints of others” (Samaras et al., 2007, p. 910).

“Guideline 4: Biographical and autobiographical self-studies in [leadership and management]<sup>1</sup> are about the problems and issues that make someone a [leader]”

In my narrative I explored the terrain of my leadership practice and looked at the issues that leaders in educational settings also grapple with. Fundamental aspects of leadership and management practice are covered in my self-study and this includes the nexus between leadership and management, challenges in influencing followers, leadership style, crafting and popularising a vision, values, principles and ethics, inspiring and motivating followers, change management, conflict management and achieving organizational goals and outcomes.

“Guideline 5: Authentic voice is necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study.”

Samaras (personal communication, 21 July 2014) has made it clear that that telling the story is not enough and the “so what” question needs to be continuously asked if the study is to meet the rigours of being a scholarly work. In my self-study I have been transparent in the way that the data was generated and analysed and my voice was mediated when I engaged with my research mentor, research participants and critical friends. Going public with my work through a presentation and publication provided an opportunity for me to test work in progress as other scholars offered critique (see section 3.3.1.5, p. 50).

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<sup>1</sup> The words in parenthesis were inserted to adapt the guidelines for my context.

“Guideline 6: The autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other.”

I made a conscious effort to avoid the traps of solipsism, romanticism and narcissism and cherished the ideal that my work would inspire other leaders grappling with serious challenges in their practice to examine themselves in a reflexive mode. I noted weaknesses in my leadership practice and am hopeful that other leaders would also see the benefits of engaging in reflexive work. Through a presentation and publication (see section 3.3.1.5, p. 50) I provided an exemplar for others in leadership and management to critically engage with as they seek understanding and meaning of their practice in their quest for improvement.

“Guideline 7: Powerful autobiographical self-studies portray character development and include dramatic action: Something genuine is at stake in the story.”

My personal history is written in a narrative form to portray the nodal moments (see Chapter Four and Chapter Five) in a manner that grips the reader’s attention because it rings true. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 16) are of the view that personal histories that are emotionally charged in aesthetically engaging ways are “unfortunately rare.” My narrative is consistent with Bullough and Pinnegar’s expectations. Nevertheless I have sought to reveal something of my character, moods, feelings and anxieties as the protagonist in the narrative. The artefacts that enhance the story line make up for what is lacking in the written text.

“Guideline 8: Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting.”

The social, historical and cultural contexts are just as important as the protagonist in a good autobiography. In my narrative I described the contexts and other persons in fair detail so as to create a closer connection with the reader. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) suggest that autobiographical self-studies include the elements of scene, situation and action in addition to that of the protagonist.

### Guideline 9: Quality autobiographical self-studies offer fresh perspectives on established truths

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 18) once again caution against the “romantic hero” and advise self-study autobiographers to resist the temptation of writing self-serving stories. I consciously wrote my personal history to critique my leadership practice and to uncover “truths”, so that my practice improves. I problematised and troubled my text so that my idiosyncrasies and inadequacies surfaced. The critical paradigm, which I used as metatheory, looks for oppressive discourses and interrogates power issues to allow for emancipation and transformation of practice. I found affinity with Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2001) notion of the ironic hero story which they describe as a narrative that focuses on the “failed, the difficult, and the problematic and which does not require the tragic end or the heroic romantic return.” This is evident in the narrative (see Chapter Five, p. 130) where I describe my directorship of SAISSE.

#### ***3.4.1.2 Nodal moments***

I selected key nodal moments, which shaped my being as focus areas for exploration in this self-study. Graham (1989, p. 16) explains nodal moments as a moment where “the course of life is seen to have connecting lines that were previously hidden, a new direction becomes clear where only wandering existed before.” He goes on further to state those moments of crises, difficult times and wrenching moments produce patterns as the experience is reconstructed. There are many such moments in my life and on looking back I observed patterns and can see that my “past life is therefore being rearranged ... retrospectively interpreted, in terms of the meaning that life is now seen to hold” (Graham, 1989, pp. 98-99). Tidwell (2006) explains nodal points as having a centre from which other subsidiary parts originate and are nodes in time. In this study I used nodal moments to describe experiences that have shaped the multiple and dynamic selves that makes up my personal and professional identity. I used nodal moments as a frame to know and understand my leadership practice and the data generated from the nodal moments presented me with opportunities to explore the social, historical and cultural contexts to achieve the key goal of self-study (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2006).

Nodal moments are sometimes described as critical events or incidents. According to Sikes, Measor & Woods (1985, p. 57) critical incidents are “key events in an individual’s life, and around which pivotal decisions revolve. They provoke the individual into selecting particular

kinds of actions, which lead in particular directions.” For Strauss (1997, p. 95) these critical incidents represent a turning point in the “onward movement of personal careers” and at this point the individual realises that “I am not the same as I was, as I used to be”. In authentic leadership theory, which is discussed in Chapter Two (see p. 26), trigger events are viewed as antecedents that precipitate leadership development. For the purposes of this study I identified four such nodal moments that provided insights into my being as it changed as well as the influence that it brought to bear on my leadership practice.

The nodal moments are:

- i. Founding member and chairperson of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled that was established in 1987.
- ii. Experiences as a Superintendent of Education (Management) of the Richmond Ward from 1997 to 2000.
- iii. Materials developer, facilitator, mentor and coach for developing capacity of school management teams from 2001- to date.
- iv. Leadership practice as the director of SAISSE from 2010 up to March 2013.

The nodal moments were reconstructed in my personal history narrative through memory work and artefacts such as photographs, newspaper clippings and publications. Research participants identified in each of the nodal moments worked with me to remember experiences.

### **3.4.2 Memory work**

In writing my personal history narrative I used memory work as a self-study method to recall, reconstruct and re-view experiences of the past that contributed to the formation of my personal and professional self/selves. I used artefacts such as photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, emails and video clips which were representative of my personal and professional self/selves and used them to act as memory prompts to re-member events, evoke memory and emotion. According to O’Reilly-Scanlon (2002) “prompts such as music, photographs, sounds, narratives, colours and smells may help to invoke memories and the remembering process.”

Roberts (2011) states that visual materials like photographs can be used to stimulate memories and help others to understand and experience the moment. Manke and Allender (2006, p. 249) argue in similar vein that artefacts in self-study are important because it contributes to the “revealing nature of the self” and that “opens evocative methodological paths.” “It is used to represent autobiographical inquiry with critical and reflective revisiting” (Samaras, 2011, p. 101).

On gathering the artefacts I found myself reminiscing as I started to re-build connections with the past and started to reflect on the way I have changed and grown. I felt emotions of satisfaction and joy as I reminisced over projects that were successfully completed and slipped in to despair and despondency when I recollected experiences that were painful and where I failed. It brought to the surface thoughts, memories and emotions that have shaped my personal and professional self and explained why I held certain assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and values. I was troubled with what I remembered and chose to remember and I found resonance with Bochner’s (2007, p. 198) words, “I want to be faithful to the past, but what I remember of my history is anchored by what summons me now to remember, and my memory is, in part, a response to what inspired my recollections.”

As I re-viewed the artefacts I asked myself questions of why I remembered the experience in this particular way and not differently, why did I feel this way when I looked at the artefact, what did I leave out or forget about the experience and what were the blanks and silences. What we remember, what we forget, what we bring to the foreground and what we relegate to the background and who we remember and why provides cues to the way we think now (O’Reilly-Scanlon, 2002; Weber & Mitchell, 2002). Thus the goal of memory work is to make sense of the past through interrogation and to render it usable in future as it influences “the construction of our identities, our current thinking, and our future behaviour” and offers insight into how we have become who and what we are and why and generates questions as we learn about our selves (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 843). Accuracy of memory is not assumed (Weber & Mitchell, 2002) however this does not detract from its usefulness in understanding the fluid self though the shifting sands of time.

Roberts (2011) states that just as images can be physically edited using technology to crop, enhance the light, adjust contrast and use filters, the mind also edits photographs in a similar way. As I looked at my artefacts I found myself cropping certain parts as I concentrated on what I wished to see. People, thoughts and emotions were thus filtered as I reconstructed what the self-wished to see in the artefact. I interpreted the artefacts and observed how I looked then, how I have changed, how similar or dissimilar my thinking is, how did I do that, what if I did things differently and fantasised about endings that are quite different from the ones that played out. Questions of who I am, what I was and who and what I could be puzzled me as I looked at the artefacts. Robert's (2011) goes on to use photography as an analogy to further explain the interpretation process.

The photograph that I saw in front of me was an image that mirrored reality, which is to say that I recognised myself, others, and saw other elements that put the photograph into context. This is the initial description of the image, which is still to be seen, where meaning, and interpretation has not yet occurred. At times when I looked at the photograph it was as if I was looking through an opaque screen that prevented me from seeing more in the picture as I struggled to unearth memories that are obscured and hidden as the present self protects and hides it. When I looked at other photographs it sometimes felt as if I was looking through a window, as the image opened up new possibilities and fantasies of what might be carried me beyond. At other times a filter of “frostiness or cloudiness” permeated and my memory was hazy and unclear (Roberts, 2011, p. 14). Sometimes I got to see bits and pieces as the memory was unclear and the complete picture was elusive as if I was looking through a veil or beaded curtain. As I looked deeply and reflected I found myself using a magnifying glass to “blow up” parts to make sense of what I was looking at and searched for clues that told me something about myself and my leadership practice. The mirror image which was a simple “anticipated, unreflexive truth” gave way to a “deeper self-observation” with a “questioning or search for self” (Roberts, 2011, pp. 14-15).

### ***3.4.2.1 A framework to analyse memories***

O'Reilly-Scanlon (2002) offers a useful framework to analyse memories. I made minor revisions to suit my context.

- Who else might remember this incident? How might they remember it?
- Who else may have experienced the same thing? Is this memory connected to the experiences of others?
- Who is represented?
- Who is not represented?
- What kind of effect could this memory have? Why?
- Why do you think this incident was remembered?
- In the memory-in-narrative, are there issues related to Class? Culture? Gender? Language? Race? Disability? Power? If so what are they?
- Does the memory-in-narrative contain any clichés? If so, what are they? What do the clichés appear to take for granted and/or assume?

### ***3.4.2.2 Digital memory box***

I gathered a number of artefacts to write up my personal history narrative. Instead of carrying them in a scrapbook or box I scanned them and converted files to make the artefacts become digitally accessible. This now made it possible for me to create a digital memory box that showed photographs, newspaper clippings, audio and video clips from my laptop in a creative and interesting manner. It was also portable which also made it possible for me to email a presentation to one of my participants who was in the United Kingdom when I interviewed her over Skype. Hoban, (2002) argues that technology not only enhances reflection but fosters trustworthiness because it makes self-study research public. However, the digital memory box had a limitation in that the research participants could not hold it and use their tactile sense as well to trigger off memories.

I selected what I thought was appropriate and relevant and created a slideshow with appropriate music for each of the nodal moments. I involved the research participants by including photographs and documents that depicted them as well. My research participants felt the reconnection and said that it evoked strong emotional responses and triggered memories and associations. The short presentation contextualised my study and served as a prompt for the questions that followed. It helped the participants to get a feel for the nodal moment as it carried them back in time. “The digital memory box as a tool for reflexivity in researching leadership practice” (see Appendix 1) is an article that was published and offered insights on how digital memory boxes were used to examine my leadership practice.

### **3.5 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

I conducted semi-structured interviews with my research participants using an interview schedule. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 421) describe a semi-structured interview as “where topics and open-ended questions are written but the exact sequence and wording does not have to be followed with each respondent.” As Kvale and Brinkman (2008) describe the process of semi-structured interviews, I developed an outline of topics with suggested questions to explore the nodal moments. The questions served as prompts for the interview and were designed to get the participants to focus on issues that I thought were important. However, the questions were open-ended and offered the participants numerous opportunities to articulate their thoughts in the way they wished and to structure their responses as they saw fit.

The questions were formulated to get the research participants to comment on my personal and professional identity, to describe the nodal moments, as they perceived it to have happened, to comment on my leadership practice and evaluate it and offer insights into how my practice could be improved. Initially I planned a generic interview schedule but before the first interview was conducted I realised that the nodal moments were unique and that every interview had to be treated differently in spite of them having certain common elements. I decided to pilot test the interview schedule with my first research participant “to identify possible snags” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 326). I found that the schedule was useful because it helped the participants to focus on the key aspects and it was flexible enough for me to zone into a particular issue and to probe further. The pilot interview gave me the opportunity to step back and reflect and make revisions

based on my experience (Seidman, 2012). After the pilot test I changed the order of a question so that the interview could flow and lead from one area to another without disruption. I decided to omit three questions in the second part of the schedule where the participants were asked to make a global assessment of my leadership practice as the participants addressed these earlier when they reflected on earlier nodal moments.

I conducted a single face-to-face interview for approximately one hour with each of the five participants. Seidman (2012) argues that face-to-face interviews allow for spontaneity and allows the interviewer to reshape their questions easily. The interviews were conducted in locations that were comfortable, and free from interruptions and distractions at the participants home, work office and at quiet restaurants. I recorded the interviews and then transcribed them and then had the participants to check them for accuracy and asked them to make revisions. As I conducted my research I was consciously aware of my ethical responsibility towards my research participants and collaborated with them in ways that respected their worth and dignity and acted in ways to protect them from any physical or emotional stress. Informed consent, transparency, confidentiality and the opportunity to withdraw anytime from the study without prejudice formed the basis of my ethical obligation (Samaras, 2011). I assured the participants that I would send them the transcripts to check for accuracy and gave them the opportunity to review my personal history narrative, which contained excerpts from the interviews.

### **3.5.1 Research participants**

In addition to writing up my personal history narrative using memory work, I purposively selected research participants to generate data for each of the nodal moments that were identified (see p. 56). Cohen et al. (2011, p. 157) explain purposive sampling as accessing “knowledgeable people, i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience.” I selected the participants because they worked very closely with me and were able to observe me intently as we collaborated. I believed that they could speak authentically about my leadership practice from first-hand experience. This is consistent with Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 40) who are of the view that purposive sampling “increases the scope or range of data exposed ... as well as the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered.” My self-study research design sought to answer questions about my leadership practice and myself and I had

no intentions of generalising my findings, hence the limitation of purposive sampling was not an issue.

I collaborated with my research participants to remember events, experiences and people that I had forgotten about and for my research participants to give me perspectives to consider in writing my personal history narrative. They helped me to reconstruct the particular nodal moment, reflect on my leadership practice and offered insights on how my practice could be improved. Samaras (2011, p. 5) stresses that collaboration underpins self-study because of the interconnectedness and relationships that exist and states “self-study research builds on the necessity of a relationship between individual and collective cognition.” My research participants made me see issues from different perspectives, challenged the assumptions that I made about my practice, and revealed inconsistencies (LaBoskey, 2004, p). Samaras (2011) posits that collecting data from multiple sources helps to crosscheck and enhance trustworthiness in a self-study.

The choice of research participants was an easy one for me because they were intimately involved in the projects we collaborated in and they were able to closely observe my leadership practice over a period of time. Three of the participants were females and the other two were males and their ages ranged from 50 to 70 and they are well established in their careers with oldest male having retired. All five are educators, two of whom were former school principals, one is a project leader who has worked in local and international educational interventions, another is a successful financial advisor and one of the participants is a senior administrator in government. In this study I used the participants’ actual names and they gave me written informed consent to use their photographs as well in this study (see Appendix 3 for an example of written consent).

I have known Pravin Thakur since the late 1970’s when we met at university and later we collaborated as novice teachers. We taught together at the same school for a few years and he served as the secretary of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled for a long time. He obtained his Ph. D. degree and thereafter resigned from teaching. He is now a very successful financial advisor. He is meticulous with records and has an analytical mind and is sober in his

judgement. I met Bowie Pillay in December 1985 when she worked as a nursing educator at the hospital that I was admitted to when I met with that life altering and life defining motor accident, which I described in Chapter Four (see p. 95). Since then Bowie has climbed the rungs of administration in public health care and is now a deputy director. Bowie served in SAISSE as an executive member and she had intimate knowledge of the issues on hand. She is driven by the passion to serve and she is a sharp, lucid thinker and an accomplished strategist. Gill Bruyns was the principal of a school in the Richmond ward and she served on the executive committee of the Masakhxolo Education Resource Centre. Gill is articulate and speaks her mind and has a head for details. Her commitment and drive significantly contributed to the successful completion of the Resource Centre. After her retirement she took up a teaching post in Britain.

I met Wendy Heard a former teacher at the non-governmental organization meetings that I attended when I became a service provider. I worked very closely with her on two different projects that ran almost six years. As a project manger she is exceptional and has the ability to deliver on difficult projects because of her leadership abilities. Se is an administrator second to none and produces reports that are filled with information that are easy to digest and process. I also had the good fortune of meeting Clive Waddy, a former principal and SEM when we worked very closely on three projects designed to build the capacity of school leaders and managers. His expertise and vast educational experience were quite clear as we collaborated in producing school governance and school management training materials. His wisdom and insight coupled with his highly structured and methodical way of working made him a formidable member in the team.

### **3.6 ENGAGEMENT WITH A RESEARCH MENTOR AND CRITICAL FRIENDS**

Earlier in this chapter I described the five-foci framework (see p. 48) that I adapted from Samaras (2011) to guide the research design of my self-study and explained the involvement of my research mentor and my critical friends group (CFG), which is the second foci “Critical Collaborative inquiry”. In his role as my research mentor and dialogical partner, Inba Naicker consistently made me aware of the role I played as a researcher and the one who was researched. He often questioned my beliefs and values and the extent to which I brought these into play in

researching my leadership practice. This excerpt of a conversation that we had, illustrates the reflexive process that we engaged in.

Inba: Tell me, how did you select the artefacts for the digital memory boxes?

Sagie: I looked at the documents, photographs, and newspaper clippings and selected what I thought was relevant for each nodal experience.

Inba: Were there any other considerations?

Sagie: I also chose artefacts that I thought the research participants could relate to and included those in which they were depicted.

Inba: How would you respond, if I said that you were engineering the process so that the participants recalled what you wanted them to remember about your leadership practice?

Sagie: I didn't see it in this way . . . You have a point, the participants' recollection of events could be influenced.

Inba: How would you accommodate for this limitation?

Sagie: Perhaps I could ask open-ended questions to get the participants to speak about events, experiences, or memories that I did not include in the memory box.

The following table reflects some of the issues that my critical friends have engaged with me as I opened up my study for critique. In Table 2, I list the aspect of my work in progress and the forum that I engaged with my CFG, the issues that were raised and the changes that I instituted as a result of my critical friends' alternate perspectives, guidance and suggestions.

**Table 2: Record of engagement with Critical Friends Group**

<b>CFG Forums</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Shift/Change/Insights</b>
<p>Interview with Anastasia Samaras &amp; Mieke Lunenberg, visiting academics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research focus and critical questions</li> <li>• Autoethnography or self-study</li> <li>• Value of study to others?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is it that I want to research? Greater clarity on research question</li> <li>• Research questions to drive methodology - Hence, I shifted to self-study for practice improvement</li> <li>• Move beyond self. Look for opportunities to contribute to the field of leadership and management</li> </ul>
<p>Presentation of research proposal to CFG and visiting academics: Marion Naidoo, Shaun Naidoo &amp; Joan Walton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why the question of "Who am I as a leader?"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relooked at the critical question "Who am I as a leader?" This reflected positional identity. Revised question to "Who am I?" which includes leadership</li> </ul>

CFG Forums	Issue	Shift/Change/Insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter outlines &amp; thesis structure</li>   <li>• Why foreground spirituality?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was boxed in with chapter outlines. Look at the rationale for the study and write up personal history narrative in a free flow write mode</li> <li>• Spirituality pervades self, so it will come out without advocacy. No longer foregrounded spirituality</li> </ul>
<p>Presentation to CFG on writing up my personal history narrative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges in writing up personal history narrative</li>   <li>• Appropriateness of Theory U and my self-study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More comfortable with critique. Saw opportunities and implications for growth and shift</li> <li>• Clarified nodal moments and why they were selected</li> <li>• Factor in that personal history is not only about the past and could look at present issues</li> <li>• Changed theoretical framework to authentic leadership self/selves</li> </ul>

<b>CFG Forums</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Shift/Change/Insights</b>
Presentation to CFG on Digital Memory Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was selection made?</li> <li>• Were the research participants guided to remember certain experiences?</li> <li>• How to get participants to open up and be honest?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use semi-structured interview to allow participants space to comment on other issues</li> <li>• Awareness of “engineered” responses</li> <li>• Possibility of getting participants to anonymously give me feedback on sensitive aspects</li> <li>• Explore PDF of thesis with keys to action videos and audio</li> </ul>
Presentation to CFG on Data analysis plan and thesis structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Free standing literature chapter or integration</li> <li>• Data analysis approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift from free standing literature review chapter to integrating it in the study</li> <li>• Analyse data in chapters organised per research question</li> <li>• Present data and analyse using a split frame approach</li> </ul>

CFG Forums	Issue	Shift/Change/Insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter Outlines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present personal history narrative as a chapter integrating data from research participants and artefacts</li> </ul>
<p>Presentation to 2nd Annual Postgraduate Research Colloquium of the College of Humanities of the University of KwaZulu-Natal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Study as a methodology was new to most of the delegates and they expressed interest in the methodology</li> <li>• Concern about trustworthiness</li> <li>• Role of critical friends versus research participants needed clarification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore limitations of theories</li> <li>• Use self-reflection &amp; self-analysis to consider issues that research participants did not talk about</li> <li>• Consider other ways to get data that did not come through</li> </ul>
<p>Interview with Peter Taylor, visiting academic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using multiple paradigms and quality standards in self-study research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Validated my decision to adopt an interpretivist/critical research stance</li> <li>• Enhance trustworthiness by adopting quality standards</li> </ul>



CFG Forums	Issue	Shift/Change/Insights
<p>Presentation to CFG on data analysis based on the question “who am I?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagram which reflected multiple nature of selves</li> <li>• Sustaining the puzzle metaphor</li> <li>• Deductions and inferences not linked to the evidence</li> <li>• Coming to conclusions too quickly</li> <li>• Disconnect between personal self and leader self</li> <li>• Assumption that leadership has evolved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review diagram as it appears to be static</li> <li>• Weave in puzzle metaphor in understanding the self</li> <li>• Deductions and inferences must be evidence based and avoid coming to quick conclusions</li> <li>• Reconsider critical questions. Added a question “Who am I as a leader?” Substituted question on leadership evolution with “Why do I lead in the way I do?”</li> </ul>
<p>Presentation to CFG on insights for improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the study extend the field of leadership and management?</li> <li>• Messiness, contradictions and tensions instead of finite conclusions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how other leaders reading this study would draw from it to improve their practice. How would the field be extended?</li> </ul>

CFG Forums	Issue	Shift/Change/Insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notion of ideal leader vs. the good enough leader</li> <li>• Aesthetic and emotive dimension of writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on the new leader selves that have emerged</li> <li>• Use the puzzle metaphor to show the incompleteness and complexities</li> </ul>

### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

The interpretivist and critical research paradigms, which I described earlier in this chapter, (see pp. 42) influenced the manner in which I analysed the data. In addition to the paradigmatic lenses, I used the authentic leader self/selves theoretical framework to interrogate the data. I adopted an inductive approach where theory emerged from the data as the inquiry proceeded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When I read my co-constructed personal history narrative I made notes of sections that were relevant to my research goals and looked for texts that could help answer my research questions. As I worked with the data from my personal history narrative I discerned certain themes and patterns and coded these as possible units of analysis. Reading and re-reading my personal history narrative gave me new perspectives and nuances that I missed.

As I used multiple methods to generate data from a variety of sources I felt that a computer based software package such as Nvivo would be useful in storing the data and assigning codes to run queries when I developed themes and categories. The research questions of my identity, leadership practice and leadership improvement guided the data analysis. The themes that arose out of the analysis were then associated with the research questions. In processing the data I provided a brief description and then discussed my inferences and deductions. Finally, I provided interpretations and reflected on my findings. The authentic leader self/selves theoretical framework (see p. 39) and literature was used to corroborate or refute my findings.

### **3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

I concur with Pithouse's (2007, p. 27) assessment that "small-scale, qualitative inquiries into lived educational experience evolve within and in response to unique, contingent, and shifting situations and relationships, the methodological soundness of these studies cannot be 'tested' by being replicated by other researchers". I therefore believe that my narrative self-study stance cannot be compared to inquiries conducted using the positivist paradigm as my study is unique and specific and therefore generalisations that are universal and definitive may not be possible. Nevertheless, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 247) caution that just as conventional researchers must ensure that their work meets requirements to be deemed valid, reliable and objective, "so must the naturalistic inquirer arrange for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability." For Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) this is trustworthiness, which they describe as the ability to persuade others that the work is "worth paying attention to", in other words it is deemed to meet the scholarly standards of rigour and robustness. In my narrative self-inquiry I was conscious of the criticism that is levelled at self-study practitioners for solipsism, romanticism and narcissism (Samaras, 2011) and I took steps to build trustworthiness into my research design. I worked with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends to interrogate my personal history narrative and the judgments I made about my leadership practice and myself.

Scholars in self-study have drawn on the work of Mishler (1990) to make claims of legitimacy for inquiry based reflexive work and use constructs similar to those of Lincoln and Guba (1985) to explain trustworthiness. Mishler (1990, p. 437) introduces the notion of exemplars to explain trustworthiness and states that the researcher must make the text available for other scholars to examine it and "assess the adequacy with which the methods and interpretations represent the data." With this information, other researchers can make judgment of trustworthiness and "decide whether or not to depend on them for further work" (Mishler, 1990, p. 438). In this study I explained how I generated the data (see p. 10), how I have analysed the data sets (see p. 72; pp. 141-206) and how I have come to the conclusions that I make (see pp. 211-222), thus making my exemplar available for validation. In my self-study I communicated the research process as well as my findings in private forums (Critical Friends Group, see pp. 66-72) and in scholarly spaces (conferences and in papers, see p. 50). In a similar way Craig (2008, p. 22)

explains trustworthiness as “ a way to ground self-study researcher’s claims to knowing and doing” as they engage in understanding, interpreting and reflecting on self-practice.

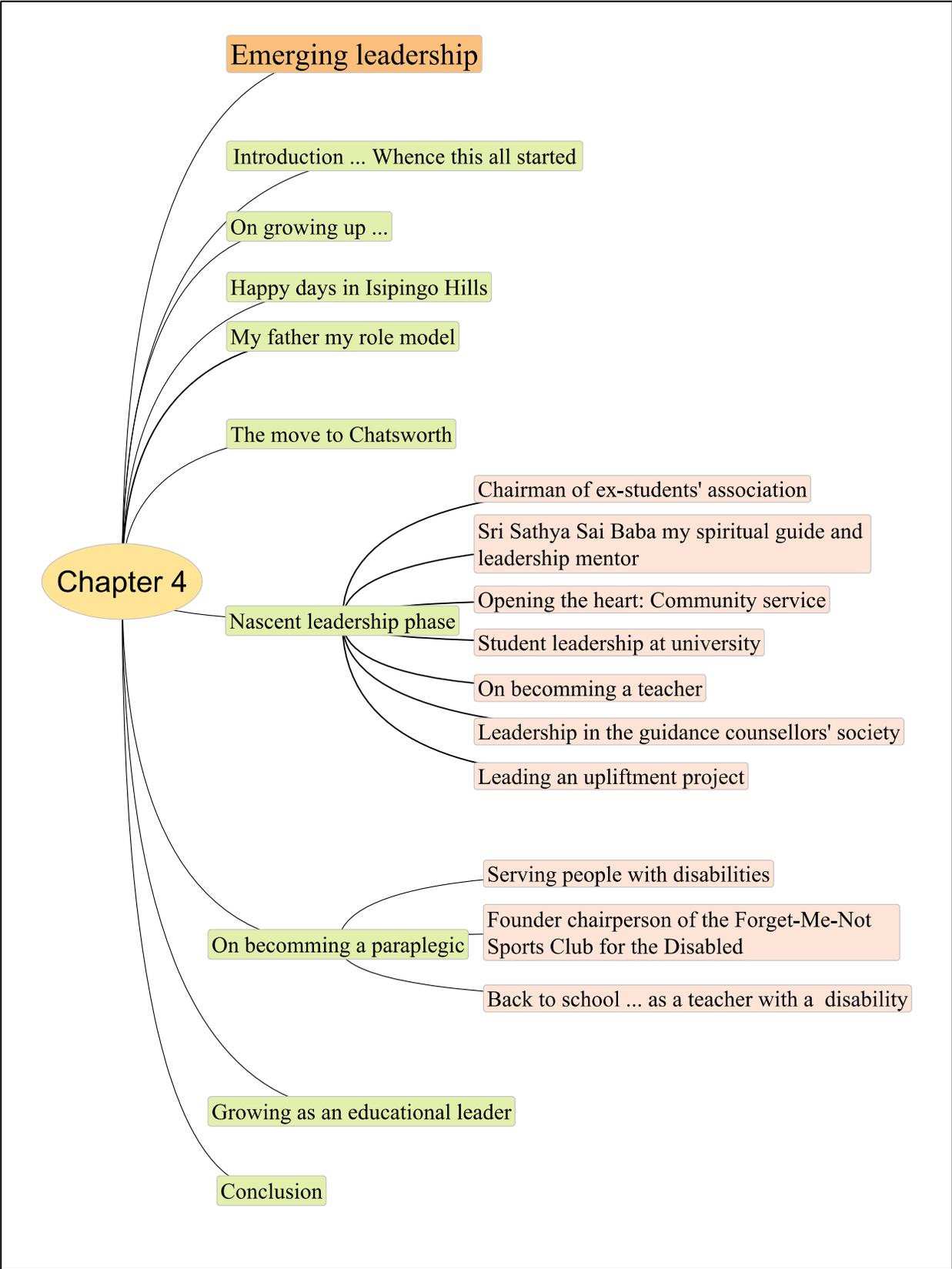
Samaras (2011) addresses the issues of transparency, validation and trustworthiness in self-study and argues that quality in self-study is established through data generated from different sources using multiple methods cross-checked with critical friends. Similarly, I have used personal history narrative, memory work, semi-structured interviews, artefacts, a research mentor and critical friends to generate and analyse data from “varied sources and perspectives” (Samaras, 2011, p. 226). The second foci of my research design indicated that a transparent and clear route, which accurately documents the research process through dialogue and critique must be followed. Table 1 in Chapter One (see p. 10) and Table Two in this chapter (see p. 66) reveal the research processes that I followed as well as the engagements that I had with my critical friends group. I also disclosed how I followed Bullough and Pinnegar’s (2001) guidelines to co-construct my personal history narrative and O’Reilly-Scanlon’s (2002) framework to guide memory work. Thus through transparency and subjecting my work to critique, I demonstrate that my work is “well founded, just and can be trusted” (Feldman, 2003, p. 28).

Richardson (1997) introduces the crystal metaphor to show how data can be examined from a variety of angles. According to Richardson (1997, p. 92) “Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different clots, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose.” Phillips and Carr (2010) state that the use of the crystal metaphor enhances and extends triangulation and reveals complexities. Working with a research mentor, critical friends and research participants created a similar prism effect for me as they reflected and refracted my perspectives, understanding and interpretations (Samaras, 2011). I found the crystal metaphor useful in enhancing trustworthiness as it brought the different facets of my study to light; “ the interweaving of processes in the research: discovery, seeing, telling, storying, [and] representation” (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 122).

### **3.9 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have revealed the paradigms that I have used as well as the research methodology for my study. The critical research questions that I sought answers for in respect of who I am and what I am doing as a leader, informed the choice of methodology. Self-study as research genre was explained and the notion that it is solely about the self was dismissed as the role of a research mentor, critical friends and research participants were revealed. The methods of personal history and memory work were discussed as the principal means that I used to discover the different pieces that made up my personal and leader self/selves. I showed how I co-constructed my personal history narrative around key nodal moments using artefacts and interviews with research participants. I also explained trustworthiness and the steps I took to ensure that the integrity and rigours of academic robustness were followed in this study. In the next chapter I present my personal history narrative, which I co-constructed with my research participants following the guidelines of Bullough and Pinnegar (2001).

Figure 9: Outline of Chapter Four



# CHAPTER 4

## EMERGING LEADERSHIP

*“The past is a puzzle, like a broken mirror. As you piece it together, you cut yourself, your image keeps shifting. And you change with it. It could destroy you, drive you mad. It could set you free.”*

Paritoshik Sharma

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION ... WHENCE THIS ALL STARTED

At the peak of my career as an educational and community leader I reached a critical crossroad like the traveller in Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken.” History will tell if I had indeed taken the road less travelled and whether the fork I chose to take was a good decision. I was committed to my duties as the director of SAISSE as I believed that the model of education in human values was desperately needed at a time when values and ethics were threatened. SAISSE was in the middle of a transformational programme that sought to turn the Sathya Sai Schools in South Africa around and create models of excellence. However, the transformational measures were resisted and micro politics created tensions as I faced enormous pressure and stress. I began to question whether I had the skills and knowledge to lead principals, teachers, parents and members of the School Governing Body (SGB) and SAISSE to deliver on a programme that I was passionate about and committed to. I wrestled with my conscience as I tossed and turned in my sleep. I felt I was sinking in quick sand. In this frame of mind I had conflicting conversations with my selves.

Self 1: “I feel like throwing in the towel and quitting.”

Self 2: “But there is so much more work that needs to be accomplished and if you quit,  
It will set the programme back.”

Self 1: “I am tired of all the negativity and stress and am not sure how this will end.”

Self 3: “You are giving up too easily. You are a quitter!”

Self 1: No I am not!

Challenges, self-efficacy questioning and dilemmas in my leadership practice led to an existential crisis as I grappled with issues of authenticity and integrity. The intense discomfort that I felt, forced me to closely hold up the mirror and question, “who I am” and what I am doing? I drew inspiration from Sri Sathya Sai Baba who quoted Alexander Pope, the English poet and philosopher “The proper study of mankind is man”. This provided the incentive for me to withdraw from the outer world and look within myself for answers to issues that perplexed and puzzled me. The existential crisis that I experienced inevitably led me to exploring notions of the self and who I really was as I struggled to make sense of my leadership practice. Dale Wimbrow’s poem captures my ambivalence, hesitancy and discomfort as I examined my self.

### **The Guy in the Glass**

by Dale Wimbrow (1934)

When you get what you want in your struggle for pelf,  
And the world makes you King for a day,  
Then go to the mirror and look at yourself,  
And see what that guy has to say.

For it isn't your Father, or Mother, or Wife,  
Who judgment upon you must pass.  
The feller whose verdict counts most in your life  
Is the guy staring back from the glass.

He's the feller to please, never mind all the rest,  
For he's with you clear up to the end,  
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test  
If the guy in the glass is your friend.

You may be like Jack Horner and "chisel" a plum,  
And think you're a wonderful guy,  
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum  
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

You can fool the whole world down the pathway of years,  
And get pats on the back as you pass,  
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears  
If you've cheated the guy in the glass.



**Figure 10: The Guy in the glass**

## **4.2 ON GROWING UP ...**

It is best that I start at the beginning so that my early childhood experiences and early life history are explored to put my leadership development into context.

The Christmas holiday festivities in the Naicker extended family home in Cato Manor carried on into early January with my arrival on 9th January 1959. I have such vivid memories of my early childhood. As the first-born child I was doted upon and had a lot of attention from my parents. Of course being the only child and son had certain distinctive advantages. I remember my parents telling me that I was very fortunate to have been spoiled with so many toys. I had a tricycle and a pedal push car, which were the joys of my life as I scooted dangerously around the house in a make-belief world. My father worked in a shoe factory and he would often bring empty wooden cotton reels, which he then attached to a wire. I then pushed it along the house imagining that I was driving a car. He also made a self-propelling "tractor" with a cotton reel, slice of a candle, pencil and rubber band. I spent many hours watching this vehicle go by.

I was raised in the Indian patriarchal tradition and came to realise at an early age that boys enjoyed more privileges than girls. My father in particular was delighted that he had a son and did his level best to please me with as much as his limited income allowed him. I remember my father and mother teaching me nursery rhymes and telling me stories. Their applause

encouraged me when I imitated them and I learnt very quickly probably because I was given little treats to reinforce my behaviour. My father also spent a lot of time with me and I often accompanied him whenever he went to visit friends or relatives. My life as the solitary child came to an end when my sisters were born. When they grew older our games included playing housekeeping and entertaining make-believe guests. I was quite naughty and often disrupted the games much to my sisters' irritation. I was given a hiding when the mischief making got out of hand especially when my mother was disturbed. I looked forward to the time my parents left me in charge of my sisters when they went out as they sometimes gave me pocket money to buy ice lollies when the ice cream van came by or they would buy "lucky packets" for us which contained a small toy and sweets.

My father was quite different from the generation he was raised in and he believed in involving children in family activities. He often reminisced about his childhood and vowed that his children would have a voice in family matters unlike his generation. In his day he said children were seen and not heard and he felt that this practice was old fashioned. Although his earning capacity was limited it did not stop him from doing his best to see that his family was well taken care of. Our meals were very simple and we did not have a choice in what we got to eat. Friday evenings though became a treat when we eagerly awaited my father's arrival as we fixed our eyes eagerly on the oily brown bag that he carried. Often he would buy chilli bites or cakes when he was paid. We got new clothing once a year and this usually coincided with Deepavali, the Hindu festival of lights. This occasion was definitely the highlight of the year with plenty of good food, exchanges of food hampers, visits to family and friends, new clothing and of course the highlight of the evening was the fireworks display for the children. We also enjoyed the December holidays when my father was on leave and he took us to visit family and friends. However, as children we looked forward to the annual picnic at the beach.

My father tried his best to give us a better life than what he had. He reflected on the loss of his mother when he was eight years old and how his sisters raised him. When the *Group Areas Act* was enforced, my father applied for a council home in Merebank. We lived here for six years and I attended a nursery school, which was then referred to as a private school. One day one of my uncles visited my family and encouraged my father to buy a house in a newly developed

township in Isipingo. Being the adventurous and optimistic person that he was, my father quickly embraced this dream. It is not long thereafter when we moved to a big house where I had my own room. My mother was very enterprising and was good in sewing. She sewed the curtains that had prints of little sailing yachts. On some evenings I fantasized that I was on board one of the yachts and went on epic adventures with whales and pirates. My father told me the story of Treasure Island, which I read a few years later.



Memories of Merebank float back from this photograph taken in 1964, when I was 5 years old. I recall Tiny the little dog who was sadly lost at a family beach picnic, and my mother's anguish. I remember the VW combi giving my dad lots of problems and my fear when a traffic officer pulled him over. In my narrative I describe my father's authoritative parenting style.

**Figure 11: Family photograph taken in 1964**

#### **4.2.1 Happy days in isipingo hills**

Life in the new house was exciting for us children as we lived right next to a park. We spent hours playing on the swings, slides and roundabout. The boys that lived next to us were much older and I joined them playing games such as cowboys and crooks and sometimes we also played cricket. My best friend Logan used to visit and we flew kites or played with marbles. Isipingo Hills was just being developed and sometimes cows wandered onto our property. My mother encouraged us to collect the cow dung, which she said was good for the garden. Whenever, family members visited over the weekend they sometimes stayed overnight. After a good lunch and the customary much anticipated granadilla pudding that my mother made, we all got into my father's small car (I remember the Volkswagen Beetle and later the Morris Minor). He took us on an excursion showing our relatives the highlights of Isipingo Hills.

I walked almost a kilometre each day with my sister Rajes to the Isipingo Primary School, which was then a state-aided school. As we were given a very small amount of pocket money, we often stretched it by buying an ice-lolly called “pop-a-two” which we split. Later the Isipingo Hills Primary School was built and we were transferred to this school. I recollect that my parents were proud of my achievements when I came home with book prizes for being placed in the top rank in class.

#### **4.2.2 My father, my role model**

The happy days soon came to an end. My father got into financial difficulties and he could not really afford living in an area that was also so far from his work. He worked in Pinetown and the transport expenses were proving to be quite a challenge. As a charge hand in a shoe factory he did not earn that well. With limited opportunities he had reached the end of his career. He said that his luck changed when he met my mother. He started work as young man in a shoe factory and his employers saw leadership potential and they promoted him to a supervisory position. He proudly showed us the certificates that he obtained after completing supervisory courses at the then ML Sultan Technikon. In spite of his limited formal education, which was grade 8 he was articulate and demonstrated his intelligence in general knowledge matters.

He had a good grasp of the political realities of South Africa and bought the daily newspaper as well as the weekend papers. He often commented on the unfairness of apartheid and he shaped my political beliefs. I listened with awe when he recounted the days of passive resistance meetings that he attended at Currie’s Fountain, a football stadium and the resistance campaigns of the African National Congress and its ally, the Natal Indian Congress. He was also a keen sports follower and I fondly remember going with him to soccer matches and cricket matches. In those days we had no TV but I remember always seeing him with a book. Later he introduced me to the works of Ian Fleming, the author of the James Bond books and he took me to the movies when the latest 007 movies were screened. At the shoe factory where he worked, he was the chairman of the sports club and I remember his blue jacket with the embroidered monogram and matching tie that he wore with pride. In spite of my father’s achievements the reality was that we could not afford living in Isipingo Hills, a middle class suburb on his very small working class salary.

### **4.2.3 The move to Chatsworth**

My father sold the house in Isipingo Hills and we rented a tiny house in Bayview, Chatsworth. We missed the luxury of a large house and I sorely missed my friends. I was disgusted with the shower where large cockroaches lurked. This was a huge contrast to Isipingo Hills where we had a clean and modern bathroom. I was admitted to Ocean View Primary School and quickly made new friends. However, our stay here was not long as my parents found a more suitable house in Montford, Chatsworth and we moved again. I was placed in Crescent Ridge Primary School for a few months. On account of accommodation constraints the school followed a platoon system where half the school learnt outdoors in the morning and this was swapped around for the afternoon session. In a short time the Dawnridge Primary School was built and I was transferred to the new school. Again it was time to make new friends and to adjust to a new environment. My teacher encouraged us to do well and said that he was buying book prizes to award to the first three students in the class. I worked hard and won a book prize, "Hong Kong Adventure." That holiday I read the book and became immersed with the adventures of the lead character Brad Forrest as he sailed on junks and secretly entered Mainland China.

### **4.3 NASCENT LEADERSHIP PHASE**

I spent a lot of time reading whatever books I could lay my hands on. I also enjoyed watching the adventures of Robin Hood over and over again on my view master (a device in which specially prepared slides were viewed in three dimension). We then got news that my mother's sister was allocated a council house in Montford, Chatsworth and they invited us to share this house with them. The adjustments to a new neighbourhood and making new friends started all over again. It took a while getting used to living in Road 706. It was an infamously dangerous road where gangsters and thugs took delight in terrorising the locals. I was quite nervous and preferred a quiet life style and rarely ventured out at the beginning. I found it very difficult to fit into this neighbourhood and was afraid to go out onto the streets. My father had by this time enrolled me as a member in the library in Victoria Street in Durban and taught me how to take a bus and get there by myself. I enjoyed these excursions and looked forward to the trip to the library every second week as I took in the attractions of the city. At the end of my grade 6 year my parents decided that it would be best for me to be transferred to Tyburn Primary School,

which was nearer home. Tyburn Primary fortunately was the last of the seven primary schools that I attended.

Looking back I think it was a miracle how I managed not just to survive the disruptions but in some instances excelled in spite of the odds that were stacked against me. In my grade 7 year I suggested to my classmates that we contribute money to buy our teacher a farewell gift at the end of the year. My classmates bought into the idea and I took care of the administration and kept a record of the names and amount of money that was collected. On looking back I realised that this was the first project that I had initiated and led. My father took me to a leading discount store where I bought a travel alarm clock for my teacher and I remember feeling happy when I saw the surprised look on our teacher. He was a tough man to please and he did not spare the rod in class. However, this unexpected experience left him bewildered and I guess he must have regretted treating us so firmly.

At Montarena Secondary School I thankfully remained rooted and completed my high schooling in a single institution. Friendships were a lot more stable and I enjoyed playing cricket after school and during the holidays with my friends. By then a library was built in Montford and my voracious appetite for reading was fed by the twice a week visit to the library. I read all the Hal and Roger adventure books, the Billy Bunter Series, the William Series and the Three Investigators collection. I succeeded academically and was usually placed in the first three positions up to grade 10. In my grade 10 year I led a delegation to see the principal where we complained about the lack of sporting facilities and the fact that we were not taken on excursions. Nothing tangible emerged from this delegation and I was amused when the principal asked us to go to the wood work teacher and ask him to make us a bat and set of stumps.

I was selected to convene the history club and chaired several meetings to promote the subject. Towards the end of the grade 11 year I was appointed as the acting head prefect. I convened regular prefect meetings and assigned duties, which I monitored by visiting the various duty points. I made up a duty list and pinned this on a notice board every week. I was also quite outspoken about apartheid and its injustices after hearing from my father about the political meetings he attended in the 1940s and 1950s. When the British Lions toured South Africa in

1974, I was critical about them playing rugby when there was international condemnation. In my matric year I was dropped from being a head prefect and was demoted to the rank of being a prefect. I attributed this to my outspokenness. A good friend was appointed to the head prefect position and this definitely helped me cope with this disappointment.

In my matric year the 1976 student boycotts in African townships broke out and I initiated several rather minor campaigns of disobedience in our Afrikaans class. Several of my colleagues joined me as we spoke English in our Afrikaans class. The vice principal cautioned me and told me “not to cut my nose to spite my face”. One day when the vice principal who was also our history teacher came late to class, we got up to mischief and there was a lot of noise. On hearing his footsteps I dashed to the front of the class with a textbook in hand and started talking about Jan Christian Smuts, a South African Prime Minister. The vice principal walked in, summoned me to continue and sat down at the table. I nervously proceeded expecting to be stopped at any minute and admonished for being audacious to imitate a teacher. I was surprised when he asked me to stand in for him if he was late again. This incident was a prediction of times to come when I actually taught a history class as a qualified teacher.

#### **4.3.1 Chairman of ex-students’ association**

My class was the second cohort of matriculants and we decided to form an ex-students association to keep our links with our alma mater after we finished matric. I prepared a circular and obtained a list of addresses of the past students from the school. Together with a few friends we delivered over a hundred circulars inviting former students to an inaugural meeting. My father gave me a few pointers on how to conduct a meeting. In my high school years he served as the chairman of the Parent Teacher Association and he was the Chairman of the Sports Club at work, so he was experienced in leading meetings. His pleasant demeanour and calm disposition endeared people and he was held in high regard. I borrowed a book from the library on meetings and learnt about meeting procedures and the administration of clubs. Armed with this knowledge I convened the meeting and was elected as the chairperson of the Montarena Ex-Students Association. I obtained a copy of another ex-students association’s constitution and used this to draft a constitution for our society.

As the school was organising the debutante’s ball, I negotiated with the principal and told him that since an ex-students association was established it was customary for this body to organise this dance. We had no money and saw this as an opportunity to fundraise. At this time I had enrolled for a teacher-training degree at the University of Durban-Westville. In spite of this commitment I managed to find the time and together with the committee members we organised a fairly successful and profitable debutante’s ball at the Durban City Hall. We published a brochure, which contained messages from the school principal, guest of honour and myself. It was here that I acquired valuable lessons in organising activities and about leading and managing people. The committee members enjoyed organising the event and were delighted with the progress that we made. Over the next few years we accumulated a fairly large sum of money and we agreed to donate some of our funds to support an orphanage that just opened in Chatsworth in keeping with our objective to engage in social upliftment programmes.



I recall Mary (pseudonym) who was crowned as the debutante of the year and the speech that I made at the Durban City Hall. I urged the public to support our ex-students society, which was formed to serve our alma mater and society. Looking back I realise that leadership was uncomplicated and was a lot of fun then.

**Figure 12: Dancing with Mary<sup>2</sup> at Debutante’s Ball, 1978.**

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<sup>2</sup> Actual names are used in my narrative where I was able to obtain informed consent. Pseudonyms are indicated next to names where consent was not obtained. Where consent was unobtainable photographs were digitally altered to prevent identification of people.

### **4.3.2 Sri Sathya Sai Baba my spiritual guide and leadership mentor**

It was in 1973 when I was in grade 9 when my father, who was not at all religious and frowned upon the ritualistic worship practice that characterised many followers of Hinduism, talked about a mystic guru who lived in South India. My mother was partial to his influence and soon we started going to devotional services which were organised by devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. At this age, I had no spiritual inclinations and believed that science had an answer to all questions on creation. However, when my father spoke about the Christ-like miracles Sri Sathya Sai Baba was performing I got interested in this phenomenon and eagerly wolfed down a book written by a journalist, Howard Murphet. At the devotional services we were exposed to the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and because they were so simple and clear I had no difficulty in understanding them. He said that he had not come to start a new religion and encouraged his followers to pursue their chosen paths and become better Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and Hindus.

I was filled with hope and inspiration when he said, “All are one. Be alike to everyone. Don’t give room for differences of race, creed or nation. There is only one race, the race of humanity. There is only one language, the language of the heart” (“Love and service,” n.d.). I was attracted to his philosophy which incorporated selfless service to ameliorate the pain and suffering in the world. He urged his followers to live by certain universal values and to transform themselves. Sri Sathya Sai Baba used the acronym WATCH to remind us to observe our words, actions, thoughts, character and heart as we lived our lives. By living a values-based life, character is enriched and habits, attitudes and behaviours that are unworthy are recognised and transformed. I was impressed with his charismatic presence, the simple way in which he articulated complex truths, and the extraordinary leadership wisdom that he demonstrated.

Off course the miracles he performed like materializing objects out of thin air, healing the sick and solving difficult personal problems fascinated me. I was equally drawn towards the humanitarian projects that he started. Sri Sathya Sai Baba initiated massive projects that delivered free drinking water to more than 700 villages and the city of Chennai. He provided a state of the art free health care at two super speciality hospitals. He was visionary and saw the imbalance in modern education, which focused on knowledge and skills and neglected human

values that enhanced character. Sri Sathya Sai Baba developed a system of education that blended secular and spiritual education at the primary, secondary and tertiary level of education (Sathya Sai, n.d., Sathya Sai - His Works section.)

My mother went to visit Sri Sathya Sai Baba in 1977 and we lapped up the stories of her adventures in India, especially her encounter with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. When I was older I came to understand that his teachings transcended religion and that he embraced spirituality, which was expressed in the universal human values of truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence. He urged his followers to live by these universal values and to transform themselves as they came to know, realise and manifest the latent divinity that was present in all of mankind. The aphorism “Love all serve all” became a refrain that provided the motivation for my actions to engage in programmes that uplifted the weak and vulnerable sectors of society. My parents became active workers in this organization and as children we enthusiastically participated in its activities. Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s mantra on leadership, which became known as the Mahavakya or great utterance became the cornerstone of my leadership practice.



I was fortunate to have had the privilege of visiting my spiritual guide and master Sri Sathya Sai Baba quite regularly over the last 28 years. In this photograph I am handing him a large stack of letters from devotees in Africa. I was ecstatic when he took the letters. I felt pleased to be an instrument, offering service to those who couldn't meet Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

**Figure 13: Meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba in Puttaparthi, India in July 1992.**

### **4.3.3 Opening the heart: community service**

In 1977 my father built a house on land that he bought many years ago. He did this with the hope that in two years time I would start teaching and would be able to assist financially. I

enjoyed the new house in which at last as a young adult I had my own bedroom. In Kharwastan I quickly made friends with my neighbours who worked selflessly in serving the community through sports. I spent most of my Saturdays organising netball and volleyball matches as an official of the Sports Union. I gave up my position as the Chairman of the Montarena Ex-Students Association. My meeting skills were sharpened and my self-esteem increased when I was included in strategic planning meetings and negotiations with the Durban City Council for better sporting facilities. I also enjoyed socialising with the adults of my community who were keen on improving the lifestyle of the residents.

I was quite happy at university and passed my courses without much difficulty. I struggled with economics though and just about made the pass requirement. In my final year student unrests got intense and I heeded the call of boycotting students to end my teaching practice session. At university we were addressed by a host of speakers that included freedom-fighting veterans like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Zindzi Mandela, Zac Yacoob, Billy Nair, MJ Naidoo and George Sewpersad. The call for Nelson Mandela's release was growing stronger and the accompanying labour unrests heightened the political climate in the 1980s. Abba Omar, the Student Representative Council (SRC) president in 1982 reflects on the student protests that were prevalent in the 1980's at the University of Durban-Westville.

Abba Omar: "...The boycott had a tremendous impact on all those who were touched by it - whether they were school students confronting the police or parents who provided them with unqualified support. It had an immense politicising effect on students at U.D.W. - it was almost like an internal 'great leap ... The first SRC took office, as I explained, in an atmosphere of heightened political consciousness. It embarked on a programme of active support for community issues ..." (South African History Online, n.d., Media section).

#### **4.3.4 Student leadership at university**

A loose association of students from Chatsworth was established and I served in a leadership capacity. As meetings were frequently banned, we sought assistance from members of the Natal Indian Congress and United Democratic Front for funds to hire busses so that we could meet in

areas where meetings were still allowed. We aligned our activities with the Chatsworth Housing Action Committee as pressure was mounted on the apartheid government. We met at night in different houses as we planned strategies and actions and we were extremely careful about who we talked to as we knew that the security operatives had agents planted everywhere. We attracted the ire of Mr Amichand Rajbansi, a politician, when we printed pamphlets that criticized his association and cooperation with the apartheid government. As part of our campaign to mobilize and conscientize the public about the events that were unfolding we decided to launch an anti-litter campaign. We planned to use placards that subtly communicated political messages e.g. "this country stinks, it needs a clean up". On the morning of the planned clean-up almost 50 students gathered at the busy roundabout and started our protest cum clean-up campaign. It wasn't long before a large police truck arrived and we were marched into it. Before I could step in, a man in plain clothes called my name out and separated me from the group.

Fear gripped me as I nervously watched the police van disappear. A few minutes later a blue Datsun 1100 pulled up and a strongly built man who looked rather menacingly, stepped towards me. I now came face to face with the notorious Sergeant Jonathan (pseudonym) of the Special Branch. Fellow students and community activists often spoke about him and his ruthless tactics to get information. I was instructed to step into the car and we drove off. At a traffic light I felt the urge to open the door and flee but the courage failed me as the lights changed. In what seemed like a very long journey, we arrived at a building and I was pushed inside. The stories of political detainees being tortured and sometimes killed flooded my mind. These feelings intensified when I learnt that I was now in the infamous Special Branch offices in Fisher Street where many famous political activists were interrogated before the obnoxious detention without trial act was enacted.

Unknown to me a student activist, the late Shoots Naidoo whom I closely worked with, was also arrested and was being interrogated in a nearby room. The interrogating officer asked me many questions, which I willingly answered. Fortunately for me I spoke the truth as they corroborated my version of events with Shoots. However, there was one question that I could not answer. He wanted to know what links I had with the underground ANC movement and if I

knew anything concerning Nelson Mandela. The truth of the matter was that I knew nothing about the ANC that was underground or anything about plans to free Nelson Mandela. After what seemed like hours of questioning I was released and told that I was being watched and that I should stop my involvement in politics. I hastily left Fisher Street and headed back home where my father cautioned me that politics would make me a bitter person.

At campus the climate steadily deteriorated as the boycotts intensified. The riot police were now stationed at the campus and the standoff between them and students was tense. Throughout this period the students were disciplined and did not resort to any violent or destructive actions. One morning I was with a group of students assembled at the administrative building where the rector had his office. When the rector peered out of his window to survey the students who were milling beneath, someone threw an object at him. Within a few minutes the riot police came charging in. This was the opportunity they were waiting for and they came in with vengeance. They baton charged the students and as we fled in terror, I saw the riot policemen get down on their knees and take aim with their rifles. I heard gunshots and saw billowing clouds of yellowish brown smoke spewing out of canisters that were rolling on the ground. In that panic I thought that the police were trying to shoot us. Suddenly someone screamed, “tear gas” and I joined a few students and dashed into the toilets and wet my handkerchief and covered my face before I rushed to the back entrance of the cafeteria. I then heard the ferocious barking of dogs as I joined a group of students who fled to the Palmiet Nature Reserve, which bordered the university grounds. We hid there for several hours. When we thought it was safe to come out we crawled out of the bushes and through the hazy skyline we saw the trail of destruction that was unleashed. It was a miracle that no one lost his or her life and that no one was seriously injured. My friends and I met that night to reflect on the events of the day and we drafted a pamphlet for distribution, giving our account of the events.

I believed that the cause we were fighting was a just one and the brutality of the police and their terror tactics incensed me. I attended meetings and freely participated in activities like drafting pamphlets and keeping students informed of developments. We listened to Capital Radio an independent radio station, which transmitted from the then Transkei and came to rely on it for giving us an un-sanitized view of major protest stories that were breaking out. On June 16 we

got together to distribute pamphlets to commemorate the Soweto uprising. A pastor at a church in Westcliff, Chatsworth supported us and invited us to meet at his church. As we went on with our work, we got news that the Special Branch was going to raid the church. Someone came up with the idea that we should hide the pamphlets in the church freezer and that we should assemble inside the church and sing hymns. The pastor handed out the hymn sheets and for the very first time in my life I attempted to sing a hymn. It was an anti-climax when the police did not pitch up.

After intense negotiations the boycotts ended and we had to work very hard to catch up with lost lectures. The students decided that the climate was now conducive and the time was right to establish a SRC. My friends encouraged me to stand for elections, as I was known to the student body for being active during the protest actions. I was nervous because I had not contested a large-scale election before, however I decided to take the plunge because of my experiences in the student unrest. I drafted an election manifesto and campaigned with my friends support. Electioneering was not as easy as I expected, however I did win a seat on the democratically elected SRC and served with some personalities who became struggle heroes in later years. Looking back I now realise that this was quite an accomplishment as a number of students stood for elections and most of them were popular.

#### **4.3.5 On becoming a teacher**

I was in my final year of study with one more major to compete and struggled with the very heavy workload. The final exam timetable was taxing and on many occasions we wrote two papers on the same day one starting at 08:00 and the next at 16:00. We thought that the university authorities had deliberately set a difficult timetable to punish us for the boycotts that had taken place. My friends and I rejoiced when we passed the exams and we now eagerly awaited the news of the schools that we were going to be posted to.

In early January 1981, I got news of my appointment to Umzinto Secondary School, which was in the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal. Initially I travelled daily with colleagues and soon found this too tiring. I was not coping with the marking and preparation of English lessons. I decided to board with a family in a flat and I enjoyed the freedom of being a young adult away from home. I did go home every weekend and my family got used to this arrangement. Saths

Govender, a very close school and university friend encouraged me to further my studies and we both enrolled for the honours degree in history, which after two years we achieved this qualification. In the following year I took up a colleague's offer to take up boarding with his family. I felt at home with my new family and soon started to spend the occasional weekends with them. The children at school were co-operative and I found it quite easy to work with them. I did however, rebel against the bureaucratic way in which the teachers were managed. The principal, the now late Mr Ponnen was a very strict man and you knew your place when you stepped into his office. He recognised my talents for announcing at school events and he invited me to assist him in a community project.

My head of department asked me to assist in producing a school play called "Charlie's Aunt". When one of the students could not perform one of the lead roles well enough, the producer teased me and said that since I coached that part so well I should take on the role. The other students eagerly coaxed me into it and I became a teacher actor in a student play. At the end of 1983 I got news that my transfer application was successful and that I was now posted to Risecliff Secondary School in Chatsworth.

#### **4.3.6 Leadership in the guidance counsellors' society**

My mother in particular was delighted to have me back at home. At Risecliff Secondary School I spent a lot of time working with learners who experienced numerous barriers in learning. They came from impoverished backgrounds and their home circumstances made it very difficult for them to succeed academically. I made a few home visits and felt that I was making a difference through supporting the learners so that they could continue with their education. On seeing how keen I was, the school guidance counsellor encouraged me to apply for the school guidance-counselling programme, which was offered at the University of Durban-Westville. I soon got news that I was successful and in 1985 I attended part-time lectures for the B.Ed. degree. I was appointed to Newhaven Secondary School as the guidance counsellor. It took me some time to adjust to my new role and I immersed myself in student development activities, the most significant being the youth year programme in 1985. I became a member of the Teachers Association of South Africa and networked with other school counsellors and acquired invaluable assistance from them. It was not long when I was elected to serve on the executive

structure of the guidance counsellors' committee. When the department of education initiated policies to cut back on school guidance services, the committee mobilized the school counsellors and tried to resist attempts to curtail an essential support service to the schools.

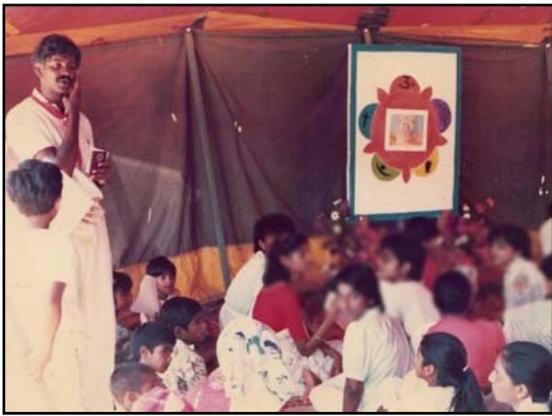
#### **4.3.7 Leading an upliftment project**

In this period I became very active in the activities of the Sathya Sai Organization and headed a humanitarian project on the outskirts of Chatsworth in Welbedacht. I rallied a few young adults and the team built a little shelter from which we operated. We spent most of our weekends happily immersed in activities that advanced the welfare of people that were destitute and needy.



**Figure 14: Building a shelter for our social service programme in 1984.**

This photograph brings back memories of the joy and fulfilment I derived when out of tremendous odds a service centre for the poor and needy was being built. As the leader of the project I took a hands on approach and realised that I had to be present to motivate and inspire others. I am leaning against the pole watching my experienced builder friends at work.



Taken 29 years ago, on 23 November 1985, this photograph feels strange to me now because I cannot identify myself as an able-bodied person. This photograph was taken 9 days before the life changing and life defining accident. When I looked at this photograph I felt depressed; the hardships, physical pain and challenges that I experience as a paraplegic overwhelms me.

**Figure 15: I address the gathering at the official opening of the Welbedacht Service Project**

#### **4.4 ON BECOMING A PARAPLEGIC**

Little did I know that the last photograph (see figure 15) that I would have standing up without assistive devices, would be taken at the official opening of the Welbedacht project. On 2 December 1985, life as I knew it changed forever. I was quite an active person who enjoyed the outdoors as I jogged, swam, played soccer and loved playing squash. I didn't in my wildest dreams think that the things I took for granted would come to an abrupt end, when I left that evening to play miniature golf with my friends. I met with a motor accident that radically changed my being and became a critical incident in my life that still significantly influences my life up to today, some 29 years later. I vividly remember the cutting and hammering sounds and the smell of petrol coming from a generator as emergency workers tried to free me from my car, which was wrapped around a lamppost. After two hours I was freed and placed on a stretcher and taken to hospital. I only remember bits and pieces as I floated in and out of consciousness. I do not remember anything about the accident and for months later I tried to recall how the accident happened. The next morning appeared as a dream to me and it took some time for me to realise that I was in hospital. Excruciating pain wracked through my body and for several days I was given intravenous sedatives to relieve me of the pain.

I could not move my legs and when I touched my body it felt disconnected from me. It was as if my upper body and lower body belonged to different people. The nurses told me that I had

injured my spinal cord and the doctors told me that I would never walk again. I had become a paraplegic and the struggle to reclaim my life had only just begun. This information did not sink into me as I was just taking it one hour at a time trying to cope with the pain that coursed through my back. My father and mother visited me twice a day and I could see the anguish that was written all over their face. The x-rays showed that I fractured a thoracic vertebrae and another had dislocated. A visiting consultant said that he would operate on my back and fuse the broken and dislocated vertebrae with rods and then I would be discharged. He said that I would be then be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of my life. Another consultant said that it would be best to take a conservative approach and let nature take its course. I was more inclined with this approach as it left me with some hope that I could possibly recover.

I prayed fervently and talked to God intensely and passionately for healing to take place. However, the healing did not come as I expected. The loss of body functions such as bowel and bladder function not only frustrated me but also depressed me. I felt hopeless, helpless and at times became very angry. However, I did not display these emotions and kept a check on them. I listened to devotional songs on a little cassette player and this comforted me. I was also fortunate to have many inspiring and comforting family members and friends who filled me with positive messages. On Christmas day in 1985 I had a feeling that something significant might happen and I was not disappointed. I felt a toe in my left leg move and I knew that it was responding to my thoughts. However, when the doctor arrived I could not replicate this feat and this movement was dismissed as a phantom event. No matter how hard I tried I could not get my toe to move. I persisted with the belief that my toe moved under my control and that I could do it again. Fortunately my physiotherapist Sushie Pentiah, believed in me and encouraged me to keep trying. In a few days time I was able to do this again and I demonstrated this to my physiotherapist who used to passively move my legs to exercise them. She said that I should try to move all the toes and I spent entire days trying to do this.

As I was a spinal injury patient I lay on my back and sides for the entire day and was rolled into different positions every few hours to prevent pressure sores from developing. I was very fortunate that the nursing staff were not only efficient but also very caring. One of the members of the Sathya Sai Organization was a matron at the hospital and the other was a nursing educator.

They visited me often and this kept the junior nurses on their toes as I received the very best nursing care. A mirror was fixed on the back of my bed and it hung in front of my face so that I could see what was going on in the ward. The occupational therapist brought a little table with a glass top on which a book was placed so that I could read from a prone position. Although it kept me busy I could not turn the pages as my back was immobilised in a brace. As I did not want to make a nuisance of myself I waited for quite some time for anyone passing by to turn the page. At this stage I had a serious urinary tract infection and had cycles of fever. At one moment I would feel intense cold and shivered almost violently and other times I would perspire profusely as I my body burnt with fever.

I soon became familiar with hospital routine and settled down. Around me there were other young men who also had spinal injuries and I eagerly learnt from their experiences. We encouraged each other's progress and shared each other's pain and disappointment. Lesley Naidoo was a young and upcoming fashion designer who became a quadriplegic. We kept in contact after 20 years after meeting in the hospital until his death. Noel Reddy and I are still in contact and he joined the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled, which we formed in 1987. It was at the physiotherapy unit that I met Lil Bhagwan who sustained spinal injuries and was totally wheelchair bound a year before me. He offered me many pointers and seeing his cheerful disposition I was filled with hope. I marvelled at the way Tony Chetty manoeuvred his wheelchair and the way he hopped from it with such agility and dexterity.

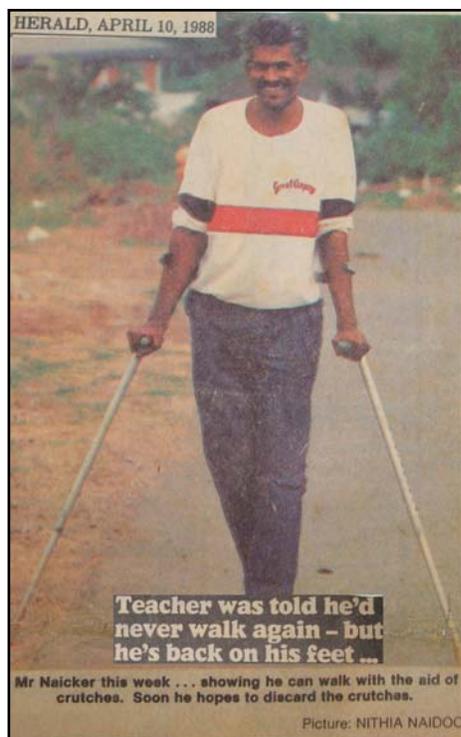
The doctors wanted my back injuries to heal conservatively so I was bound to the bed for 6 weeks. As I could not empty my bladder I was trained to intermittently catheterize myself and had to use a suppository to regulate my bowel movements. In the beginning I had many accidents and this filled me with suicidal thoughts. Fortunately I have a very strong mind and these depressing moments did not last for very long. I was comforted when I listened to the soothing devotional songs and discourses that Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave to his followers. On my birthday on 9th January in 1986 I had a transcendental dream of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I levitated in a prone position and I saw a blue light coming out his hand as he passed it on my back. A week later I had another dream in which he supported and encouraged me to walk. I felt energized and inspired by these dreams and this intensified my efforts to move my toes.

Gradually I gained the movement of my foot and my physiotherapist, Sushie Pentiah told me that if I could move my leg I could walk again. I felt encouraged and motivated and I eagerly anticipated the day when I would get off the bed. In the meantime a wheelchair was ordered for me and I selected a model that could be used to play sports. Eventually the day arrived when I was taken off the bed and taken to the physiotherapy unit. I enthusiastically accepted the challenging tasks my physiotherapist handed out to me. The first task was to strengthen my arm muscles. I could not see the logic in this, as this had nothing to do with walking. Later I saw her wisdom in prescribing these exercises to gain upper strength. Without strong arms I would not be able to take care of myself. It took me a lot of effort to transfer myself from the floor onto the wheelchair. I could barely sit unassisted and my new physiotherapist Karminy Thandrayen, threw a ball at me to strengthen my back muscles. When I got back to the ward after two hours of exercise I felt tortured and mercifully slept after lunch for a few hours. This routine went on for months. Over time I was able to stand with callipers that were made for me and I learnt to walk in between two sets of parallel bars.

The total distance was 5 metres but it felt like I was running an ultra distance marathon race. On the first day I barely moved 10 centimetres when exhaustion made me quit. I returned the next day and the next day until eventually after a month, I was able to traverse the entire distance. I still had to manage my bladder through catheterizing intermittently and regulated my bowels with the use of suppositories. There were very few accidents and my self-esteem and self-confidence grew. After spending 7 months in hospital I thought that I was sufficiently rehabilitated and should be discharged. Throughout my hospital stay the orthopaedic doctor in charge of the ward was very sceptical about my making any progress and he was distant. I remember his incredulous look when I stepped out of my wheelchair, took hold of my crutches and stepped in front of his desk and requested that he discharge me as someone who was fit to return to work. He quietly filled out the paper work.

New challenges awaited me at home. There was a flight of 5 stairs at the entrance to the house and because I was not yet steady on my feet I had to sit at the bottom step and had to hop on my butt until I reached the top stair where I transferred onto the wheelchair. This was the routine that I followed whenever I had to leave or enter the house. The lounge too was out of bounds

because there were three stairs that led to it. I was very fortunate to have my father with me at home and he drove me for the daily physiotherapy sessions that I went to. Until I learnt how to get in and out of the bath on my own I relied on my father who patiently tendered to my needs. Gradually my legs grew stronger and with the frequent spells of exercise at physiotherapy I could walk slowly using a walking frame. A few months later I mastered the art of using elbow crutches which gave me greater mobility and it was then that I felt that I was ready to return to work as a school counsellor.



I was delighted when I retrieved this newspaper article from the photographer. Hope, courage and determination are signified in this photograph. I did not realise then that the journey would be long and difficult and would eventually lead to the point where I am now more wheelchair bound. Notwithstanding this I have no regrets for daring to dream that I could become “normal” again.

**Figure 16: Newspaper article that appeared in the Sunday Tribune Herald, on 10 April 1988**

#### **4.4.1 Serving people with disabilities**

Lil and I met regularly and he lent me magazines for people with spinal injuries. He also talked about cars that could be modified for persons with disabilities. Armed with this new knowledge I bought an automatic car and had it especially converted for me with hand controls, so I could drive the car without using my legs. This gave me a new lease in life and I was now free and independent to go wherever I wanted to go. When I chatted with a few other people who were disabled I learnt that they did not work, did not have friends outside the disability sector, did not play sport and spent most of their time at home. Their families did not have the means to take

them out and they lived a very insular life divorced from mainstream society. As people with disabilities we felt different from able-bodied persons as society saw us as people who were lesser beings who did not count for much. Whenever I went out in public on wheelchair, I saw people staring at me. When I was in my wife's company and went to check in at a hotel or visit a doctor for the first time they would often give her the documentation to read and sign even though I was the paying guest or patient. Even professionals like doctors would sometimes talk down to me and discuss my medical problems with my wife who was present.



I retrieved this microfiche copy from the newspaper archives. In this article I narrated the events of the accident and my determination to walk again. I also share the vision of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled. In hindsight I realise that I found it very difficult to cope with an altered being and I strongly desired to be whole again.

Figure 17: Newspaper article that appeared in the Sunday Tribune Herald, on 10 April 1988



Figure 18: The Forget-Me-Not Sports Club logo

I suggested that we start a club for people who were disabled and my newly found disabled friends were quite enthusiastic in supporting it. We decided to go out on a weekend away and booked chalets at the Albert Falls dam. We had lots of fun and this adventure boosted our confidence. It was then that the idea of starting the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Physically Disabled gained momentum.

In the dialogue that follows Pravin Thakur, a research participant who is still associated with the club reminisces with me as we recalled how the club started.

Pravin: The first thing is a recognition [of a] need which, others didn't see. In your case you identified the goal, you drove it and when it was slackening you pushed and then we achieved ... those are fundamental characteristics of leaders. They will be bold, make moves and take decisions and get things done [and] desire ... everyone to be accountable for what they were supposed to do ... You showed that initiative as a leader ... You realised the need for the promotion of disabled facilities or sport and then you took action. Once you got disabled you become forgotten and it resonates with our name! Forget-Me-Not - don't forget me if I am disabled you know.

We made enquiries and learnt that there was a Sports Association for the Disabled that organised competitive sports events and recreational activities, in our province. We were invited to try out a couple of the sports at a fun day and some of us enjoyed playing wheelchair basketball. With encouragement from the chairperson we decided to constitute a club, which then affiliated to the Natal Sports Association for the Disabled. At the inaugural meeting I was elected as the chairperson and my friend Lil was elected as the vice chairperson. It was at this meeting that I met the remarkable Jace Nair who in spite of being blind from the age of 14 made astounding progress. I marvelled at his intelligence, administrative and organizational abilities.

We spent many hours together as I assisted him with installing computer software that enabled him to read and type documents. Jace was soon handling a mega project for the organization he worked for and he encouraged us to participate in a huge fair to raise funds for our club.

#### **4.4.2 Founder chairperson of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled**

As chairman of the club I had numerous responsibilities. We arranged many sporting activities and the members looked forward to these outings. I recruited a few friends and members from the Sathya Sai Organization to assist us when we needed able-bodied people to assist us with transporting the disabled to and from various sports venues. Mr Johnny Sitaram whom we elected as our patron was a pillar of strength. He arranged for us to use the physiotherapy room at the Aryan Benevolent Home for our meetings and made it possible for us to use the homes transport at a minimal cost when we needed to. In 1987 Lil Bhagwan and I were selected to represent Natal in the SA Championships for the disabled. We joined the team at the Holiday Inns and were presented our provincial colours. It was a proud moment when we played basketball and table tennis for our province. I won a silver medal as a finalist in the basketball tournament and a bronze medal for finishing third in the table tennis doubles category.

Over the years the club members met at least once a month as we got together to play sports and to socialise. We arranged many fund raising events like staging plays, holding dinner dances, selling hot dogs and cold drinks at a major community fair and collecting funds at shopping malls. The blind navigator's rally was one of the biggest events that we organised. We did this in partnership with the Lions Club of Port Natal. A blind navigator had a map that was prepared in braille and he or she read out the speed and route directions that the driver had to follow. I approached a major oil company for a sponsorship and this event attracted publicity in the newspapers and featured on TV as well. Since then we hosted two more blind navigator rallies. The twentieth anniversary of the club was celebrated in a big way when over 100 people with disabilities were brought together to play various sports and games. We secured adequate funding and recruited volunteers from the Sathya Sai Organization and Art of Living Foundation to assist us with this mammoth undertaking. On 23 September 2012 the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club turned 25 years and the club hosted a fun run where close onto 200 able-bodied persons and 100 people with disabilities participated. Athletes on wheelchairs, hand cycles and

on crutches participated in a widely publicized event that was covered in the local newspapers, a radio station and this was broadcasted later in the year on national television. The TV video clip can be viewed on YouTube using the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8DQ0xMwcrI>. Pravin Thakur reflects on the impact that the club had over the years and the collage below depicts some of the press coverage the club has enjoyed.

Pravin: I think we influenced positively the lives of all the disabled families that we touched. By simply putting together a social function whether it was a trip to the beach or a function like a dance ... it took a disabled person out of his house. It was one of service ... if you just take those 50 members ... they will all give you that story of somebody in the club who helped them out. Unselfishly and that comes from having this vision that you want to make a difference to the lives. So when you met your unfortunate incident, when you were in hospital ... it was possible that maybe a higher purpose used you as the driving force [as] that vehicle to take this thing forward.



**Figure 19: Newspaper collage of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled advocating for inclusion and equity**

### **4.4.3 Back to school ... as a teacher with a disability**

At the beginning of the 4th term in 1986 after being absent from school for almost 9 months and having been hospitalised for 7 months I thought I was ready to go back to work. I was barely rehabilitated and through a miracle I was able to take a few steps using elbow crutches. I was determined to return to school and vehemently shrugged off suggestions to apply for a medical board. I was grateful that my principal was supportive and he encouraged me to return to school. The first few days were agonizingly painful. I perspired profusely as it was almost like running an ultra distance marathon when I walked the 200 metres from the car park to my counsellor's office. When I came home I was so exhausted that I collapsed onto the bed and only got up the next morning. It took me so long to go to the staff room from my office that invariably the bell rang to signal the end of the break when I just got there. It was a huge adjustment facing my colleagues, some of whom were very supportive and others just felt awkward around me. In time they learnt that only the outer me had changed but the old me was still very much the same. The learners did not seem to notice that I was walking in a strange way with crutches and would often walk up to me and chat. It was a relief that the December holidays had arrived and I looked forward to the trip to India to see Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

## **4.5 GROWING AS AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER**

I came back from Sri Sathya Sai Baba's ashram in India feeling revitalized and stronger. I bought a car, which was converted so that I could drive it with hand controls. I went back to university and completed the qualification to become a guidance counsellor. At school I initiated several projects to promote learner welfare. The principal and staff were supportive and most of the projects were very successful. I threw myself into my work as I was determined to dispel the notion that I was not capable because I was now a paraplegic. In hindsight I realise that I worked very hard and the quest to be an equal, provided the motivation that I needed. I worried my principal to give me challenging assignments as I felt he was not fair to me because I thought that he saw me as someone who was less capable. However, when my principal was promoted he called me to his office and showed me documentation that he had processed on several occasions recommending me for a merit award because of the work that I was doing at school.

In 1992 I decided to advance my studies and enrolled for a masters degree in school counselling at Rhodes University, which I completed in two years. I then learnt that the department of education was advertising posts for school counsellors to be based at Teachers' Centres and decided to apply. In July 1993 my principal called me in the holidays and told me that I was successful in my application. I was ecstatic and looked forward to the new challenges and opportunities that lay ahead. This was in the heady days in South African history as democracy and the much talked about freedom was just raising its head in the near horizon. Nelson Mandela was released from prison and constitutional talks had started.

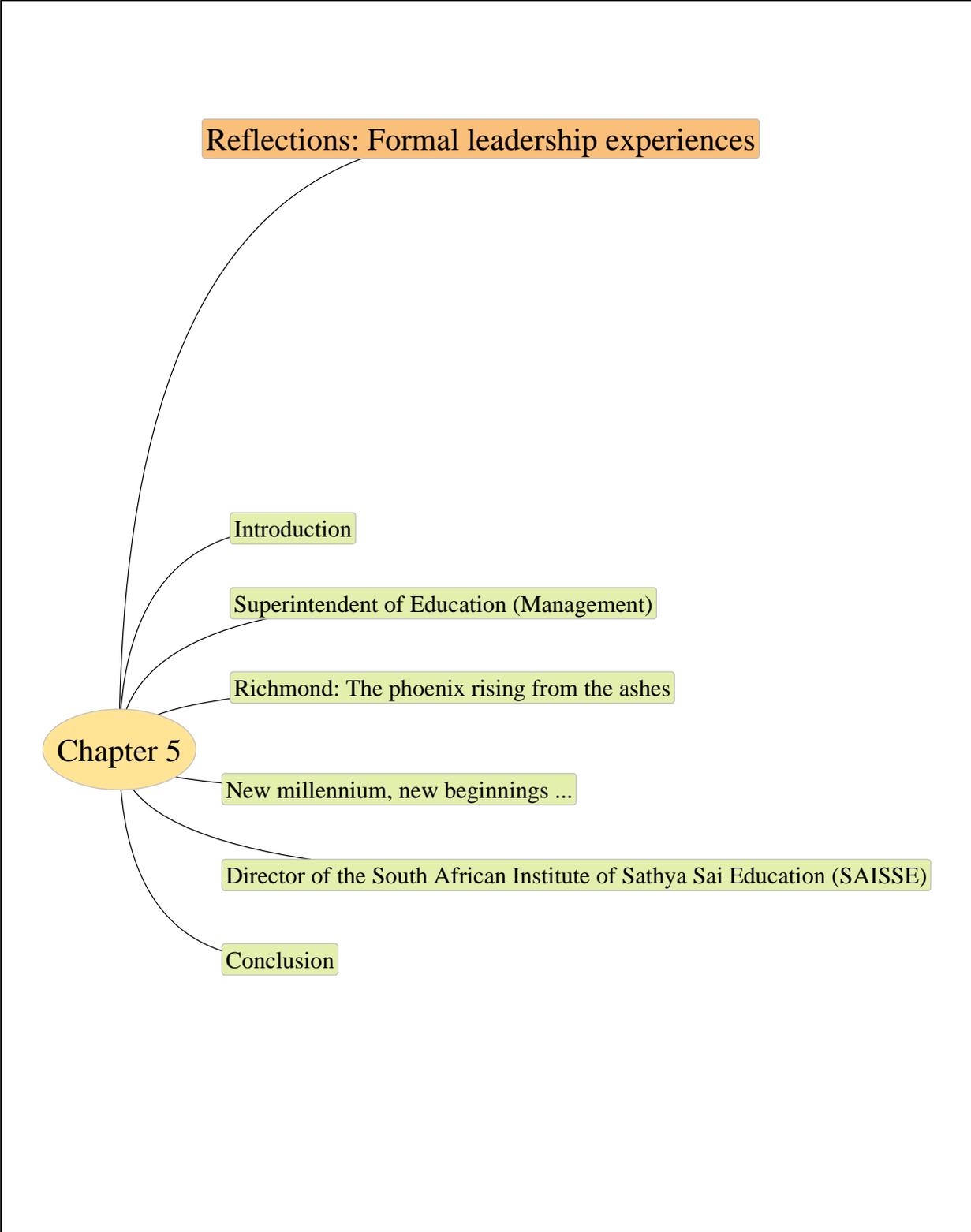
Sweeping changes had occurred in the landscape of South African education in the mid 1990's. Discussions and negotiations were also taking place as the different departments of education merged. When the new South Africa emerged I was now a senior education specialist at the Chatsworth Teachers Centre. I offered guidance and counselling services to learners who were at risk and programmes to support schools. Mr D.M Moodley, the then principal of the Chatsworth Teacher's Centre made conscious attempts to expose the professional staff to activities that would develop them and expand their experience. I took advantage of these opportunities and organised many workshops at the centre and at school level.

One of the big events that I put together was a leadership program in conjunction with the Chatsworth Rotary club and the department of education. Learners from the different racial groups came together to experience learning and socialising in a multi-racial context. At this time racial integration was the new buzzword activity that many South Africans embraced in the spirit of the new South Africa. I interacted with several senior officials from the department of education and they involved me in many of their developmental programmes. I was exposed to many professional programmes that targeted existing and emerging educational leaders and I was growing in confidence. When the opportunity came I immediately seized it and applied for the position as a SEM.

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I related the formative years of my life, family circumstances and the emerging leadership roles in school and university. I narrated my experiences as a teacher and school counsellor as well as the leadership roles that I began to play in my profession. My experiences in spirituality and selfless service activities are recounted and I described my life as a paraplegic and the establishment of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled. In Chapter Five, which follows I recall the formal leadership roles that I played and the nodal experiences that shaped my leadership practice.

Figure 20: Outline of Chapter Five



# CHAPTER 5

## REFLECTIONS: FORMAL LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

*“There are no extra pieces in the universe. Everyone is here because he or she has a place to fill, and every piece must fit itself into the big jigsaw”*

Deepak Chopra

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I described the formative and contextual factors that shaped who I am and I narrated my early life history, which explores my emergent leadership experiences. In this chapter I trace the key nodal experiences and trigger events that shaped who I am as well as my leadership practice in formal educational leadership settings.

### 5.2 SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION (MANAGEMENT)

Vacancies arose for SEM posts as restructuring of the new unified education Department took place. I decided to apply because I was confident that I was suitably qualified and was sufficiently experienced. In keeping with our values my wife, Ruban and I decided that if it were necessary we would relocate to a rural area if I was successful and offer our service to develop rural communities. I applied to a few rural areas and was pleasantly surprised when I was shortlisted for interviews. A few months later an official from the Department of Education in Pietermaritzburg called me and informed me that I was appointed as a SEM in the Pietermaritzburg district.

In July 1997 I made my way to the Pietermaritzburg district office in Shepstone Building and met my District Manager Mr Henry Dlamini (pseudonym) for the first time. He impressed me with his warm and friendly disposition. In the first District meeting, he assigned circuits of schools as they were then called in the newly constituted Pietermaritzburg district. At the meeting Henry announced that I would be responsible for the Richmond Circuit. I noticed that my colleagues exchanged glances when this announcement was made. Henry made light of this and said that I stepped forward first to accept this assignment. The truth was that we all stood in

line and when he announced Richmond they took a step backwards quickly. Being slow on crutches I was rooted to the ground. I did not have any knowledge of the Pietermaritzburg district nor the Richmond circuit and wondered what was so special about Richmond. I vaguely remembered that Richmond was quoted in the media in stories of political violence. I was just pleased that I was given a circuit to manage and was looking forward to this new challenge.

That evening I shared the events of the day and news of my appointment to the Richmond circuit with Ruban. She phoned her mom who had relatives living in Richmond. Coincidentally at the time of my appointment the violence in Richmond escalated and it soon gained the notorious title of the killing fields of KwaZulu-Natal. The political violence made headline news in the national newspapers, television news broadcasts as well as news bulletins on that radio stations. This news filled me with fear and trepidation. The concern of my family members for my safety just made me feel more anxious. Fortunately, at this time the district office was not too well organised and did not have a vehicle for me to use to visit Richmond. I spent most of my time at the office in Pietermaritzburg trying to get information about the schools that I was to oversee. Colleagues from the other district offices sympathetically exchanged a few words of encouragement when I met them at Regional meetings. Some of them were better informed about what was going on Richmond and urged me to be careful. I spoke at length with the former SEM Mr. Siphon Mdlantshe (pseudonym) who painted a broad picture of what Richmond looked like and he promised to take me on an orientation visit. I eagerly waited for the day when we would go to the Richmond Schools.



My initial reaction to the regular sightings of soldiers, armed police and military vehicles was one of fear. The graphic visuals in the newspapers and television news programmes disturbed me. Slowly, I came to accept this as a way of life, but still maintained my guard when I was in Richmond.

**Figure 21: Soldiers patrolling Richmond (“Daily Maverick”)**

One afternoon in late August, Siphon called me and said that we were going to go to Richmond the following day. I had mixed feelings. I felt excitement and joy at the prospect of meeting the principals with whom I was going to work with. I looked at it as an adventure and was keen to get started. However, the news on television of the intensified conflict and the visuals of soldiers patrolling the town and surroundings of Richmond scared me. When Siphon arrived he looked calm and I took my cues from him and did not talk about my fears. In the car he gave me an overview of the schools, the staff, the principals and a general description of the socioeconomic conditions. In all there were 38 schools located in different areas of Richmond. Some of the schools were in the town, others in the townships and the rest in farms. I remember that I was confused as he rattled off the names of the schools and the principals. The scenic drive to Richmond was pleasant. The beauty of the green vista, which rolled over kilometres, struck me. The occasional dams alongside which white arum lilies bloomed were picturesque. I did not see so many jersey cows before and was fascinated when I saw horses in the paddocks.

As we entered Richmond Town we passed a timber factory and were soon in the village. The shops in the main street were typical of those in rural areas, which largely served African customers. Our first stop was the Circuit Office, which was at the corner of Shepstone and Chilley Streets. When we entered the office a middle-aged lady rose from her desk and greeted us. Siphon told me that she was Mrs Phumzile Sibaya-Gwambe who was the clerk that was stationed at the office. He then introduced me to Ms. Abigail Musa (pseudonym) who worked in the office as a general assistant. After a welcome cup of tea and a slice of banana cake we drove off to the schools. I noticed the soldiers in battle fatigues carrying assault weapons. Siphon did not show that he was affected and carried on as if it was business as usual. We journeyed through the townships of Magoda and Indaleni until we reached Esimozemeni. Even though I had some knowledge of what the conditions would be in rural schools, I was shocked with what I saw. Without exception all the schools had bare ground around the buildings and there were no lawns or flower gardens. The exterior looked neglected and didn't look like they were painted in past twenty years. I felt despair when I saw a group of learners huddled together in a dark and cold classroom at the Byrne Valley Primary School. In spite of these hardships the principals were warm and friendly and curiously eyed an Indian SEM walking with crutches. Gill Bruyns a principal and research participant describes the appalling conditions of the schools in Richmond at the time.

Gill: There were huge classes, Sagie absolutely enormous classes. There were often two classes in one classroom with a teacher at either end. Their schools were very under resourced, windows broken and lot of vandalism. There were absolutely no laboratories at all as far as I know. I think one of the high schools might have had a laboratory but with absolutely no equipment whatsoever. Very few schools had electricity. Hardly any had telephones ...

In the following conversation, Gill Bruyns describes the volatile situation in Richmond.

Sagie: As you would recall, Richmond was embroiled in violent political turmoil for many years and the army was deployed to stabilize the area ...

Gill: The children were really traumatized obviously by the violence and the behaviour was awful and the teachers really had a very hard time trying to discipline children. Most of the parents had left or were killed. They were living with grandparents who were struggling with huge households of grandchildren to cope with them. It was a very awful time, ... you could smell the fires burning, you could see them, and you could hear the guns going off. The children were terrified of helicopters because the soldiers would come in and drop in.

The office at Richmond was housed in a historical building and I was amused to see the words “dealer in fireworks” painted on one of the walls. I hoped that this was not an ominous sign. The solitary piece of equipment in the office was a telephone and I saw the bemused look on Mrs Sibaya-Gwambe’s face when I asked her to photocopy a document for me. The local ex- model C school was better resourced and I began to rely on the goodwill of Mr Richard Gibbs who opened his school to me whenever I needed to hold meetings. I was amazed when I learnt that most of the schools did not have printing facilities and that the learners only saw printed test papers at exam times when the principals went off to Pietermaritzburg, a nearby city to have

them printed. When limited funding became available I did not assign the resources to schools. Instead I met with the principals and asked them what they thought about the idea of housing the photocopying machines at the circuit office. A committee led by Richard managed the resource centre and the schools contributed a small amount to cover the costs of buying consumables like printer cartridges. I was able to buy a few computers; some shelves and reference books for teachers who were struggling to come to grips with new outcomes based curriculum, which was just introduced. This initiative later grew into a more substantive resource centre.

In 1997 and 1998 the violence got worse. The schools in Magoda, Indaleni and Esimozomeni were often closed as communities lived in terror. Families were massacred and learners dared not risk lighting candles or lamps if they needed to study at night. With the spate of funerals and threats made to teachers the schools had no option but to close. In spite of the army and police throwing more resources, Richmond still remained the flashpoint in KwaZulu-Natal. The Mayor of the town, Mr Andrew Ragavaloo an ANC Councillor, was also a principal. His bodyguard who carried an Uzi sub-machine gun stood at the entrance of the rooms in which I held my circuit meetings. Richmond was a divided community with the African National Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party and United Democratic Movement vying for support. Each party tried to influence my work and I strove very hard to show impartiality. When I was told that the department of works had funds to refurbish 10 of my schools, I made sure that all schools across the political spectrum had access to the funding. There were times when the media contacted me and asked me for my comments whenever violence flared. One of my most painful moments was going to console Mrs Sibaya-Gwambe when her son was killed in what was labelled as the Tavern Massacre. In the following conversation Gill Bruyns recalls the time when I visited the schools in an armed vehicle called the Casspir.

Gill: I felt that when you actually got in into the back of that .... Casspir and went out to them to the townships, to the schools they realised that you really meant business. It just made such an impression on everybody ... that you would actually do that as an SEM. Go out and actually see what the problems were and you know ... it could have been a very dangerous situation ... made them see that in fact the Casspir was not there to hurt them ... that you know you were in it and so therefore that it was kind of a safe vehicle? It just helped the community all-round.

Sagie: It was quite terrifying ...

Gill: I'm sure it was .... Sagie that actually opened up you know people's minds. It really did. It made a difference ... we just felt if you could do it we can also go out there.

Sagie: But I must tell you Gill I was terrified because there was one instance when I was traveling in a Casspir I heard a loud explosion and I cowered underneath the seat and the next thing I heard all the police officers and soldiers in the vehicle laughing. I asked them what's funny. "They said no man, this vehicle is hydraulically driven. It was just releasing some air off the brakes!"

In the office I taught Ms Sibaya-Gwambe and Mrs Musa to use the computer and was pleased with their enthusiasm. It was not too long before they became computer literate and productive. Mrs Sibaya-Gwambe used her newly acquired skills to work more efficiently as she gathered and processed information from the principals. She was a pillar of support and strength. She looked out for me and warned me whenever she perceived danger. She had a network of friends and knew what the conditions were on the ground. One principal who was connected to a certain party did his level best to set me up for failure. He would close his school early and storm into my office angrily when he was asked to explain. He also accused me of taking sides in the conflict and demanded to know why his school was not renovated. Mrs Sibaya-Gwambe was wary whenever he visited and gave me a heads up when she knew he was visiting. I became reliant on Mrs Sibaya-Gwambe and trusted her judgment. One day I received a phone call from

an anonymous caller who threatened my life. This scared me but this soon passed by and when I did not receive any more calls.

### 5.3 RICHMOND: THE PHOENIX RISING FROM THE ASHES

The motivation and morale in the circuit was very low and the educators were buckling under hostile working conditions and the newly introduced curriculum further dispirited them. The violence and insecurity was a major driving factor for the despondency and apathy that was settling in. A sponsor from a large insurance company approached me and said that he would sponsor a “prayer day” to motivate the teachers. I was told that this was done before. I agreed to do this provided education was given priority and that the programme be billed as part of the education department’s campaign to restore the culture of learning and teaching at schools (COLTS). At this gathering, senior officials from the Department of Education were present as well as local community leaders. I delivered an address where I urged the teachers to have hope that the violence would abate and that Richmond would rise like the phoenix from the ashes. I shared a vision of a resource centre that would address the community’s needs. At subsequent circuit meetings I popularised the vision and got some of the principals excited about the project.



Figure 22: Newspaper article in the Natal Witness, 18 March 2009

One of the principals Mr Rob Smith (pseudonym) happened to be at a meeting where government officials addressed them and said that funds were available for projects in communities that demonstrated that they were living in peace. After a discussion with the principals we decided to meet the community members of Richmond and make a presentation of our plan for a resource centre. The committee was formalized with Mrs Gill Bruyns, Mr Richard Gibbs, Mrs Florence Gumede (pseudonym) and Miss Thandiwe Buthelezi (pseudonym) and myself serving as committee members. I prepared photographic slides that showed the poor state that our schools were in and the ravages of the violence. I made a case for a resource centre that would uplift the standard of education in Richmond and ultimately contribute to peace, as people were educated. At a meeting at the town hall I proposed that we apply for the funds to build a resource centre, as it was a sustainable project. Education would be used as a vehicle to break down prejudices and ignorance and could lead to people living in peace and harmony. The community leaders who came from the different political parties were impressed with the plan and asked me to present this to the company that was contracted to implement the KwaZulu-Natal Peace Initiative. In spite of impassioned pleas that Richmond was more deserving we were only awarded R1 million.

When we next met as a committee I suggested to the members that we needed a name. I suggested that the name should be linked to peace and be of significance to the community. The committee went into a brainstorming mode and offered several Zulu names and Thandiwe suggested the name Masakhuxolo. The committee decided that the name “Masakhuxolo” which means, “let’s build in peace” was apt. Work then started with the project when we approached an architect, Mr Henry Wilcox (pseudonym). I prepared a rough concept plan of the resource centre. I knew the needs of the schools and planned for a physical science and life science laboratory, an IT classroom, a conference room, a boardroom for meetings, offices for visiting specialists and a room to house resource materials for teachers, printing facilities and an office for the SEM. I was disappointed when the architect told me that the money that we had would only cover about 20% of the costs of the project. The committee looked at ways in which the project could be scaled down. We also considered making representations to see if the KwaZulu-Natal Peace initiative would increase our allocation. I also spoke to the representatives of the committees working in Pietermaritzburg and Howick and appealed to them to give us some of the money allocated to them. It was not unexpected that that this plea

would fall on deaf ears. From the initial euphoria I now felt despondent. However, I soon snapped out of this disappointment with the realization that at least something new was being added to the educational facilities at Richmond. I then busied myself with the administrative duties that needed to be completed.

In the following dialogue Gill Bruyns traces the origins of the Masakhuxolo Education Resource Centre.

Sagie: Gill what gave rise to the Masakhuxolo project?

Gill: Sagie I remember us having a big meeting in the hall, the Memorial Hall ... you felt that if we brought this Masakhuxolo project off the ground we would hopefully educate all our children and that education would then reflect back on our community. I think there [was a] follow-up meeting we had ... just the principals and discussed what was necessary and that's where it came up that with the lack of electricity out in the schools when they needed a computer lab ... they also obviously needed the biology and the science lab and you also suggested at that stage ... the idea of a resource library just for educators which also was good.

Sagie: I recall we started with a little committee; there was Florence Gumede, Thandiwe Buthelezi and Richard. I remember the name of the centre. We brainstormed and then Thandiwe said Masakhuxolo because it means let's build in peace.

Gill: That's right and that was the peace initiative so it was very, very apt you know.

The committee members began to look for land. We visited several sites that had potential. Someone suggested that we approach the municipality and ask them whether they had suitable land for the project. Mr Andrew Ragavaloo, the former mayor of the municipality, said that he would facilitate the process in which land adjacent to the town hall be made available to build the resource centre. The municipality also undertook the responsibility to upgrade the library

and have this incorporated in the project. The land came at no cost and we were delighted that all of the funds would go to the buildings. I then visited the chief director of the education department in the Pietermaritzburg region to discuss the project. He was quite happy with the project and he agreed to relocate the circuit office to the new resource centre. He also undertook to provide additional cleaning staff to take care of the resource centre. With the letter showing that we had the land at no cost and the letter from the Department of Education demonstrating commitment to use the resource centre and provide additional staff, I submitted the application for the funds to the KwaZulu-Natal Peace Initiative. We had high expectations that work would commence soon.

However this was not to be. Violence broke out again and Richmond was gripped in a new wave of terror. We received communication from the KwaZulu-Natal Peace Initiative stating that our project was put on hold as violence had flared again and this was contrary to the conditions of the grant. In the next few months I prioritized other programmes, as the transformation of the circuit was uppermost on my agenda. The teachers were struggling with getting to grips with the outcomes based curriculum and the lack of resources just exacerbated matters. Whenever opportunities presented themselves I organised workshops for the teachers at Mr Richard Gibbs's school. The teachers came to appreciate them and the principals encouraged them to attend. Several capacity building workshops for the principals were also organised and they came to understand that the old authoritarian ways of leading schools had no place in a democratic country. The novelty of having governing bodies soon wore away as problems associated with role confusion surfaced. I had my hands full with conflicts that arose when governing bodies started to make appointments that were sometimes disputed. In some instances matters got ugly as some of the appointees were driven out and became displaced educators. I remember feeling incensed when a pastor of a church got involved and influenced the governing body to make a selection that favoured a particular candidate.

Gill Bruyns recalled the manner in which decisions were made at our meetings.

Gill: It was a very inclusive leadership ... you know a description to me is like a fried egg ... you know with the yolk in the middle and the people around. The yolk is the important part, and you were the decision maker, the white ... you took all of us ... you took our suggestions and you incorporated them. You did not throw out any suggestions that just did not make sense. You threw very few ... you guided our discussions [in] the correct way ... I don't mean that you had decided on the end product at all. You kept us [from] going off the track. It's the way I want to put it. So I felt that as much as you listened to us you wouldn't let us go off the track, which was very good.

A year had gone by and the violence in Richmond had gradually diminished. In this time there were reports in the media that the government had suspended the peace initiative funding in the wake of allegations of inappropriate spending, irregular tender procedures and high consultancy fees being paid. The contract of the former director-general, which had expired, was not renewed. It did not look good for Masakhuxolo and we thought that the project would not take off. Mr Henry Wilcox, the architect said that he would explore other avenues to get the funding and one of these was seeking an appointment with the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for finances. A few weeks later he called to say that the MEC was impressed with our plans and said that it was the “most sustainable peace initiative project” that he had reviewed. We got excited at this news and our hopes were raised. I approached the mayor of Richmond, Councillor Bheki Mtolo and told him that the project was again alive and he asked me to do a presentation to the town councillors. At this meeting I updated the councillors and told them that the mayor had offered to use his mayoral car allowance to top up our funds. I later learnt that his generosity might have been driven by the adverse publicity that was generated when the community learnt that he planned to spend almost 10% of the town’s budget on a mayoral vehicle (see <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Politics/Protest-against-Richmond-mayor-20010127>). The energy around Masakhuxolo was now building up again and the department of education confirmed that it would provide the staff needed to operate the resource centre.

Towards the end of 1999 my health deteriorated and I experienced many urinary tract infections, which is linked to my paraplegia. The daily travel of almost 250 kilometres took its toll. The poor ablution facilities in the Richmond schools aggravated the infections and I couldn't muster any energy to perform my duties. Some of my colleagues advised me to seek a medical board, as they knew that I was working in very difficult circumstances. Reluctantly I applied for a medical board. When I presented myself to the doctors, they were amazed that I had continued to serve the department of education for so many years after the motor accident had rendered me a paraplegic. It didn't take much convincing and my medical board was approved without difficulty. As this was being processed I met with some of the senior principals in the ward and apprised them of the developments. I told them that since a lot of initiatives were in the pipeline and that we had galvanized a lot of energy in the circuit it was important that these continue. I suggested that Mr Vincent Khoza, (pseudonym) a very capable principal should be appointed as the acting SEM until such time the post was advertised. Everyone was supportive of this decision. In early 2000 my medical board was approved and I ceased to be the ward manager of Richmond.

However my links with Masakhuxolo were given a new lease when Mr Rob Stewart (pseudonym) a service provider who had funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to service educational projects engaged me to see the project through. By this time MEC had approved almost R6 million for the Masakhuxolo Project and we went into the tendering process with the Richmond Municipality acting as the implementing agency. We now had funds for the project in its entirety and this included the computers for the IT Centre. Within a year Masakhuxolo was constructed and I made regular visits to Richmond to attend project meetings. It was a joyous event when I was invited as a guest speaker to a function when the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal Mr Sbu Ndebele officially opened Masakhuxolo. Richmond had now risen like the phoenix from the ashes. I felt that my work was done here and that I had meaningfully contributed to the development of an area that was ravaged by strife and violence.



**Figure 24: Gill Bruyns browsing through a book at the Masakhuxolo library**



**Figure 23: Premier Sbu Ndebele at the official opening of Masakhuxolo**

I used a digital memory box as a tool to remember events and to co-construct my personal history narrative with my research participants. The Richmond nodal experience can be accessed on YouTube using the following link: <http://youtu.be/B5phfRzK888>. Gill Bruyns brings this part of my life to a close when she made known her feelings after she reviewed the photographs of the resource centre in the digital memory box.

Gill: ... You organised a whole lot of courses for us, which was clearly very good. You listened to what we needed, apart from noticing what we needed ... when you went down to the schools you could see what the gaps were. We certainly had courses that we needed and they were appropriate ... there was lots of support for the governing body members ...

But I think your strengths were that you actually had this vision and you were not going to be deterred from it. It underpinned what you wanted to do for Richmond ... you were absolutely determined.

... I knew that you were always there for Richmond in that respect. I was absolutely thrilled to see those children in the classrooms now utilizing that resource centre which was what both of us had dreamed of. It was lovely to see the maths being taught and knowing that those science and biology laboratories were being used by the children and that expertise would ultimately enhance the community, because of the children ... really well educated would come back and bring something back into Richmond which is I think our dream really!

#### **5.4 NEW MILLENNIUM, NEW BEGINNINGS ....**

The new millennium arrived without the much anticipated millennium bug disaster. A few months later in 2000 I received news that my medical board application was approved. The doctor who processed my application told me that since I was young and active I should find something to do to keep myself busy. He suggested that I should do something that would occupy me but give me sufficient time to look after my health. It was not long when a former SEM, Mr Glen Jones (pseudonym) whom I had brief interactions with in the Pietermaritzburg Regional Office invited me to do a few capacity building workshops for departmental officials. I gladly took up his offer and conducted the workshops, which I quite enjoyed. I also received feedback that encouraged me and I looked forward to future assignments like these. After taking on a few minor assignments, Mr Clive Waddy (a research participant in my study) called me and asked me if I was interested in a project that a non-governmental organization was putting together to develop the capacity of school governing bodies.

My writing and research skills came to good use as we developed a set of 7 manuals to build the capacity of governing bodies of the schools in KwaZulu-Natal. Initially Clive and I occasionally disagreed on certain decisions and it took us some time to work past these differences. He had a way of doing things and I had my preferences and these did not always correspond. In time we learnt to be patient and tolerant with each other. We sometimes visited each other as it made sense to travel together to meetings and we got to see each other in a different context and this helped strengthen our working relationship to the point where we got to respect each other and

strong bonds of friendship were formed. The manuals were well received and were translated into different languages and were accompanied by a series of posters. We also conducted the training of master trainers across the province of KwaZulu-Natal and we were looked upon as school governance experts. Whenever I saw the posters of the manuals on the walls of the principals' offices and when they referred to the manuals I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment. In the conversation that follows Clive Waddy reflects on the materials that we developed.

Sagie: What was your assessment of the materials that were produced for the Understanding School Governance and Towards Effective School Management projects?

Clive: Some of our manuals were exceptionally good, concise, ordered, to-the-point, easy to read and absorb (even by laymen) attractively laid out and printed, with comprehensive coverage of relevant topics. Some of our manuals were not as good and I think particularly of the Finance manual ...

Sagie: What are your perspectives on the master trainer programme?

Clive: I cannot remember how the participants were selected. Whatever the method, not all of them were enthusiastic or particularly interested. Having said that, I am sure that participation for some of them was a life-changing experience ...

You were the ideal partner. Hugely supportive - I think of the time that I was deeply upset by what I regarded as unjust criticism and was thinking of packing it in ... You were an ideal sounding board and happy to contribute your opinions and ideas.

It was not long after the school governance project was handed over to the department of education when the late Mrs Cheryl Cameron approached me and asked me whether I would lead a project on building the capacity of school management teams. A set of training and reference manuals in three languages, posters and a training video had to be produced. With the experience I had with the governance project I was happy to take on this new assignment. I was

delighted when Clive who was not available earlier, joined the team. By now we had a good understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses and complemented each other as we took on this new challenge. In the space of 18 months we produced 12 manuals and the accompanying materials. As the materials project leader I had to ensure that the work was up to standard and delivered on schedule. We worked very hard and sacrificed many weekends, public holidays and worked late hours to produce the material. I recalled the frustration and anguish that I felt when my work was critiqued and suggestions were made on how they could be improved. I took the criticism personally. In the collage below some of our work is represented together with the newspaper coverage that our projects received.



**Figure 25: Understanding School Governance and Towards Effective School Management materials and press coverage**

Towards the end of 2004 I was approached by Mr James Manuel (pseudonym) to conduct school governance training that focused on financial management in schools in Welkom and Kimberly. I was the lead facilitator and worked with four other colleagues who I recruited to carry out this assignment. As the project leader I had to allocate schools to the consultants, read their reports and then collate them into a master report before sending them off to James. It was

not always fun as we sometimes disagreed about the way things should be done. Sometimes the arguments almost got out of hand and after people took time off and reassessed the situation we found ways to overcome our differences. My passion for excellence and attention to detail was a significant contributing factor. I could also be very obstinate and fixed about the ways things could be done.

As I worked with the educational development projects I was also involved in the activities of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE) in South Africa. In December 1999 I was invited to take charge of the national team that was managing the Institute's schools in the country. The school in Chatsworth and Newcastle were already opened and the school in Lenasia was scheduled to open in 2003. I was familiar with Sri Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy on education and his education model, which sought to develop character and elicit human values that were inherent in every learner. I attended international conferences on the human values programme in 1986, 2000 and 2008 as well as the inaugural conference of Sathya Sai Schools in 2001. I was convinced that character education would lead to a transformed society and therefore put a lot of time and effort into the schools. In early 2000 I updated the board of management constitutions and put into place programmes to strengthen the schools.



**Figure 26: I receive an advanced certificate in Education in Human Values from Sri Sathya Sai Baba at a graduation ceremony in India, in November 2002**

I was delighted when I was asked to prepare a paper to present at an international conference in India in September 2001. A friend of mine, Mr Suda Singh helped me to produce a short video,

which I used in my presentation at the Strengthening Human Values Conference. At the conference I met the now late, Mr Victor Kanu and a few senior officers of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization and they asked me to join the inspectorate to accredit the Sathya Sai Schools in Africa. In January 2001 Mr Victor Kanu organised a working conference in Ndola, Zambia to develop a tool that could be used in the accreditation process. I was very impressed with the Sathya Sai School in Zambia and was fascinated by Victor's account of how the school was started. Shortly thereafter Victor invited me to assist him in a project sponsored by UN: HABITAT to change the behaviour and attitude of learners in African cities towards water, sanitation and hygiene. For the next 7 years I served in the project initially as his deputy but in the last 4 years I took charge of the project. We developed materials and manuals for teachers to use to change behaviour through eliciting values and promoting character education. I travelled extensively to countries in East Africa and West Africa and came to experience the different cultures in Africa. The French proved quite a challenge and through my good friend Professor Opape Onanga from the Sorbonne University in Paris, I was able to manage. I prepared detailed reports for United Nations as well as several publications. In the course of the programme I travelled to Nairobi, Addis Abba, Ndola, Accra, Abidjan, and Dakar to facilitate at conferences and to monitor progress on the implementation of the programme. When a similar programme was introduced in Asia I was requested to join a group of experts to address conferences in the Philippines, Bangkok and Nanjing. I participated in an international conference in Mauritius in 2005 and in 2011, I was invited to share experiences at the United Nations Conference in Cape Town and participated in the "Seminar on Human Values- based Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education: Best Practices for Sustainable Programme." Further information on UN World Water Day 2011 can be accessed from the following website: [http://www.unwater.org/wwd11/event\\_programme.html](http://www.unwater.org/wwd11/event_programme.html).

The exposure to the United Nations programme, travel to so many countries and the chance to experience so many cultures and interaction with many experts and accomplished leaders like Mr Victor Kanu, Mr Kalyan Ray, Mr Andre Dzikus and Dr Jumsai enhanced my leadership development. I grew in confidence and realised that they saw beyond my disability and appreciated the knowledge and skills that I brought to the project. I enjoyed the travel and in spite of the difficulties in places that were not wheelchair friendly I somewhat managed. It was very difficult to get vegetarian food in most of the African countries but I did not mind. I grew

to appreciate the comforts that I enjoyed back home in South Africa and thanked God for the blessings to be born here. A website that offers details of the Human Values in Water Sanitation and Hygiene Education (HVWSHE) can be accessed at <http://hvwshe.urbancities.org/index.html>.



**Figure 27: I address a UN-HABITAT meeting in Philippines alongside Victor Kanu**

In 2006 my wife Ruban experienced a critical moment in her career when she was declared in excess at her school and she decided to resign from her teaching post. At this time the sector education training authority (SETA) programmes were in demand and we decided to seek accreditation. In 2002 I established a closed corporation as a vehicle for my consulting work and we acquired premises in an office block in central Durban. Ruban and I worked hard and the Education Training and Development SETA (ETDPSETA) soon accredited our company. Since then we have trained over 1000 learners in accredited learning programmes. As New Age Strategies, we trained teachers under a New Zealand Aid Project to build their capacity to work with orphans and vulnerable children and built the management capacity of the school management team in the Ugu district in a project funded by the Zenex Foundation.

Our work in the Ugu district ran for four years and was situated in Phungashe a deep rural area some 170 kilometers away from Durban. I mentored the principals whilst Ruban coached the HoDs. We found tremendous satisfaction in working with the rural school managers and saw that the environment in which they operated from was very difficult. The abject poverty, very high rates of unemployment, scourge of HIV/AIDS, lack of basic facilities, poor parental involvement and inadequate support from the education department made their task a daunting one. We did our best to motivate and inspire them and gave them hope when they mastered certain basic skills. We were encouraged by their enthusiasm and appreciated the efforts they put in implementing the knowledge and skills we shared with them. In spite of the Zenex Foundation pouring millions of rands into the Isibalo Project the final evaluation showed that little gains were made in improving the results in Phungashe. The evaluation report on the school development programme can be accessed at the following website: <http://www.zenexfoundation.org.za/evaluation-and-research-reports/school-development-programme>. Having spent some four years in the field I believe that the contextual factors were just too overwhelming. However a couple of schools stand out and if they continue to implement the knowledge and skills they acquired, it wouldn't be too long before they achieve improved results. In the following conversation Wendy Heard, the project manager reflects on our performance as a service provider.

Sagie: How did New Age Strategies impact on the project outcomes of the Isibalo Project?

Wendy: Of all of the service providers the most positive came from New Age Strategies. I mean if you spoke to them or in the evaluation or in the close out thing we did at Kings Grant, you know New Age Strategies always came out and if you bump into them now and talk, you know ... you know they'll talk about New Age before any of the others. I really do think that ... that curriculum leadership and management ... was well received by the schools and remembered, that made the impact there ...

Wendy: You recognised within the SMT their professionalism as well. You also saw [them as] professionals and you never sort of undermined them or spoke down to them ... you didn't sort of see yourself as an expert and you allowed them space and recognised the roles that they played. I would say that you are very democratic and participative ... you like to bring people in and [you are] people orientated. You are not only task focused or goal directed. You want what's best for people and what they value.

Sagie: What you think I could have done differently?

Wendy: Not from my side but in discussions and reflections that we've had with Zenex and others it did come through. I remember one session that we had when we discussed it, it was indicated that... you always came with a solution you know to schools where they felt that perhaps there should have been more of a self-discovery on the part of the recipient you know ...

The photographs that follow are a representation of the work we delivered as an education service provider



**Figure 28: Isibalo awards ceremony with Mrs Nzimande and Ruban**



**Figure 29: Educators receive training certificates for orphans and vulnerable children support programme**



**Figure 30: Graduates of the curriculum management course**



**Figure 31: South African Principals' Association Conference 2011 with the school principals that I mentored**

## 5.5 DIRECTOR OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF SATHYA SAI EDUCATION (SAISSE)

Since 2002 I served under the leadership of Victor Kanu who was the director of the African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (TAISSE). In 2004 Victor appointed me as his deputy director and I worked closely with him in the HVWSHE project with UN: HABITAT (see p. 125). In November 2009 Ruban and I were on vacation in New Zealand when I received news that Sathya Sai World Foundation (SSWF) had appointed me as the director of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSE), which later under my tenure became the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE).



I was very fortunate to have had Genoveva and Victor Kanu as my mentors. They made a huge impression on me and I was inspired by their mission to promote human values education and develop the character of children in Africa. Victor Kanu dreamt of a better world especially for children who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. He was a visionary leader who led from the front and saw huge projects to completion. Genoveva's caring and nurturing presence brought out the best in me when I worked with the Kanus in the HVWSHE project.

**Figure 32: Genoveva Kanu, Victor Kanu and myself at the Sathya Sai School in Ndola, Zambia**

I accepted the assignment to lead the ISSE, as I was passionate about the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme and was ready to use the experiences and skills I had gained in this field to good use. I was asked to immediately conduct a study of the four schools administered by the Institute in South Africa and to prepare a report. I made my way around the schools in Chatsworth, Newcastle, Lenasia and Cape Town and met with the principals, members of the board of management and leaders from the Sathya Sai Organization of South Africa. My findings showed that the schools secular performance ranged from good to poor. In the poor performing schools the learners came from impoverished backgrounds with several

barriers that prevented them from succeeding. In spite of the fact that the character education programme was implemented for almost seven years, it needed a lot of work to bring it to the ideals that were envisaged.

I found that the schools were poorly funded and that teacher morale was very low. The poor salaries without fringe benefits exacerbated the situation. In some schools many of the teachers were under qualified, as the schools could not afford to pay good enough salaries to attract suitable staff. Teachers who were medically boarded and already retired or had taken severance packages were recruited to fill in vacancies. The principals of the schools did not have sufficient administrative experience and management qualifications. The boards of management struggled to supplement the school funds and preoccupied themselves with physical and financial resource management. Some of the problems in the schools could be apportioned to the Sathya Sai Organization, which was not resourcing the schools to the extent it should have. Members of the Institute, some of whom who were involved with the schools for a long time agreed with the findings and started to think of ways to address the gaps. I felt inspired by the enthusiasm, willingness and commitment that the Institute members showed for getting on with the task on hand. I took this on as a challenge to turn the schools around and establish models of excellence.

On taking up the directorship I reconstituted the Institute with new members and welcomed the former members to stay on. From the report on the state of the schools, it was evident that a turnaround strategy was required. I introduced an executive structure and assigned portfolios to willing and capable educationists. I shared the report and asked the executive team to develop a strategic plan. We revisited the vision and mission statement of the Institute and then produced an operational plan, which we implemented. The SSWF had produced guidelines for its schools and we sought to align the structures and programmes to the approved guidelines. Looking at the challenges that lay ahead I was very naive to think that because we were enthusiastic we would be able to achieve the lofty goals we set for ourselves. I was optimistic that we could make a difference and that we would raise the benchmarks for the schools. I threw myself into the activities of the Institute and it was not long before positive energy around the team was generated. I felt inspired and motivated with the effort that the executive committee members, school principals and management board members were making to turn the schools around.

Bowie Pillay, an executive member recalls the organizational culture and climate that prevailed within SAISSE.

Bowie: I think your participative management style has really grown SAISSE as a group.

The ethos of the group then is really focusing on serving because I think that underpins our role as members in SAISSE. You developed us as members of SAISSE ... in that interaction, our open communication ... we could be frank with each other ... and you've been very developmental ... from several aspects. On a personal level, professionally on how we managed the portfolios as well as unifying us with a good team spirit ... very positive team spirit. You've actually been able to unify us as a group ... You know a team that is very focused on delivering our different portfolio responsibilities ... I think in terms of the actual culture we were able to focus on what we were supposed to...

Matters however, rapidly deteriorated at the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth with teacher attendance, punctuality and work ethic being questioned. Learner discipline was deteriorating and some of their deviant exploits made their way onto Facebook. The school's finances were precarious and the school had slipped into a deficit and its operation was in threat. The senior leadership of the Sathya Sai Organization in South Africa and the SSWF was consulted and there was consensus that the principal should be replaced in the following year. The principal handed in a letter of resignation and I thought that the matter was over. At this time the governing body, which now replaced the former Board of Management had also approved new uniforms for the school. The principal and a few staff members used the change of uniforms to leverage support to resist the change of leadership and management of the school. One of the parents requested a meeting with me to discuss the changes at the school and I responded positively and agreed to meet the parent. Prior to the meeting I learnt that the same parent had prepared pamphlets and was distributing them in the school car park to other parents and learners. When I went to the school to meet that parent I found a gathering of over 150 parents waiting at the school hall. It was a very difficult meeting as the parents were worked up and demanded explanations for the principal's "sudden resignation", the apparent "lack of

consultation” with the change of uniforms and the “illegality” of the way in which the governing body was constituted. They were aggressive and refused to accept the explanations that were offered to them.

It was a difficult period and I was under extreme duress. The principal was an affable person and was popular with the staff, learners and parents. I was in a dilemma and had to weigh up the options of disclosing all the reasons why SAISSE and the SGB felt that the principal was no longer suitable to head the school or to keep to the path of integrity and confidentiality. Some of the parents approached a journalist and an article, which covered the principal’s resignation, appeared in a Sunday newspaper. After the principal’s resignation was effected, the new principal was subjected to hostility and the school became a battleground as the handful of parents resisted the changes that SAISSE and the SGB initiated. I continued to engage with the members of the SGB and SAISSE to find solutions to stabilize the school. At this time the governing body took a decision to rationalize and retrench redundant staff, as the school could not sustain itself. This added to the tensions and matters deteriorated and another article appeared in a community newspaper.

The small group of parents were incensed with the former principal's resignation, the change in uniforms and the rationalization of the staff. Eventually the SSWF sent a very senior officer to conduct an investigation. In his report, which was presented to the SSWF the officer did not find merit in the parents grievances and concluded that their actions were not justified. The Institute and the governing body were vindicated whilst senior members of the Sathya Sai Organization were implicated in aiding and abetting the parents. I felt relieved and honestly believed that the root source of the crises was identified and that the SSWF would take the necessary steps to remedy the situation. In the following conversation Bowie Pillay reminisces on the way I managed the crises.

Sagie: How I could have managed the crises better?

Bowie: I have to think hard for that one ... but I think for me, maybe just a level of impatience with stakeholders and may be one example would be the SGB or the concerned parents group because I think that took the mickey out of you [laughter]. Also when I speak of the SGB maybe and it's just an observation in terms of high expectations ... your high expectations you know ... and therefore the assumption that everybody understands what's expected of them ... could have been why you were impatient with them. I think [it is] also to be fair to you in terms of impatience [as] lots of issues were starting to become fast and furious and by that I mean, especially in terms of ... unresolved interpersonal relations.

Sagie: ... if I look back at myself ... I think that if I had been a little more patient with the parent body and I think that if I had to do something differently now I'd do a lot more consultation ... more widespread and more broad based than assuming that because people are not complaining that people are happy ... I learnt the lesson that when people are quiet that's the time you really worry.

My hope for peace and stability at the Chatsworth School was short lived as organizational politics continued to make its way into the school and new issues were used to further certain agendas. The SSWF sent a high-powered delegation to South Africa but they proved to be ineffective as the co-operation and harmony that was envisaged failed to materialize after they left. Throughout these tribulations I was confused and struggled to make sense of what was going on around me. It was clear that there were two camps; SAISSE whose mandate was to provide oversight of the schools and the Sathya Sai Organization of South Africa whose responsibility was to support the schools and provide resources. Throughout these difficult months I wanted to throw in the towel and resign. I felt demoralised by the continuous

conspiracies and political games that undermined the work of SAISSE. However, I decided to continue with the duties that I was entrusted with as the members of the Institute encouraged me to continue. I was also determined to honour my mandate, as I was passionate about values, ethics and character education. I privately nurtured the hope that this was only a temporary set back.

The last straw for me was when I felt that the leadership of the SSWF had acted incorrectly on a matter that the SGB and SAISSE had agreed upon. The SSWF lent tacit support to a parent who wreaked havoc in the school. I was annoyed with this unfortunate and misplaced support for the parent who was spurred on to act with greater impudence. He became emboldened and continued to attack the school using legal threats and brought the school to ill repute in yet another article in a major weekly newspaper. It was at this stage that I decided to resign my position as director of the Institute. In tendering my resignation to the SSWF I said “I would like to inform you that I have tendered my resignation as Director of the Institute with immediate effect. My reason for doing so is to maintain my integrity and remain true to myself.” After I sent off the email, I received numerous messages of appreciation, support and comfort and this helped to alleviate some of my disappointment and anguish that I felt. I sincerely wished to advance the Sathya Sai Schools in South Africa but realised that to do so would mean engaging in political activities. As a spiritual aspirant determined to follow the voice of my conscience, I was unhappy to follow the path of my detractors and resort to the tactics that they employed. I thought it would be best to withdraw quietly.

# Parents fight with Sai school over fee hikes

**CHARMEL BOWMAN**

IRATE parents are at war with the management of the Sathya Sai School in Chatsworth over dramatic school fee increases.

The school is one of many around the world based on the principles of the late Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, that are intended to offer affordable education and promote an ethos of truth, peace and non-violence.

While Sai schools elsewhere in the country charge a small maintenance fee (in South Africa it's R35 a month), the Sai School in Chatsworth has steadily raised fees from R1 200 in 2010 to between R6 000 and R6 600 for 2013, while receiving a state subsidy and donations from devotees.

School management members say that due to rising costs and having to pay teachers market-related salaries, they

had no choice but to increase the fees.

School fees doubled from R1 200 in 2010 to R2 400 in 2011 and then again to R4 800 in 2012. Fees for 2013 are R6 000 for grades R to seven and R6 600 for grades eight to 12.

Parent Neville Pillay, who has been vocal about the fee increases, said his two children were not readmitted this year and he was considering legal action if they were not immediately reinstated.

While he admitted to not paying 2012 fees, he said he did this to get management to be transparent about what they were spending the money on.

He said while he and his wife could afford to send their children to a private school, they wanted their children to learn the values and cultural beliefs taught at the Sai school.

However, Sagie Naicker, a director at the school, is

adamant the fee increases were necessary, saying a few former parents were waging a vendetta against the school.

He said the school was run as an independent school according to the Department of Basic Education. The Rights and Responsibilities of Independent Schools document, which the Sunday Tribune has seen, states that independent schools follow their own distinctive missions and determine their own admission policies in line with the law.

But a member of the SA Sai organisation said a Sai school charging more than R6 000 in fees was wrong and against the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba teachings. He said teachers at Sathya Sai schools were often religiously inclined, understanding they would not be paid market-related salaries, which kept the salary bill low.

*charmell.bowman@inl.co.za*

**Figure 33: Newspaper article that launched a series of events that led to my resignation as director of SAISSE**

The leadership of the SSWF attributed importance to the newspaper article that the dissident parent initiated and in spite of my protestations that the article was based on untruth, my pleas fell on deaf ears. As the newspaper article was factually incorrect and prejudicial I made a complaint to the Press Ombudsman. I was delighted with his ruling, which vindicated SAISSE, the SGB and myself. The ombudsman directed the newspaper to apologize to the school and myself. "He said: "Fact-checking is the basis of solid journalism and reporters must observe this rule religiously. Bowman clearly did not adhere to this rule." He added, "I have little doubt that the mistakes made by the newspaper have caused Naicker and his school unnecessary harm." The full ruling can be accessed at <http://www.presscouncil.org.za/Ruling/View/sagie-naicker-si-school-chatsworth-vs-sunday-tribune-2429>.

# Apology to Chatsworth Sai School

THE Sunday Tribune apologises to Sagie Naicker, a director at Chatsworth Sai School (pictured right), for a story that the Press Ombudsman has found to be unfair, out of context and misleading.

Naicker lodged a complaint with the Press Ombudsman about a story published on February 10, headlined "Parents fight with Sai school over fee hikes".

The story was about parents' complaints over the increase in school fees at the Sai school.

The Press Ombudsman has directed the Sunday Tribune Herald to apologise for a misleading headline, inaccurate statement, unfair and out-of-context comparison between two schools, lack of verification and for not getting comment from Naicker on various matters.

The Press Ombudsman found that the Sunday Tribune Herald was wrong in omitting relevant information on Naicker's school.

We apologise for any unnecessary harm done to Naicker and his school.

**Figure 34: The editor reluctantly printed an apology which did not fully comply with the Ombudsman's ruling**

I felt that whilst I did not get the justice from the leadership of the Sathya Sai Organization of South Africa and the SSWF with regards to this matter, I was relieved that a judicial process cleared SAISSE, the SGB and myself of the untruths published. The newspaper articles in Figures 33, 34 and 35 reveal the nature of micro politics that plagued the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth. I was out of depth and clearly did not know how to navigate in a sea of conspiracy and political intrigue. Looking back at this experience I realised that my decision to resign was a good one.

# Ruling against this paper

THE Sunday Tribune apologises to Sagie Naicker, a director at the Sai school in Chatsworth, for a story that was unfair, out of context and misleading – and for the unnecessary harm this has caused him and his school.

Naicker lodged a complaint with the Press Ombudsman about a story on February 10 headlined “Parents fight with Sai school over fee hikes”.

The story, written by Charmel Bowman, was about parents’ complaints over the increase in school fees at a Sai school. She wrote: “The school is one of many around the world based on the principles of the late Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, that are intended to offer affordable education and promote an ethos of truth, peace and non-violence.”

Press Ombudsman Johan Retief directed us to apologise for the:

- Misleading headline – the story quoted only one dissatisfied parent, while the headline used the word “parents” (plural);
- The inaccurate statement that Sai schools in South Africa (other than Naicker’s) charge a monthly fee of R35;
- An unfair and out-of-context comparison between two schools that left the reader with the impression Naicker’s school was charging an exorbitant fee – which was not necessarily true;
- A lack of verification and comment from Naicker on various matters; and
- Omitting information that Naicker’s school had a policy of exemptions and concessions, and that the personal needs of such children were borne by the school – which would have put the matter in a different light and context.

Retief said: “Fact-checking is the basis of solid journalism and reporters must observe this rule religiously. Bowman clearly did not adhere to this rule.”

He added: “I have little doubt

the mistakes made by the newspaper caused Naicker and his school unnecessary harm.”

Retief dismissed three other parts of the complaint.

Sagie Naicker said: “Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the founder of schools that promote values-based education to develop character exhorted his followers to live a life of truth and right conduct.

“He said, ‘Truth alone triumphs and Dharma (righteousness, duty) protects those who protect Dharma’. The ombudsman’s ruling vindicates the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education and the school governing body, and justice has been served.

“The misleading article did not put the parent contributions in proper context. The Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth adheres to the guidelines of the Sathya Sai World Foundation and asks parents to contribute to the costs of running the school if they can afford to do so. The school has an exemption policy to assist parents who genuinely cannot afford to make contributions and a number of parents have been granted concessions.

“The school has made a conscious effort to enroll pupils from impoverished backgrounds and the costs of their tuition, uniforms, textbooks and stationery, transport and meals have been borne by the Sathya Sai Organisation.

“The vast majority of parents at the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth have agreed to increase their contributions so that their children get a quality education that also shapes character. The costs at this school are below those of most independent schools as well as former Model C schools.

“In an age where ethics, morality and good character are at risk, the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth is making strides to strengthen the moral fabric of society.”

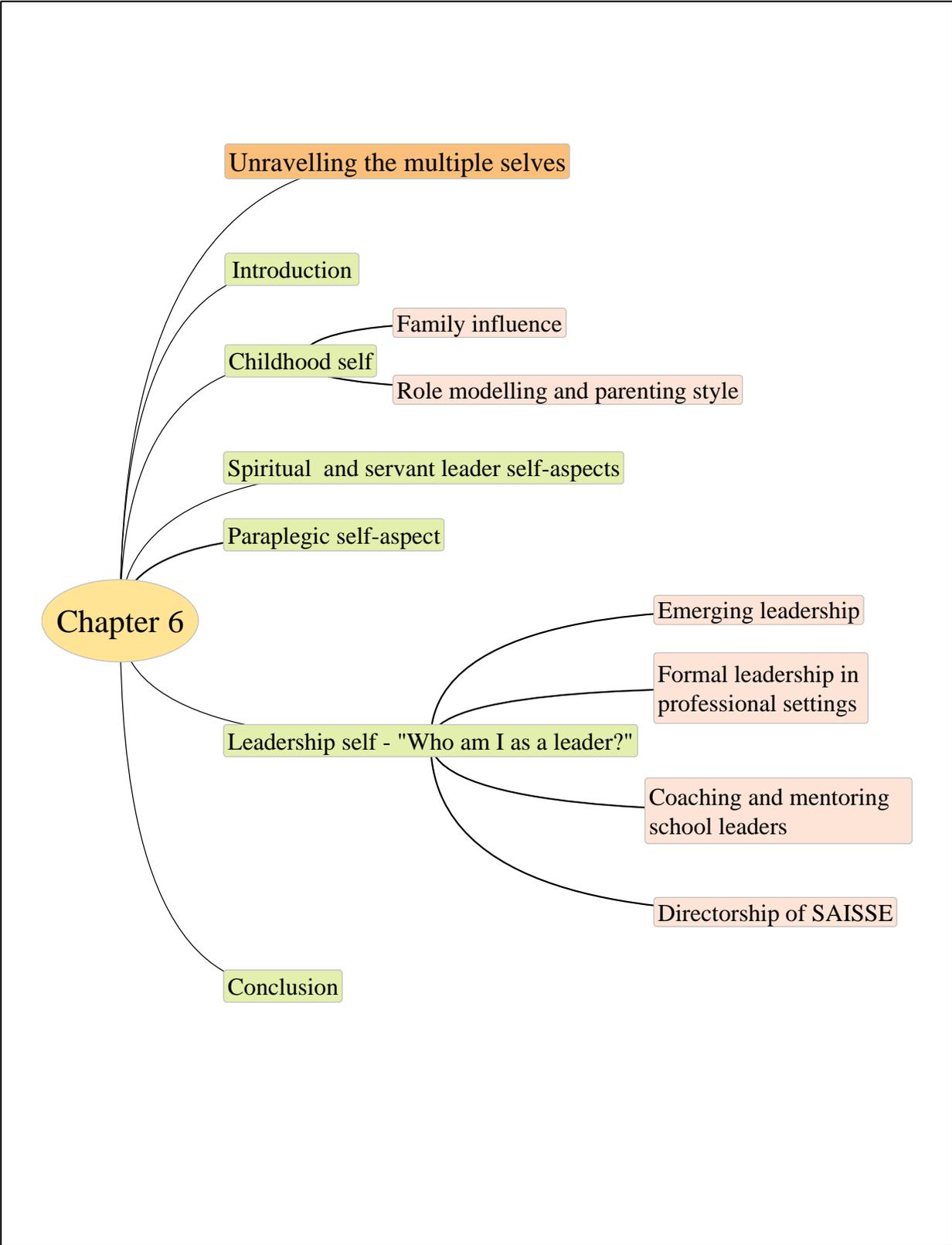
**Figure 35: The newspaper printed a second apology which fully complied with the Ombudsman’s judgment**

The issues that I grappled with as director of the Institute forced me to reflect on my actions with great intensity as I desperately sought to make sense of what was going on. I was confused as all the knowledge and leadership skills I possessed did not hold me in good stead and I felt that I was failing. I was exposed to micro politics and found it difficult to navigate in these difficult times as I was determined to hold onto the values that I espoused. I could see that implementing turn around strategies required a great deal of sensitivity for people's feelings and that I was so caught up in action that I failed to read contextual clues that emanated from the few people who were disgruntled. I underestimated the power that a few people had to disrupt the Institute and felt let down by the majority of people who chose to be silent.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

My formal experiences in educational leadership as a SEM in the Richmond ward were recounted in this chapter along with the establishment of the Masakhuxolo Educational Resource Centre. I then traced my experiences as an educational leadership coach and mentor in different settings. I finally narrated my tenure as the director of SAISSE and the critical incident that led me in a search to understand who I was and the way I engage as a leadership practitioner. This self-study was born out of this anguish and has given me the space to be reflexive about my practice. In the next chapter I explore the notion of the self in an attempt to explore and understand who I am and who I am as a leader. Answering these questions I believe, will assuage my existential quest to find meaning in life as well as improve my leadership practice.

Figure 36: Outline of Chapter Six



# CHAPTER 6

## UNRAVELLING THE MULTIPLE SELVES

*"Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle."*

Lewis Carroll

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous two chapters I narrated my personal history and the critical incident that was the genesis of this research. I traced the formative experiences and influences on my practice and focused on the leadership roles that I played in primary and high school, at university and in the community. Thereafter I provided insight into the educational leadership roles I occupied as a senior education specialist, SEM, education service provider, leadership coach and mentor and as a director of SAISSE. Owing to the intense discomfort that I felt at a particular point in my leadership practice (see Chapter Five, p. 130), I had to closely hold up the mirror and question “who I am” and “what I am doing?” The existential crisis that I described in my personal history narrative inevitably led to exploring notions of the self and who I really am as I struggled to make sense of my leadership practice.

In this chapter I engage with my personal history narrative and explore who I am and its implications for my leadership practice. I present the themes that emerged from the deconstruction of my personal history narrative and use the authentic leader self/selves theoretical framework that I described in Chapter Two (see p. 39) and relevant literature to make sense of “who am I”. As I immersed myself in the data, coded and developed themes for analysis I became aware that certain categories of self/selves were significantly represented because there were multiple references to these self-aspects in my personal history narrative. For me the different self-aspects represented pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of my life and herein is the possibility that when pieced together I may be able to unravel who I am and examine my leadership practice in this context. A presentation and discussion of these self-aspects are presented in the following sections.

## **6.2 CHILDHOOD-SELF**

In this section I examine key elements in my formative years that shaped my being. I examine my family background, the role and influence of my father and his parenting style and how these shaped who I am and who I am as a leader.

### **6.2.1 Family influence**

In my personal history (see Chapter Four, page 77) I referred to the family context in which I was raised. The attention that I received as the first-born male may have contributed to my leadership development as I grew up in a conservative Indian home where male members were treated differently. As a boy I received certain liberties and I enjoyed an elevated status. I became more aware of the fact that I was privileged when my sisters were born and benefitted from the difference in the way we were parented.

*... I was raised in the Indian patriarchal tradition and came to realise at an early age that boys enjoyed more privileges than girls ... As the first-born child I was doted upon and had a lot of attention from my parents. Of course being the only child and son had certain distinctive advantages. I remember my parents telling me that I was very fortunate to have been spoiled with so many toys ... I remember my father and mother teaching me nursery rhymes and telling me stories. Their applause encouraged me when I imitated them and I learnt very quickly probably because I was given little treats to reinforce my behaviour. My father also spent a lot of time with me and I often accompanied him whenever he went to visit friends or relatives.*

I enjoyed the lion's share of my parents' attention and they showed their affection by buying me toys to make me happy. The privileges I enjoyed extended beyond material benefits and I was presented with many opportunities that fostered and enhanced my intellectual development. As a solitary child my parents had more time to invest in my early education and they often asked me to recite nursery rhymes and the alphabet, sing and later read to visitors. My experience is consistent with Bass and Stogdill (1990) who observe that first-born children have better opportunities for language acquisition and interaction with adults. I believe that the privileges that I enjoyed and stimulation that I received advanced my intellectual development, enhanced

my feelings of self-worth and probably played a role in shaping my personality thus paving the way for leadership roles in later years. Andeweg and Van Den Berg (2003, p. 607) maintain that first-born children are favoured and that in “patriarchal societies, culture demands that they do so with their first-born son.” Furthermore, Avolio’s (2010, p. 734) findings reveal that 70 percent of leadership emergence “was due to environmental events” and the remaining 30 percent attributed to genetic influences (Arvey & Chaturvedi, 2011). Environmental factors played a “substantially important” role in nurturing my leadership (Arvey, Rotundo, Johnson, Zhang & McGue, 2006, p. 16). My experience as a first-born male child reveals that I enjoyed preferential treatment and the opportunities that I received provided the educational and cultural capital to grow as a leader in later life. This, however, came at the expense of my sisters who were treated differently because of gender differences. This reflection has enhanced my sensitivity to the gender inequalities that patriarchal cultures perpetuate as girl children are discriminated against.

In Chapter Four, (see p. 80) I narrated the moments when I was left alone in charge of my siblings when my parents went out.

*I looked forward to the time my parents left me in charge of my sisters when they went out as they sometimes gave me pocket money to buy ice lollies when the ice cream van came by or they would buy “lucky packets” for us which contained a small toy and sweets when they returned home.*

As the eldest child I was assigned responsibilities at an early age and I was expected to conduct myself in an exemplary manner and act as a role model to my siblings. This accords with Bass and Stogdill’s (1990) finding that first-borns are advantaged because they are given family duties earlier and there is greater pressure on them to grow up faster as parents “encourage goal setting and independence” (Murphy, 2011, p. 14). Murphy and Johnson (2011, p. 462) share a similar view and suggest that factors “related to birth” such as birth order and month of birth can also influence leadership development. Role modelling and parenting style are also closely linked with birth order and plays a role in leadership occupancy (see section 6.2.2, p. 144). My family context and background made it possible for me to exercise power and learn valuable lessons in influencing others to achieve the outcomes that I desired. Avolio and Luthans (2006) observe that formative experiences are the repositories of authentic leadership development and

Gardner et al. (2005) posit that authentic leadership is shaped by the leader's interpretation of the accumulated life experience which includes family and early childhood. Similarly I too am of the view that birth order, family influences and cultural factors were instrumental in building a platform for me to grow into leadership roles in later life and influenced my leadership practice.

### **6.2.2 Role modelling and parenting style**

In my personal history (see Chapter Four, p. 82), I made reference to my father and the role he played in influencing my leadership development. I looked up to my father as my earliest role model and was inspired by his character and by the leadership roles that he took on in a public service. I recognised that he was a gentle, wise soul who had strong feelings on justice. He shaped my political beliefs and at an early age I understood that apartheid was an iniquitous and dehumanizing experience for the majority of the disenfranchised citizens in South Africa. I drew on his example to champion the cause of the underdog and through association with my father; my sense of fair play and justice was heightened.

*He started work as young man in a shoe factory and his employers saw leadership potential and they promoted him to a supervisory position. He proudly showed us the certificates that he obtained after completing supervisory courses at the then ML Sultan Technikon. In spite of his limited formal education, which was grade 8 he was articulate and demonstrated his intelligence with his general knowledge. He had a good grasp of the political realities of South Africa and bought the daily newspaper as well as the weekend papers. He often commented on the inhumanness of apartheid and he significantly shaped my political beliefs. I listened with awe and admiration when he recounted the days of passive resistance meetings that he attended at Currie's Fountain, a football stadium and the resistance campaigns of the African National Congress and its ally, the Natal Indian Congress. He was also a keen sports follower and loved going to soccer matches and cricket matches with me ... At the shoe factory where he worked, he was the chairman of the sports club and I remember his blue jacket with the embroidered monogram and matching tie that he wore with pride (see Chapter Four, p. 82).*

My father also shaped my scholar self-aspect by encouraging me to read at a very early age and in my personal history (see Chapter Four, p. 83) I recalled my father enrolling me at a public library. I did not see him idling or wasting time because in his free moments he would either read the newspaper, which he bought daily or his head would be buried into the novel that he was reading. My father was influential in developing my leadership self-aspect and this is corroborated by a corpus of scholars who refer to Bandura's (1977) classic work on social learning to examine the influence of role models in leadership development (Avolio, 2010; Avolio, Rotundo & Walumbwa, 2009; Zacharatos, Barling, & Kelloway, 2000). According to Bandura (1977, p. 5) "most of the behaviours that people display are learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example." When I wrote my personal history narrative, I reflected on my father's character, the knowledge and wisdom that he possessed and realised that he played a significant role in my leadership behaviour as I looked up to him as a mentor and role model who was worthy of emulation. I recalled in my personal history narrative that my father prepared me to chair my very first meeting when the ex-students club at my high school was established.

*My father gave me a few pointers on how to conduct a meeting. In my high school years he served as the chairman of the Parent Teacher Association and he was the Chairman of the Sports Club at work, so he was experienced in leading meetings. His pleasant demeanour and calm disposition endeared people and he was held in high regard (see Chapter Four, p. 85).*

I observed my father and was inspired by his sense of sacrifice as he sought to serve the community. He was always positive and upbeat when he returned from the meetings and I never heard him complain. I was filled with pride when the school published my father's photograph in the school's inaugural magazine and I came to appreciate that my father was held in high esteem by the school community for the services which he voluntarily offered. My observation that I acquired leadership knowledge from my father is corroborated by Hartman & Harris (1992, p. 164) who suggest that children learned "at least some aspects of leadership from their parents early in life." Gardner et al. (2005) highlight the pivotal role that exemplars play in demonstrating high levels of integrity, trustworthiness and transparency. Self-awareness, a key construct in authentic leadership theory is heightened through contact with appropriate role

models. My father appeared to be centred and balanced and this he role modelled very well as most people remember him for his calm and peaceful demeanour.

In Chapter Four (see p. 80) I described my father's parenting style. He preferred an open and transparent communication style with his children as he felt that he was raised in an archaic tradition that stripped children of their rights and this hampered their development.

*My father was quite different from the generation he was raised in and he believed in involving children in family activities. He often reminisced about his childhood and vowed that his children would have a voice in family matters unlike his generation. In his day he said children were seen and not heard and he felt that this practice was old fashioned.*

This parenting style is similar to the authoritative style that Oliver et al. (2011, p. 535) describe as firm “but appropriate control along with high levels of warmth or responsiveness to children's needs and interests.” Authoritative parents “encourage independence within limits”, are supportive, foster responsibility and assertiveness and encourage self-regulation (Murphy, 2011, p. 463). My father kept a watchful eye on us from a distance and would only intervene if it were absolutely necessary. In this way I came to be responsible for myself and learnt self-restraint without looking outwardly for cues on how to conduct myself. Studies by Murphy (2011) reveal that authentic leadership development is associated with authoritative parenting style and that “authoritative parents produce teenagers most likely with the best chance for becoming effective leaders.” Avolio's et al. study (2009, p. 339) “Early life experiences as determinants of leadership role occupancy: The importance of parental influence and rule breaking behaviour” emphasizes the influence of authoritative parenting in shaping authentic leadership development. My father's parenting style not only shaped my leadership practice but also encouraged me to exercise self-control and self-discipline.

### **6.3 SPIRITUAL AND SERVANT LEADER SELF-ASPECTS**

In my teenage years I became cynical, challenged traditions, and scoffed at my parents' explanations for continuing Hindu customs that they could not rationally explain. There were many distortions in Hinduism, which was largely propagated in the oral tradition. As a curious

and critically minded young person, I wanted logical and rational explanations for the strange Hindu traditions and rituals (Maharaj, 2013). Fortunately my tryst with meaningful spirituality began when my father introduced my family to the life and teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

*At the devotional services we were exposed to the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and because they were so simple and clear I had no difficulty in understanding them. He said that he had not come to start a new religion and encouraged his followers to pursue their chosen paths and become better Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and Hindus. I was filled with hope and inspiration when he said, “All are one. Be alike to everyone. Don’t give room for differences of race, creed or nation. There is only one race, the race of humanity. There is only one language, the language of the heart (Chapter Four, p. 87).*

Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s discourses struck a chord in me not only because they were easy to understand but also because it inspired me and I felt good. I found that the simple way in which he articulated complex philosophy was practical and easy to understand. “The informal approach to religion, the lack of dogma and absence of rituals” impressed me as a follower (Aitken, 2006, p. 108). Drawing from my own experiences, the books that I read, the videos that I watched, and conversations with other followers, I was able to discern that Sri Sathya Sai Baba was a transformational leader. He embodied the four dimensions of transformational leadership; “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration” (Piccolo et al., 2012, p. 569). I looked up to Sri Sathya Sai Baba as someone who inspired idealized influence through his charismatic and authentic presence. He had very high moral and ethical standards and acted consistently with what he taught. I had come face-to-face with an authentic being whose thoughts, words and deeds were in harmony (Chibber, 2010). The vision of a united and common humanity that he articulated was the inspirational motivation that encouraged me as a citizen growing up in a country that was deeply segregated by apartheid. Through his discourses he enunciated lofty ideals that nourished my intellect and he stimulated my search for answers to the many spiritual questions that puzzled me. In my personal history narrative (see Chapter Four, p. 97) I discussed the individualized consideration Sri Sathya Sai Baba demonstrated when he ministered to my personal needs and helped me to recover after the accident that made me a paraplegic.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba embodied the virtues in leadership that I aspired for and he became my role model. He encouraged his followers to recognise and realise the divinity in themselves and all beings. Against the backdrop of a deeply divided South African society his message that all religions were valid and should be respected impressed me (“Sathya Sai Baba – His works,” n.d.). His clarion call exalting his followers to respect and appreciate everyone as an equal inspired me and helped shape my views on apartheid. At an early and impressionable age I came to understand that apartheid was an unjust social, political and economic system. This heightened my sense of justice and I came to appreciate that humanity was one and in my own way I tried to live by principles that embraced democracy and diversity instead of reproducing the prejudices that my secular education covertly instilled (Freire, 2000).

*When I was older I came to understand that Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings transcended religion and that he embraced spirituality, which was expressed in the universal human values of truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence. He urged his followers to live by these universal values and to transform themselves as they came to know, realise and manifest the latent divinity that was present in all of mankind (see Chapter Four, p. 88).*

In my young adult years I began to gradually discern a difference between religion and spirituality as I engaged with literature and was exposed to the diverse group of people who were also drawn to Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings. His references to divinity present in all of creation and the universal values of truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence, which was inherent in all human beings, shifted me from religion to spirituality (“Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba - Introduction, 2014”). I accepted that these values were universally present in most institutions, both secular and spiritual and were worthy to strive towards.

It is difficult to define and quantify what spirituality is as it is a socially diverse experience that is subjectively felt and understood. It is a “controversial and contested phenomenon” (Gibson, 2011, p. 8) and is sometimes conflated with religion. Some scholars make a distinction between religion and spirituality whilst for others there is no difference (Dent, Higgins & Wharff, 2005). Fry et al. (2011) argue that religion is a set of beliefs, prayers, customs and rituals that characterises devotional practice whereas spirituality is associated with the human spirit and values. Spirituality may subsume religion and goes beyond to incorporate altruistic love, which

manifests as selfless service and living in harmony with ones' environment (Fry et al., 2011). In spite of the controversies around spirituality the literature suggests that it can enhance leadership. Salameh's (2011) study on the perceived practice of servant leadership among school principals in Jordan suggest that educational leaders could benefit from being exposed to servant leadership theory, which is built on spiritual values that positions leadership as an act of service. Clarcken's (2008) self-study as a leader in the context as head of school at a university supports the view that effective leadership can be influenced by spiritual principles and practices. Blanton's (2008, p. vii) qualitative research suggests that the work of principals in the study was grounded in spirituality and that three elements of spirituality "fairness, caring, and equity" directed their leadership practice.

In Chapter Two, (see p. 17) I discussed my interest in spirituality, values and ethics and I listed some of the books that I read as a young adult on these topics. I gradually shifted in the way I conceived my relationship with God as I contemplated on the universal human values that I was exposed to and I made a conscious decision to live by them. I believed that if I loved all and served all I would become a better person. At an early age I was exposed to the human values of truth, love, right conduct, peace and non-violence that Sri Sathya Sai Baba articulated. I had faith that if I lived by them I would experience fulfilment and contentment.

*He urged his followers to live by certain universal values and to transform themselves. Sri Sathya Sai Baba used the acronym WATCH to remind us to observe our words, actions, thoughts, character and heart as we lived our lives. By living a values-based life character is enriched and habits, attitudes and behaviours that unworthy are recognised and transformed (See Ch 4, p. 87).*

In authentic leadership theory, Ilies et al. (2005) suggest that when leader and follower values are similar it is more likely that a positive relationship would develop. However, I have observed that it was easier to establish value congruence with those that I led in less challenging and stressful moments instead of difficult times. I found it to be a challenge to live by my values especially in moments that were difficult, stressful and demanding as pragmatism and expediency demanded otherwise. Diddams and Chang (2012, p. 597) ascribe these tensions to the "self that is only partly determined" and that authenticity which is a developmental process may have some "recurring level of non-congruence." The discomfort that I felt when I was not

fully living my values led me to examining my leadership practice. According to Whitehead (2009, p. 184) when “living contradictions” emerge “concerns, actions and evaluations” are modified. My search for the Holy Grail has shown me that it is far easier to espouse, articulate and pontificate about the human values than to live by them.

In my experience I noted that living by truth and integrity was a challenge as power and influence imperatives in some leadership contexts dictated otherwise. In such dilemmas I felt tensions and conflicts within myself as I struggled to shift from my actual self to my ideal self (Higgins, 1987), which for me represented the congruence between my espoused and lived values. In these contexts my equilibrium was disturbed and this forced me to reflexively evaluate the situation as I wrestled with my conscience. There were times that I regretted hasty and impulsive actions and on sobriety realised that I could have done better. Through the processes of reflection and reflexivity I engaged with issues and events in my life that did not go as planned and examined my attitudes, behaviours and thinking that contributed to the unintended outcomes. I often asked myself the question of whether my actions were politically motivated and self-serving or whether they emanated from a spiritual source, which had the well-being of all. Ilies et al. (2005) suggest that authentic leaders seek the well-being of followers as expressed in eudaemonic terms, which emphasises excellence in character and virtues instead of hedonism, which is the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain.

The Mahavakya theory of leadership, which I discussed in Chapter Two (see p. 32) stresses harmony between thoughts, words and deeds and argues that trustworthiness is promoted when people are transparent as they demonstrate a sense of completeness (Chibber, 2010). A critical reflection of my life experiences has helped me to recognise errors in judgment, lapses in decision-making and impulsive actions and this awareness has the potential to transform future behaviour. I consciously made efforts to maintain the congruence in what I thought, what I said and what I did but am aware that I have not yet perfected this state of being. There were moments when I acted with tact and diplomacy, as social imperatives demanded that I do not articulate what I was actually thinking. At other times I found myself doing something that was contrary to what I thought or said. Over the course of time through reflection I have become aware of these discrepancies, contradictions and inconsistencies and felt the dissonance, which

alerted me to the fact that I did not act with integrity. Thus, self-awareness, a critical component of authentic leadership theory (Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans, Norman & Hughes, 2006) is crucial if I am to transform myself as well as my leadership practice.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has significantly shaped my thinking, attitudes and behaviours especially in terms of making a difference and improving the life of people who are marginalized, destitute and vulnerable.

*I was attracted to his philosophy which incorporated selfless service to ameliorate the pain and suffering in the world ... I was impressed with his charismatic presence ... and the extraordinary leadership wisdom that he demonstrated ... Sri Sathya Sai Baba initiated massive projects that delivered free drinking water to more than 700 villages in the city of Chennai. He provided state of the art free health care at two super speciality hospitals. He was visionary and saw the imbalance in modern education, which focussed on knowledge and skills and neglected human values that enhanced character ... The aphorism “Love all serve all” became a refrain that provided the motivation for my actions to engage in programmes that uplifted the weak and vulnerable sectors of society (see Chapter Four, p. 87).*

As a young adult with a lot of enthusiasm and energy I became involved in service activities to uplift the lives of poor and vulnerable people. On hearing of the major projects that Sri Sathya Sai Baba initiated I felt motivated to also make a difference and started a service centre at Welbedacht, an informal settlement outside Chatsworth in Durban where residents lived in abject poverty, without running water and electricity. I led a team of young adults to deliver educational support, primary health care and poverty alleviation programmes. The seeds of servant leadership (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002) that Sri Sathya Sai Baba planted took root and I tried to live by his injunction “The hands that serve, are holier than the lips that pray” (Kamaraju, 2013, p. 119). I derived tremendous fulfilment out of these projects when I saw that the beneficiaries quality of life improve and the eagerness and joy in which they participated in the projects.

“These individuals wanted to share the happiness they had got from their personal relation to God toward others, particularly by being altruistic [;] receiving love promotes loving others” (Pessi, 2011, p. 14). I too was motivated to be an instrument in God’s hand and was elevated by the feelings of joy that I felt when I served others. There was a spiritual basis for my altruistic behaviour and I had come to recognise that the needs of others especially those of the less fortunate were no less than mine. This is consistent with Pessi’s finding, which indicates that there is a link between altruism and religiosity. The Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled that I discuss in the next section of this chapter (see p. 156) was also born out of the spirit of selfless service. I acquired valuable leadership knowledge and skills in participating in these service programmes. Hannah, Lester & Vogelgesang (2005, p. 51) propose that leaders who experience “heightened levels of virtue and altruism,” exercise greater effect and have increased positive influence on followers and organizations. In selfless service I came to appreciate the abundance that I enjoyed and felt the connectedness with others as we worked together to achieve states of happiness that we desired. Thus I too benefitted from engaging in acts of service.

On reflection I realised that the joy and satisfaction that I experienced was sometimes contradicted by the challenges, stresses and conflicts that emerged as teams worked together even if the members were spiritual aspirants. As the director of SAISSE I experienced difficulties that forced me to ask the questions of who am I and what I was doing. In my personal history narrative in Chapter Five (see p. 130) I referred to this as the most painful and difficult nodal moment that I experienced as I grappled with issues of integrity and authenticity. As I looked within “I experienced great discomfort, uncertainty and even heartbreak as I reflected upon the beliefs and practices that defined who I was” (Wright, 2009, p. 269). In this nodal experience the instances of joy and fulfilment were far and few in between in comparison to the relentless siege of micro politics that characterised the reform measures that SAISSE instituted to improve the Sathya Sai Schools in South Africa. Whilst this was a challenging experience I learnt valuable lessons and am not discouraged that pieces of the puzzle did not fit together to create the picture of success that I envisaged. In spite of this, I am still committed to offering my energies to engage in selfless service activities to transform myself and in the process bring joy and relief to the under privileged sectors of society. This observation is consistent with Turner and Mavin’s (2007, p. 387) finding that “life histories and in particular

negative trigger events contributes to the development of leader identity as well as leadership development through the processes of reflection.”

#### **6.4 PARAPLEGIC SELF-ASPECT**

In Chapter Four, (see p. 95) I described the life altering experience that I endured when a motor accident radically changed my being and forced me to fight to get a semblance of the life that I was accustomed to.

*Little did I know that the last photograph that I would have standing up without assistive devices was taken at the official opening of the Welbedacht project. On December 2, 1985, life as I knew it changed forever ... The nurses told me that I had injured my spinal cord and the doctors told me that I would never walk again. I had become a paraplegic and the struggle to reclaim my life had only just begun.*

The reference to the photograph (see Figure 15, p. 95) taken 9 days before the accident is poignant because it reveals my present self, longing for the completeness of my older self, which was independent and free of mobility assistive devices. Higgins (1987) self-discrepancy theory that I discussed in Chapter Two, (see p. 35) suggests that the actual self strives towards becoming an ideal self. In this particular instance there is a contradiction as I expressed the desire of going backwards instead of forwards because my ideal self in an able body is located in the past. My desire for a complete, healthy and mobile body is in response to the pain, hardship and frustration of being trapped in a body that is disabled. As a person with mobility impairment my independence is seriously limited and the quality of my life is affected because of the barriers I experience on a daily basis. O'Connor, Young & Saul (2003) conclude that for paraplegics even simple routine tasks demand a lot of energy and effort. Seeing myself free, independent, mobile and active in the photograph reminded me of the challenges that I now face daily. I find the activities that able-bodied people take for granted such as reaching for objects in high places, carrying articles such as shopping bags and climbing curbs and stairs, very difficult because both public and private places are not adapted for people with mobility impairments. Blanes, Camagnani and Ferreira (2009, p. 19) are of the view that “these barriers have a negative impact on the QoL [Quality of Life] and self-esteem of persons with SCI [Spinal Cord Injury]”.

I also experienced the diminished body functions that Blanes et al. (2009) describe. In addition to the partial loss of sensation, I find the loss of normal urinary and bowel function and increased spasticity quite stressful. If there is anything apart from experiencing mobility impairment, it is the frequent urinary tract infections that I find to be debilitating. I concur with Blanes et al. (2009, p. 19) who argue, “problems associated with an impaired body, such as pain, fatigue, urinary tract infections, spasticity and susceptibility to pressure ulcers, have a significant impact upon the lives of many people with SCI”. Hence I am of the view the accident that led to my paraplegia is a critical incident that has “changed my life forever.”

The challenges I experienced extended beyond the physical self and included moments when my dignity was compromised and my self-esteem was eroded as I struggled to negotiate between the desire to function as an able-bodied person with an “intelligent mind” trapped in a “disobedient body” (Chib, 2011, p. 9). The labels of a person with a disability, a paraplegic and being differently abled, redefined who I was and I struggled to accept this identity, which was determined by my medical status. O’Connor et al. (2003) are of similar view that medical status plays a significant role in defining who paraplegics are. People with disabilities are seen as being different and in some instances are looked down as being lesser capable. My experience is consistent with O’Connor’s et al. (2003, p. 211) observation that feelings of difference “emerged as an important and disturbing aspect of the experience of living with paraplegia ... and was related to being simultaneously invisible and overly visible in the eyes of the community.”

In Chapter Four (see p. 104) I recalled the initial reaction of my colleagues and learners when I returned to work.

*It was a huge adjustment facing my colleagues, some of whom were very supportive and others just felt awkward around me ... I worried my principal to give me challenging assignments as I felt he was not fair to me because I thought that he saw me as someone who was less capable.*

At the physical level I appeared to be very conspicuous and people stared at my unusual swing through gait with my crutches or when I wheeled myself in a shopping mall. Whilst I was overly

conspicuous, paradoxically I was invisible in the workplace as I initially struggled to gain the respect of my colleagues and seniors. In time I learnt that I would have to prove myself to my colleagues that I was competent and was a valuable member of the team. I therefore worked very hard to debunk the stereotype that people with disabilities were not capable and did not add value at the workplace (See Chapter Four, p. 104).

*I threw myself into my work as I was determined to dispel the notion that I was not capable because I was now a paraplegic. In hindsight I realise that I worked very hard and the quest to be an equal provided the motivation that I needed ... In time they learnt that only the outer me had changed but the old me was still very much the same.*

I desired to be treated equally and fairly and I resented the notion that I was less capable and therefore I should be assigned “soft” jobs. I struggled to negotiate the balance of desiring independence and at the same time admitting that I needed help in some matters because of physical limitations. Like O’Connor’s (2003, p. 414) participants, I too am acutely aware of the limits to my independence and sought to establish a “balance between relying on others and maintaining personal control.” In time I learnt to swallow my pride and accept assistance as I came across many well-intentioned people who did not feel pity for me but just saw me as a strong, independent person with mobility impairment.

As I faced social, psychological and physical barriers I made conscious efforts to overcome these barriers and appear to be “normal.” I do not look at myself as a person with a disability but only experience this self when I experience barriers. I usually accepted environments that did not accommodate my special needs and tried to fit in without attracting too much of attention to myself even if it meant compromising my self-worth by accessing meeting and conference rooms through rear entrances which sometimes took me through unpleasant restricted spaces. Watson (2002, p. 513) aptly describes the way I tried to fit in society. “People who have an impairment or chronic condition, it is argued, suffer a loss of self and go through a process during which they negotiate their lives in such a way to be ordinary as possible and so retain some contact with desired life-worlds.”

My first hand experience as a paraplegic, coupled with the heightened sense of justice and fair play that I described earlier played a significant role when I helped cofound the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled which is documented in Chapter Four (see p. 102) of my personal history narrative where I made the following observation:

*When I chatted with a few other people who were disabled I learnt that they did not work, did not have friends outside the disability sector, did not play sport and spent most of their time at home. Their families did not have the means to take them out and they lived a very insular life divorced from mainstream society. As people with disabilities we felt different from able-bodied persons as society saw us as people who were less fortunate and lesser beings who didn't count for much (see Chapter Four, p. 100).*

The Forget-Me-Not Sports Club has for the last 28 years acted as an advocacy group campaigning for the rights of people with disabilities and empowered people with disabilities to resist oppression and inequality. Initially the club started out as a self-help organization but over the years it evolved into a self-organised entity that started to question the inequalities in society. The club's name mirrors the marginalised status of people with disabilities and reflects its desire for its members to be included in mainstream society. We felt "discriminated against and marginalised because of [our] disability and had very limited access to fundamental socio-economic rights such as employment, education and appropriate health and welfare services" (Howell, Chalken & Alberts, 2006, p. 48). As a club we sought a transformed society where we would be treated with "dignity and equal access for personal development" (Siyabulela & Duncan, 2006, p. 307). Using my experience as a person with a disability I strategically directed the club's mission to champion the cause of the marginalized, to sensitize the public on our needs and act as a lobby group to improve the quality of life of our members.

In spite of the trials and tribulations that I have faced as a person with a disability I regard it to be a positive and fulfilling experience because it afforded me the possibility to grow. I take disability has a challenge that offers me opportunities to transcend limitations and become a fuller being. Gardner et al. (2005) maintains that such life changing experiences accelerate authentic leadership development and describe these moments as trigger events, which are opportunities for reflection, self-awareness and self-regulation. In my personal history narrative

I recounted my life experiences and discuss the different leadership roles I have played notwithstanding the fact that I am classified as a person with a disability. My reflections are consistent with Gardner's et al. (2005) exposition of authentic leadership theory and I maintain that the trigger event of becoming a paraplegic enhanced my personal growth and ultimately my leadership practice.

## **6.5 LEADERSHIP SELF – “WHO AM I AS A LEADER?”**

In this section I reflect on my leadership self-aspect and examine how I evolved and developed as a leader. I survey leadership experiences and critically examine them to provide insights into who I am as a leader.

### **6.5.1 Emerging leadership**

In my grade 7 year I took charge of a very small project, which was the very first formal act of leadership that I demonstrated.

*... I suggested to my classmates that we contribute money to buy my teacher a farewell gift at the end of the year. My classmates bought into the idea and I took care of the administration and kept a record of the names and amount of money that was collected. On looking back I realised that this was the first project that I had initiated and led (see Chapter Four, p. 84).*

I recall that that I was pleased when we collected the required amount of money to buy the travel alarm clock for our teacher who expressed his surprise and gratitude when the gift was presented to him. I spent time at home compiling a list of the learners who contributed as well as the amounts of money that they gave. At an early age I intuitively understood the need for good administration and kept good records, which included the receipt as well as an elementary income and expenditure statement because I was accountable to my fellow learners (Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009). By fulfilling the need for “financial information” and reporting to the donors I demonstrated transparency (Mestry & Bisschoff, 2009, p. 126), which in hindsight I realise, ensured a trouble free project. This was my first experience in leading and managing a project and I recall the satisfaction my classmates and I felt when the project was completed.

In high school I initiated a few projects, which I narrated in Chapter Four and my teachers soon came to recognise that I had leadership potential and this led to my being appointed as an acting head prefect. However, I believe that I was not appointed as head prefect because I was an outspoken critic at the time when the Soweto uprising against apartheid made news headlines in 1976. I was sensitized quite early in life that apartheid was unjust and I was sufficiently motivated to take a stand and make my feelings known. At this time the anti-apartheid movement was building pressure internationally discouraging sporting relations with South Africa and lobbied that no normal sport could be played in an abnormal society.

*When the British Lions toured South Africa in 1974 I was critical about them playing rugby when there was international condemnation. In my matric year I was dropped from being a head prefect and was demoted to the ranks of being a prefect. I attributed this to my outspokenness (see Chapter Four, p. 84).*

I have no regret that I was not appointed as head prefect in spite of the fact that it would have looked good on my curriculum vitae. It was only much later in life I realised that leadership did not reside in a formal position and that it could be practised without a title. I believed in being true to myself and speaking my mind although it was contrary to the school management's view. This act of being genuine, free from external pressure and influence (Gardner et al., 2005), gave me the space to act on my values and principles. I took a stand and acted consistently with what I thought (Chibber, 2010). I accepted the price for being outspoken when I was not appointed as head prefect. I viewed this leadership experience as a trigger event, an antecedent in authentic leadership development (see Chapter Two p. 26) as it forced me to reflect on my principles and this served as a catalyst for my leadership development. On reflection I see this trigger event as a formative experience. My value system and certain key principles, which shaped and directed my life in later years, were still in an embryonic state.

When I was elected as the founding chairperson of the Montarena ex-students association I developed valuable leadership knowledge and skills and this provided me with a good grounding to move onto bigger projects.

*It was here that I acquired valuable lessons in organising activities and about leading and managing people ... Over the next few years we accumulated a fairly large sum of money and we agreed to donate some of our funds to support an*

*orphanage that just opened in Chatsworth in keeping with our objective to engage in social upliftment programmes (See Chapter Four, p. 86).*

I was sensitive to the plight of the poor and disadvantaged and felt a need to offer my time and energy towards their welfare. In noting that leadership is about influence (Bush & Middlewood, 2013), as the chairperson I persuaded the members to adopt a decision to support a newly opened orphanage. I now see this as the seeds of servant leadership that Sri Sathya Sai Baba had sown, beginning to sprout. According to Greenleaf (1998) selfless service precedes acts of leadership. At this stage in my life I did not have any leadership aspirations and was primarily motivated to offer acts of service to make a difference to the community that I belonged to. The influence that I exercised resonates with Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach's (1999, p. 10) assertion that leadership focuses on the morals and ethics of leaders and the power and influence they exert are "derived from defensible conceptions of what is right or good." Bush (2007) is of similar view and understands leadership as a process of influence derived from a leader's values and beliefs. The Mahavakya theory of leadership considers character (Chibber, 2010), which is the embodiment of values, beliefs and personal attributes as the source of leadership. The influence that I exerted on my fellow ex-students to donate funds to the orphanage originated from the principles and values that I embraced at the time.

My leadership development was accelerated when I engaged in acts of resistance at university as students protested at the actions of the apartheid government. In 1980 the resistance against apartheid was rising and coupled with labour action and demands for Nelson Mandela's release, South Africa was a smouldering political hotbed. When the students at the University of Durban-Westville agreed to form a students' representative council my friends felt that I could make a contribution and they encouraged me to contest the elections.

*My friends encouraged me to stand for elections, as I was known to the student body for being active during the protest actions. I was nervous because I had not contested a large-scale election before, however I decided to take the plunge because of my experiences in the student unrest. I drafted an election manifesto and campaigned with my friends support. Electioneering was not as easy as I expected, however I did win a seat on the democratically elected Student's Representative*

*Council (SRC) and served with some personalities that became struggle heroes in later years.*

As democracy was a novel experience for me, I took a risk and offered myself as a candidate but soon realised that it was quite a difficult task to influence people to vote for me. As a young emerging leader I was more inclined to take higher risks than older leaders who “want higher probabilities of success and may be content with lower payoffs” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 181). Notwithstanding, this I was grateful for the opportunity and in hindsight realised that this experience contributed to my growth as a leader. Leaders who take risks “seek out and create opportunities and then turn these opportunities into advantages or results” (Taffinder, 2006, p. 12). Risk taking promotes learning and personal renewal especially when calculated risks are taken (Barth, 2013).

I spent some time in drafting a manifesto and my friends helped me to put up posters around the campus. In drafting the manifesto I looked at my experiences as a student and drew on this to develop a vision. Vision crafting is a key function of leadership (Brecken, 2004) as leaders create an image of the future. I tried to create “an impelling vision” (Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 70) to get my fellow students excited and energized by the programmes I promised. In hindsight I realised that in my naivety I made many promises that I could not deliver on and that I did not develop a shared vision, which I discuss in Chapter Seven (see p. 170). Electioneering was a challenge, as I had to summon up courage to approach students that I barely knew and canvassed their support. When I addressed the students at mass meetings I was very nervous and did not know how they would react to what I said. It is believed that heroic leaders are expected “to be strong: to display initiative, courage and tenacity” (Murphy, 2013, p. 52) however, exceptional leaders “also accept their weakness and develop a capacity to cope” (Murphy, 2013, p. 56). My communication skills were tested and I realised that I had a difficult road ahead because of the more popular students who were politically well connected were contesting the elections. Whilst I was unsure of the outcome I assumed that with support from friends and my visibility in the student protest meetings, students would vote for me. I developed relationships, “networks and coalitions” as a support base to achieve my objective (Bolman & Deal, 2007, p. 122).

### 6.5.2 Formal leadership in professional settings

When I was appointed as a school counsellor I became active in the committee that fostered professional development programmes in the Teachers' Association of South Africa. As a member of the committee I was involved in organising activities and had an opportunity to demonstrate leadership acumen. At this time the department of education was cutting back on support services like school guidance and counselling and this stimulated my interest to look at service delivery models. I enrolled for a master's degree programme in school guidance and counselling to further my knowledge and skills in this discipline, as I believed that this knowledge would also be useful in promoting special education services. My response was shaped by the understanding that leadership is "both embedded in and influenced by context" (Johansson, Moos, Nihlfors, Paulsen & Risku, 2011, p. 538). Thus in certain moments context responsive leadership emerges to attend to issues or challenges on hand.

*I became a member of the Teacher's Association of South Africa and networked with other school counsellors and acquired invaluable assistance from them. It was not long when I was elected to serve on the executive structure of the school guidance counsellor's committee. When the department of education initiated policies to cut back on school guidance services, the committee mobilized the school counsellors and tried to resist attempts to curtail an essential support service to our schools (see Chapter Four, p. 94).*

I investigated the existing state of school guidance in my province and explored the possibilities of future service delivery models. I used this knowledge to influence the committee's position on school guidance and counselling as we lobbied to retain this educational service. Chibber (2010) explains that "To see" component in the Mahavakya theory indicates the degree of awareness of the context and environment that the leader finds himself or herself in and the quality of information that is available influences decision making. Zand (1997) confirms that knowledge and influence go hand-in-hand and argues, "Influence derives from contributing knowledge – concepts, ideas, questions, facts, and insights" (Zand, 1997, p188). The knowledge that I gained from my dissertation "School Guidance and Counselling in Natal: Present Realities and Future Possibilities" (Naicker, 1993) also proved to be valuable when I was appointed as a senior education specialist, in the psychological, guidance and special education services sub-directorate, which was a stepping-stone in my career as an educational leader.

*When the new South Africa emerged I was now a senior education specialist at the Chatsworth Teachers Centre. I offered guidance and counselling services to learners who were at risk and programmes to support schools ... I took advantage of these opportunities and organised many workshops at the centre and at school level. One of the big events that I put together was a leadership programme in conjunction with the Chatsworth Rotary club and the department of education. Learners from the different racial groups came together to experience learning and socialising in a multi-racial context (see Chapter Four, p. 105).*

At the Chatsworth Teachers' Centre I served as a consultant to the schools in my circuit assisting teachers, guidance counsellors, and school principals to support learners who were at risk. I was recognised as a resource from the department of education and the school personnel looked up to me for leadership when it came to school guidance and counselling matters. My experience of schools and working with adults held me in good stead as a "knowledgeable" leader (Murphy, 2013, p. 29) building on the notion that "it takes expertise to make expertise" (Fink & Markholt, 2013, p. 322). I used this platform to design and deliver a number of programmes to build the capacity of school personnel so that learners who required guidance and counselling services could be assisted.

As the new democratic South Africa was just emerging I realised the need for a leadership programme for prefects from schools across the racial divide and used the opportunity to sensitize them about race, prejudice and discrimination. The approach that I adopted is described as responsive leadership, context-responsive leadership and cultural responsiveness (Caldwell & Spinks, 2005; Jacobson & Johnson, 2011; Johansson et al., 2011). Responsive leadership is the extent to which the needs of students, the community and society at large have been considered (Caldwell & Spinks, 2005) and is also regarded as context-responsive leadership, which "is practical wisdom in action" (Johansson et al., 2011, p. 538). The notion of culturally responsive leadership encompasses history, values and knowledge of the cultural background of learners so that critical consciousness is evoked to challenge inequities in society and empower communities (Jacobson & Johnson, 2011; p. 562).

Collaborating with entrepreneurs and professionals from the Rotary Club and senior education departmental officials enhanced my self-esteem and self-confidence as I grew into an educational leadership role. This gave me the confidence to apply for the position of SEM when it was advertised.

*I decided to apply because I was confident that I was suitably qualified and sufficiently experienced ... In keeping with our values, my wife Ruban and I decided that if it were necessary we would relocate to a rural area if I was successful and offer our service to develop rural communities (see Chapter Four, p. 108).*

In Section 6.3 in this chapter (see p. 146) I discussed the influence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in my life, the tenets of selfless service that inspired me to work for the welfare of society and the universal values that he advocated. It was in this spirit that I applied to work in rural areas and was delighted when I was appointed to the Richmond Circuit of Education. In Chapter Four, (see p. 114) I describe my vision for Richmond as “the phoenix rising from the ashes” and in my personal history narrative I described my aspirations for personal improvement. My work goals as a SEM were in harmony with my personal goals as I sought improvement for the community of Richmond as well as personal transformation. Motives and goals are constructs that authentic leadership theorists use to explain self-awareness and this is linked to the leaders actual self and possible self (Gardner, et al., 2005). The discrepancies between the actual and possible selves are brought to the forefront as leaders engage with associates and check whether their lived lives are consistent with the ideals they espouse. “For authentic leaders, we expect their hoped-for selves will reflect the leader’s role as an agent for positive change with respect to themselves and others” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 353).

A research participant and former principal of a school in Richmond, Gill Bruyns describes the conditions at Richmond.

*There were huge classes ... absolutely huge enormous classes. There were very often two classes in one classroom with a teacher at either end. Their schools were very under resourced, windows broken and lot of vandalism. There were absolutely no laboratories at all as far as I know. I think one of the high schools might have had a laboratory but with absolutely no equipment whatsoever. Very few schools had electricity. Hardly any had telephones ... I was absolutely thrilled to see those*

*children in the classrooms now utilizing that resource centre which was what both of us had dreamed of* (see Chapter Four, pp. 111-121).

As the SEM I was responsible for the schools and initiated several programmes to develop the resources that were essential to deliver the curriculum effectively. I was sensitive to the setting and background that I found myself working in. This resonates with Johansson's et al. (2011, p. 538) view that "leadership is both embedded in, and influenced by, context." The deprivation, devastation and neglect motivated me to respond to the challenge to improve education in this rural setting and this became a goal that I strove to achieve. In my tenure as SEM I focused on establishing a resource centre as well as developing and enhancing school managers competence. This conforms with Luthan's et al. (2006, p. 87) explanation that goals "may range from an overarching or strategic goal that is expressed as a vision to specific performance outcomes." Luthans and Avolio (2003) suggest that authentic leaders are future oriented and strive to develop themselves as well as followers.

### **6.5.3 Coaching and mentoring school leaders**

My educational leadership career continued when I became a service provider to the department of education as a leadership and management consultant. I acquired new knowledge and skills as a materials developer and my facilitation and training skills were enhanced.

*We worked very hard and sacrificed many weekends, public holidays and worked late hours to produce the material. I recall the frustration and anguish that I felt when my work was critiqued and suggestions were made on how they could be improved. I took the criticism personally* (see Chapter Four, p. 123).

I used my educational leadership and management experience to develop the capacity of school management teams who in some instances were poorly motivated and could not "develop, sustain and monitor teaching and learning effectively" (Bush, Joubert, Kiggundu & van Rooyen, 2009, p. 167). As a materials developer I had to research school leadership and management topics and work to tight publishing deadlines. I was a novice at developing materials and felt distressed when my work was criticized. I felt that the criticism was personally directed at me when in fact people were suggesting ways to improve the materials. In time I became aware of my resentment and my defensive behaviours gradually gave way as I accepted the criticism.

This awareness led to self-restraint and I was able to open myself to other views and improve my work. Self-awareness and self-regulation (Gardner et al., 2005) are characteristics that are strongly linked to emotionally intelligent leaders, which “has positive implications for leadership effectiveness and for the leaders’ own psychological well-being” (Ilies et al., 2005, p. 378). Balanced processing occurs when leaders allow for multiple perspectives through listening to others more carefully and external evaluations of the self are welcomed (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Gardner et al., 2005).

I enjoyed facilitating at workshops and found the interaction not only rewarding but also stimulating. However, it was not all smooth sailing as an educational consultant as I encountered new challenges. In my personal history I narrate my experiences of leading a team of consultants in in the Free State and Northern Cape provinces (see Chapter Four, p. 124).

*It was not always fun as we sometimes disagreed about the way things should be done. Sometimes the arguments almost got out of hand and after people took time off and reassessed the situation we found ways to overcome our differences.*

In spite of adopting a servant leadership and collaborative leadership stance, my passion came in the way and created tensions in the team. There were times when I became inflexible and I became intolerant of different views on how a particular task could be completed. As someone who dislikes tensions and conflicts I usually reflected on what happened and found ways to work past the differences and re-established harmony and goodwill in the team. Discrepancies between the actual self, which was impatient, intolerant and sometimes overbearing conflicted with the possible self, which sought harmony and good working relations. According to Avolio and Luthans (2006, p. 83) authentic leadership development is facilitated when the gap between the actual self and possible self is narrowed.

#### **6.5.4 Directorship of SAISSE**

The final leadership experience that I narrated in my personal history narrative is the directorship of the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE), which I recounted as the motivation and impetus of this self-study (see Chapter Five, p. 130).

*I accepted the assignment to lead the ISSE, as I was passionate about the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme and was ready to use the experiences and skills I had gained in this field ... I took this on as a challenge to turn these schools around and establish models of excellence that would be worthy of emulation ... I was optimistic that we could make a difference and that we would raise the benchmarks for the schools ... I threw myself into the activities of the Institute and it was not long before positive energy around the team was generated. I felt inspired by the enthusiasm, willingness and commitment that the Institute members showed for getting on with the task on hand ... Looking at the challenges that lay ahead I was very naive to think that because we were enthusiastic we would be able to achieve the lofty goals we set for ourselves.*

I took my duties as the director of SAISSE very seriously and was committed to reforming the schools to the extent that the secular and spiritual education demanded. I expected everyone serving the Sathya Sai School to share a similar passion and commitment. I also set certain standards and expected members of the Sathya Sai community to meet these expectations. As a result of the various interventions SAISSE made a difference and the schools were showing indications that with more support and guidance, they would be turned around. However, in my overzealousness I did not take time to clarify these expectations or communicate them in a manner that everyone understood. I have come to accept that I was impatient and this character flaw contributed to some of the leadership lapses that I experienced as director of SAISSE. Goleman (2003) highlighted the importance of the affective domain and the role of emotions in the performance of leaders and organizational effectiveness. In Chapter Seven (see p. 185) I discuss the dilemmas I experienced in the value decisions that I made, the challenges I encountered with managing my emotions and the difficulty I experienced in managing micro politics and conflict. I was misdirected in my mission as I thought that a sense of urgency and enthusiasm would see transformational work through (Fullan, 2001). I was unaware that this had to be tempered with careful planning and attentive monitoring of the environment.

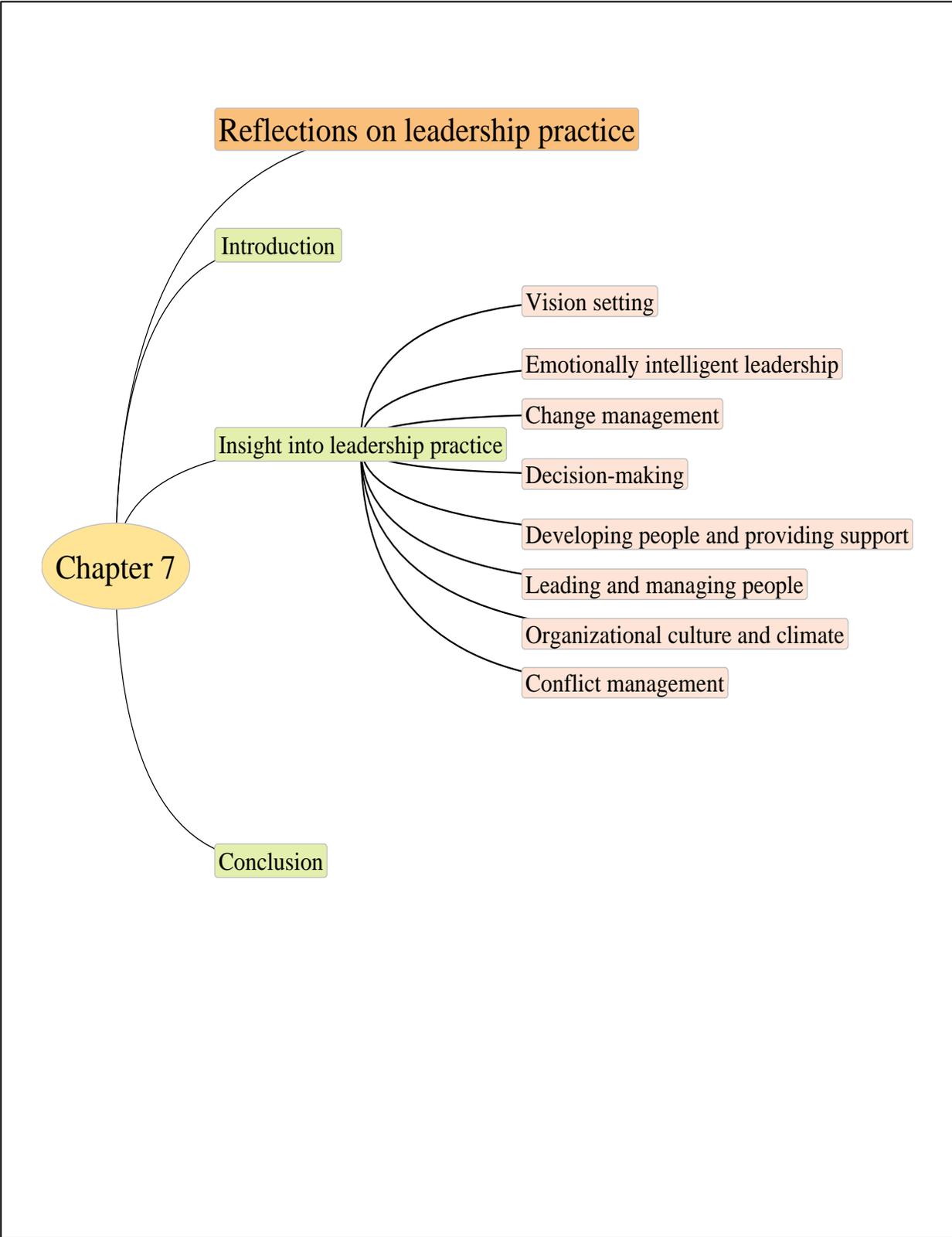
## **6.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter I have examined who I am and have drawn on the multiple notions of self/selves framework, which I discussed in Chapter Two (see p. 37). In piecing together the puzzle of my

identity I have explored the multiple selves that were visible in my personal history narrative. I found that the childhood-self and family contextual factors, spiritual self-aspect and servant leader self-aspect, paraplegic self-aspect, and leadership aspect were dominant themes in my personal history narrative and these themes offered opportunities for me to engage with the research questions “Who am I?” and “Who am I as a leader?”

Close examination of the multiple selves that constituted my personal and professional identity provided rich insights into who I am and who am I as a leader. Notwithstanding this, the puzzle is not complete as there are missing pieces and that some of the pieces are irregular and do not fit. The fragmentary understanding of the self provides significant clues to who I am and who I am as a leader but owing to the complexities of time, space and context the complete self remains enigmatic and elusive. Because the self is dynamic and oscillates between the actual self, ought self and ideal self, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of what it is. In the next chapter I examine my leadership practice and as it is inextricably linked to my personal and professional self more light will be cast on who am I and who am I as a leader and will add more pieces to solve the jigsaw puzzle that I am building.

Figure 37: Outline of Chapter Seven



# CHAPTER 7

## REFLECTIONS ON LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

*I love those who can smile in trouble, who can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection. 'Tis the business of little minds to shrink, but they whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves their conduct, will pursue their principles unto death.*

Leonardo da Vinci

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter engaged with my personal and professional self/selves in respect of the research questions of who am I and who am I as a leader. Using the authentic leader self/selves framework aspects of self/selves were interrogated. This provided insights into what makes up my self/selves through examining the childhood self-aspect and family context, spiritual and servant leadership self-aspect and paraplegic-self. In discussing my leadership self-aspect I critically reflected on my emerging leadership roles at school, university and the educational leadership roles I occupied as a senior education specialist, SEM, education service provider, leadership coach and mentor and as a director of SAISSE.

In this chapter I engage with the critical research question, “what is my leadership practice?” and “why do I lead the way I do?” by interrogating key nodal leadership experiences which I described in my personal history narrative (see Chapter Four and Five, pp. 77-139). Critical analysis of evidence that gives insight into how and why I lead the way I do, is brought to the surface to reveal hidden meanings and assumptions. I make visible snapshots of my leadership practice by exploring the following themes; vision setting, emotional intelligence, change management, decision-making, developing people, leading and managing people, organizational culture and climate and conflict management.

### 7.2 INSIGHT INTO LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

It is not enough to know what leaders do “without a rich understanding of how and why they do it” (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2001, p. 23). Focusing on the “what” diminishes “how leadership gets done through the ordinary, everyday practices involved in leadership routines

and functions” (Spillane, 2006, p. 5). In order to get a fuller and more complete understanding of leadership behaviour, the rationale for leadership practice must also be grasped. Leadership practice refers to the “particular instances of leadership as they unfold in the moment-by-moment interactions in a particular place and time” (Harris, Moos, Moller, Robertson & Spillane, 2007, p. 4). It has to do with what leaders do as they execute tasks in their day-to-day work (Naicker, 2014). In this section, aspects of my leadership practice, as well as the reasoning that guides my thinking, acting, beliefs and attitudes follows.

### **7.2.1 Vision setting**

Creating a compelling vision and getting others to share in that vision, is one of the core ingredients of leadership (Brecken, 2004). Nanus (1995, p. 186) captures the spirit and energy of visioning as he argues, “there is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.” When I was appointed as SEM of Richmond, a town in rural KwaZulu-Natal I realised that I had to mobilize resources to improve the delivery of educational services. Rurality, political violence, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and scarce resources were huge barriers to overcome and educators, who were dispirited, compounded this bleak scenario. The digital memory box, which I used as a tool to reconstruct my personal history narrative helped my participant and I to recall the vision I shared with the community of Richmond. The vision of Richmond rising like the mythological phoenix from the ashes encouraged and motivated the teachers, school managers and school governing bodies. To address the lack of key resources we decided to develop an education resource centre to meet the needs of the educators. At circuit meetings, I popularised the vision and got the principals excited about the project. “An ideal and unique image” was created to enrol others in this dream (Reynolds & Warfield 2010, p. 63).

Gill Bruyns a former principal in Richmond and research participant observed that the vision I shared, was a driver that provided focus and impetus for my leadership practice (see Chapter Four, p. 120).

*But I think your strengths were that you actually had this vision and you were not going to be deterred from it. It underpinned what you wanted to do for Richmond ... you were absolutely determined ... I knew that you were always there for Richmond*

*in that respect. I was absolutely thrilled to see those children in the classrooms now utilizing that resource centre which was what both of us had dreamed of. It was lovely to see the maths being taught and knowing that those science and biology laboratories were being used by the children and that expertise would ultimately enhance the community, because of the children ... really well educated would come back and bring something back into Richmond which is I think our dream really.*

The establishment of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled, which I narrated in Chapter Five (see p. 102) was born out of a vision to serve people with disabilities who were forgotten and marginalized. Pravin Thakur, a research participant is of the view that a need was identified and acted on to promote sport for the disabled.

*... this vision that you want to make a difference in their lives. So when you met your unfortunate accident ... it was possible that maybe a higher purpose used you as the driving force [as] that vehicle to take this thing forward. You realised the need for the promotion of disabled facilities or sport and then you took action ... You showed that initiative as a leader. You realised the need for the promotion of disabled facilities or sport and then you took action.*

In both the Richmond and Forget-Me-Not nodal experience, the visions were driven with the intention of making a difference, addressing a need and serving others. Drawing on the success of Sri Sathya Sai Baba whose vision of free health care, drinking water and education became a reality I created visions to emulate my spiritual guide. The visions I crafted intended to make a difference and improve the quality of life of those in need. Vision crafting is predominant in most models of leadership and is often cited in the academic and practitioner literature (Bush, 2007; Martini, 2008). Effective leaders are depicted as visionaries who know what their institutions and organizations should look like in the future and their vision statement is a symbol that provides direction and momentum for stakeholders (Kowalski, 2010). Leaders who exhibit visionary leadership behaviour are those who adopt challenging visions and share the ideal by communicating and persuading others to become so committed that they devote their energies and resources to achieve the vision (Nanus, 1995). The vision of Richmond rising from the ashes like the phoenix was an evocative image of hope that stood in contrast to the violence, devastation and deprivation that the schooling community was experiencing.

Arising out of my collaboration with Gill Bruyns, I am mindful that the resource centre became a reality because the principals and the community owned the vision. Similarly, the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled was able to improve the quality of life of its members because the vision was co-shared. When I became a SEM I drew inspiration from reading Peter Senge's (1990) "Fifth Discipline" in which the notion of shared vision was articulated. I appreciated and understood that it was not only critical to co-construct a vision with others, but it was imperative that it was clearly communicated so that shared understanding emerges. This resonated with the "To tell" (Chibber, 2010, p. 17) component of the Mahavakya theory of leadership as the people that I worked with, perceived integrity when I discussed the vision with them. I was mindful of the context, the environment and realities in which I was located as I crafted these visions which was consistent with the "To see" element of the Mahavakya theory of leadership (Chibber, 2010, p. 17). Working with others and genuinely seeking their input gave me different perspectives as "balanced processing" (Gardner, et al., 2005, p. 347) enabled me to craft the vision with greater clarity and effectiveness. I discovered that working collaboratively with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends "allowed for heightened self-awareness of the importance of others" in researching the way I develop visions for the organizations I have served (Pithouse-Morgan & van Laren, 2012, p. 425).

### **7.2.2 Emotionally intelligent leadership**

On reviewing the artefacts in the digital memory box and writing my personal history narrative I noted certain aspects of my leadership practice that concerned me and aroused greater self-awareness of my emotions. In my personal history I narrated my experience of leading a group of educational consultants who were commissioned to support selected schools to develop their budget.

*My passion for excellence and attention to detail was a significant contributing factor. Sometimes I could also be very obstinate and fixed about the ways things could be done (see Chapter Five, p. 124).*

I was passionate about what I was doing and occasionally I adopted an inflexible stance when I believed that a certain idea would yield the desired results. This approach sometimes created tensions and affected working relations in the team. At this stage in my leadership development I believed that positional power granted me the authority to be assertive and I was not fully

aware of my emotions and the discomfort that this generated for others. One of my research participants Bowie Pillay also underscored the high expectations I have of the people I work with and my impatience when they don't perform as expected (see Chapter Five p. 134).

*... but I think for me, may be just a level of impatience with stakeholders and one example would be the SGB or the concerned parents group because I think that took the mickey out of you [laughter]. Also when I speak of the SGB maybe and it's just an observation in terms of high expectations ... your high expectations you know ... and therefore the assumption that everybody understands what's expected of them ... could have been why you were impatient with them.*

Self-awareness is a key concept in emotional intelligence and is seen as a prerequisite for effective leadership. The recognition of the emotions that leaders experience and their accurate self-assessment of the emotion, enables them better self-control and self-management. Furthermore authentic leadership theorists are of the view that an awareness of emotions and its effect on others has implications for leadership development (Gardner et al., 2005). It is through reflection and self-examination that authentic leaders become aware of their “core values, identity, emotions, motives and goals” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 347). Avolio and Luthans (2006) include balanced processing, a construct in authentic leadership theory, as a means for leaders to analyse their feelings in a critical enquiry mode that considers other perspectives as well. Authentic leaders are conscious of their emotions and the effect it has on others and this recognition is helpful in decision-making and curbing impulsive behaviours (Gardner, et al., 2005). The data that the digital memory box generated, which was used to write up my personal history narrative made me aware of the effect my emotions and my corresponding actions have on other people, especially those within my work place (Vickers, 2010).

When I served as the director of SAISSE I experienced a trigger event, an antecedent in authentic leadership development, which forced me to take a closer look at who I was and what I was doing (see Chapter Five, p. 130). Feelings of inadequacy, self-efficacy questioning and confusion provided the energy and momentum to withdraw from the outer world and look within myself for answers to issues that puzzled me.

*The issues that I grappled with as director of SAISSE forced me to reflect on my actions with great intensity as I desperately sought to make sense of what was going*

*on. I was confused as all the knowledge and leadership skills I possessed did not hold me in good stead and I felt that I was failing. I was exposed to micro politics and found it difficult to navigate in these difficult times as I was determined to hold onto the values that I espoused.*

On reflection, I observed that in this stage of my leadership development I was more aware of my emotions and I could describe how I felt. I attributed this consciousness to the self-study research into my leadership practice that I had just started. Self-awareness is an integral component of self-study as practitioners continuously engage in reflective exercises to unveil elements of themselves and their practice that have been hitherto obscure (Allison-Roan & Hayes, 2012). In my study self-awareness moved beyond understanding and interpreting my life experiences to critiquing and interrogating my emotions. My research mentor, critical friends and research participants heightened the awareness of my emotions as they challenged interpretations of my experiences. Greater emotional awareness which emanated from my self-study has made me conscious of how my passion, stubbornness, impatience and critical view of underperforming individuals has got in the way of my leadership practice This has given me additional insights into how emotions have influenced my leadership practice and this has offered me possibilities of better managing my emotions as I work with people.

### **7.2.3 Change management**

SAISSE undertook a baseline survey to assess the schools under its oversight and undertook transformational measures to align the schools to recently approved guidelines from the international parent body. This put SAISSE and the stakeholders on a tenuous course as educators, parents and school managers wrestled with the changes that were implemented. Far reaching reform measures were implemented and these included rationalizing staff to make the schools financially viable, constituting school governing bodies, introducing new school uniforms and overhauling the systems and procedures in which the schools were led and managed. The SGB and SAISSE were subjected to resistance as micro-politics surfaced at the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth and I found myself in unfamiliar terrain and out of depth. All the leadership knowledge and experience that I had was not sufficient to cope with the siege that engulfed the governing body and the Institute. In my personal history (see Chapter Five, p. 134) I described the confusion, anguish and emotional roller coaster ride that I experienced.

*... if I look back at myself ... I think that if I had been a little more patient with the parent body and I think that if I had to do something differently now I'd do a lot more consultation ... more widespread and more broad based than assuming that because people are not complaining that people are happy ... I learnt the lesson that when people are quiet that's the time you really worry ... I could see that implementing turn around strategies required a great detail of sensitivity to people's feelings ... This self-study was born out of this anguish and has given me the space to be reflexive about my practice.*

Much has been written about the slow speed in which schools change, the sustainability of reform measures as well as the resistance that change generates (Starr, 2011). My assessment on the changes that SAISSE instituted, highlights the inadequate change management knowledge and skills that I possessed especially in a non-formal context where there were no clearly defined policies and procedures. My reflexive assessment on the changes that SAISSE instituted reveals that too many changes were effected too soon and because there wasn't sufficient buy-in of the various stakeholders, resistance was generated. The reform programmes were bold and ambitious and went against the best practice of "reform by small steps" (Glatter & Kydd, 2003, p. 237). Change is a complex process that elicits varying responses, views and emotions and therefore needs careful managing (Hellman, 2012). The reflection and critical review of this incident has made me re-examine my thinking, acting and thinking about my acting (Warwick, 2011).

I was focused on improving the schools and was not sensitive to the opinions and feelings of what I thought to be a handful of parents. As the director of SAISSE with positional power, I exercised power over the parents who resisted the changes. In hindsight I realised that my predecessor who wielded enormous power as well as the culture of the organization, which discouraged questioning leadership, influenced my stance. The critical perspective in change management literature emphasizes the role that power and discourse plays in resistance (Pieterse, Caniëls & Homan, 2012). Unequal power relations in the form of leaders and managers using positional authority to make people do what they would otherwise not have done are associated with resistance. When there is misalignment in the discourse embodied in language and texts in formal and informal settings resistance to change may occur as "varying interpretations prohibit

the development of shared mental models.” (Pieterse et al., 2012, p. 802). In discussion with my research participants, different perspectives of the change management process emerged and I became aware of the gaps in my performance (Samaras, 2011). This reflexive stance has led me to critically reflect on my leadership practice and I have become not only aware of lapses but also acquired knowledge and skills to better manage change in the future (Bolton, 2010).

I am of the view that the difficulties I experienced in change management in this nodal experience is a “trigger event” (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 343). I attributed the search for meaning and desire to interrogate my leadership practice for growth to this trigger event (see Chapter One, p. 3). Through self-awareness and reflexive dialogues with a research mentor, critical friends and research participants my limitations in managing change have been exposed and this has implications for the way I lead and manage change in the future.

#### **7.2.4 Decision-making**

Gill Bruyns, a research participant reflecting on the artefacts in the digital memory box made the following comments regarding the way decisions were made at meetings of the Richmond Circuit of Education (see Chapter Five p. 118).

*It was a very inclusive leadership ... you know a description to me is like a fried egg ... you know with the yolk in the middle and the people around. The yolk is the important part, and you were the decision maker, the white ... you took all of us .... you took our suggestions and you incorporated them. You did not throw out any suggestions that just did not make sense. You threw very few ... you guided our discussions [in] the correct way ... I don't mean that you had decided on the end product at all. You kept us [from] going off the track. It's the way I want to put it. So I felt that as much as you listened to us you wouldn't let us go off the track, which was very good.*

Decision-making is one of the most important duties of leaders and managers because the results have a profound influence on the organization and its people (Gülcan, 2011). In time I realised that if I was to influence others to do what was needed to achieve mutually desired goals, it was necessary to meaningfully involve people in the decision-making process. I had intuitively

stumbled upon the wisdom that people usually had ideas on how to approach issues and needed a good facilitator to elicit the ideas. My father's authoritative parenting style and involving his children in decision-making also influenced me. I therefore recognised the value of joint decision-making through personal experience and incorporated it in my leadership practice. This became the "living theory" that I used consciously when organizational decisions had to be made (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1). However, I realised that it was not easy, as I had to patiently guide meetings to arrive at good decisions. I was aware of the sensitivity and tact that was needed especially at times when I felt that some of the ideas were not viable.

The self-awareness and self-regulation I demonstrated made the principals feel that their ideas were genuinely welcomed and this inspired them to participate more actively in the decision-making process. The consensual leadership decision-making style that I demonstrated engendered ownership, commitment and teamwork (Faraci, Lock & Wheeler, 2013). Somech (2010) suggests that in addition to harnessing collective wisdom to solve problems facing schools, participative decision-making has the potential for promoting school effectiveness. In spite of the effort that consensual decision-making demands, I am convinced that the benefits it yields, outweighs the difficulties that it may pose. The review of my decision-making style reaffirms and validates what I intuitively came to accept as my "living theory" (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1). The examination of my decision-making practice has generated a theory of my lived practice in decision-making (Samaras, 2011; Whitehead, 2008).

### **7.2.5 Developing people and providing support**

The complexities and challenges of today's education call for leaders to not only support student learning but also the staff (Townsend & MacBeath, 2011). Positive outcomes are associated with staff development and it is acknowledged that it is a necessary condition for improvement and innovation (Hopkins & Harris, 2013; Ladyshevsky, 2010). In my leadership practice I recognised that professional growth and development was critical for the organizations I worked in and I consciously strove to build capacity and empower members of staff. In my personal history I recollect the experience of training two members of staff to become competent in using computers.

*In the office I taught Ms Phumzile Sibaya-Gwambe and Mrs Abigail Musa to use the computer and was pleased with their enthusiasm. It was not too long before they became computer literate and productive. Mrs Musa used her newly acquired skills to work more efficiently as she gathered and processed information from the principals.*

Authentic leaders “place emphasis on follower development” and “foster the development of associates” (Gardner, et al., 2005, p. 345) without the expectation of personal gain. However, development, which occurs in “trusting relationships,” contribute towards more effective team performance as a consequence of authentic leaders demonstrating awareness of their motives and goals (Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey & Oke, 2009, p. 12). Developmental interactions such as mentoring and coaching are also linked to productivity and are regarded as being essential for both the individual and the organization (Ladyshevsky, 2010). In developing people I drew on my experience of former principals, and colleagues who invested considerable time in building my capacity and competence. As a result of my positive experience I too made the time and effort to develop staff members. This also sent out a signal to the principals that as the SEM, I was committed to using computers to reduce “complexity and enhance the overall administration” of the schools in the ward (Krishnaveni & Meenakumari, 2010). Crum and Sherman (2008) are of the view that effective leaders develop, empower and delegate tasks in a responsible manner. As a result of enhanced capacity I was now better placed to attend to other operational and developmental tasks, as Mrs Sibaya-Gwambe was able to process routine letters, reports and other administrative documents.

Gill Bruyns, a research participant reflected on the workshops that were organised in the Richmond ward to meet the developmental needs of the school management teams, educators and members of the school governing bodies.

*Well you organised a whole lot of courses for us, which was clearly very good. You listened to what we needed, apart from noticing what we needed ... when you went down to the schools you could see what the gaps were. We certainly had courses that we needed and they were appropriate ... there was lots of support for the governing body members (see Chapter Five, p. 120).*

In the late 1990's the South African education system was subjected to waves of reform in a post-apartheid era (Bantwini, 2010; Ono & Ferreira, 2010; Spreen & Vally, 2010). In my interactions with the schooling community I realised that capacity was lacking to transform the schools into self-reliant institutions as the *South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996* envisioned (Brown, 2006). The “unprecedented curriculum reform in the history of South Africa” (Ono & Ferreira, 2010, p. 59) generated resistance, confusion and unhappiness as teachers grappled with new ways of teaching and learning (Matoti, 2010). This situation was exacerbated by the introduction of school governance, which created tensions between the school management teams and the governing bodies, as they did not understand their duties and responsibilities (Xaba, 2011).

In recognition of these challenges and developmental needs, together with colleagues from the department of education, I responded by organising workshops to empower teachers, school managers and the governing bodies. In the ward meetings I engaged with the principals and determined the developmental needs of the schools and took steps to ensure that the workshops were relevant and added to their knowledge and skills base. My training and developmental experience as a counsellor at the Chatsworth Teacher's Centre which I narrated in my personal history (see Chapter Five, p. 105) came to good use.

Clive Waddy, a research participant commented on the personal support he received when we worked together on a project to develop the capacity of school governing bodies.

*You were the ideal partner. Hugely supportive – I think of the time that I was deeply upset by what I regarded as unjust criticism and was thinking of packing it in ... You were an ideal sounding board and happy to contribute your opinions and ideas (see Chapter Five, p. 122).*

As a school counsellor my listening skills and levels of empathy were elevated and I usually responded to colleagues in the workplace in a way that communicated I cared about their well-being. The commitment to caring for other people's well-being is consistent with the altruistic predisposition I described in Chapter Six (see p. 152). I am of the view that most of the time people just needed someone who was patient and willing to listen to them as they vented and

gave expression to their feelings. My relationship with Clive also extended into the professional space as we critiqued each other's work as critical friends. I offered my views on the materials that he developed and reviewed the workshop sessions that he facilitated and he reciprocated in a similar manner. Drawing from this I have learnt that closer relationships are forged and collegiality is strengthened, when authentic care is demonstrated.

Singh's (2013, p. 498) study confirms that there is a "strong correlation" between empathy and collegiality in a "people-centred" environment. Leaders who are ethical and principled are "likely to engage more in activities that facilitate understanding and also reveal their empathy" (Mahsud, Yukl & Prussia, 2010, p. 566). Furthermore, Lloyd and Walker's (2011, p. 393) conceptual model reveals that authentic leadership is "values driven" and is "relationship centred." As leaders demonstrate "behavioural integrity" where they are perceived to be "walking the talk, delivering on promises, and aligning words and deeds" the well-being of the organization is promoted (Leroy, Palanski & Simons, 2011, p. 261). I am of the view that in any organization, people are its most important asset and that they must be nurtured and developed. My experiences have shown me that when people are supported, relationships are strengthened and this promotes an organizational culture and climate that is conducive to growth and development.

### **7.2.6 Leading and managing people**

Most definitions of leadership include the process of influence, which is brought to bear on people to achieve organizational goals (Bush, 2008). As dimensions of power, influence and authority are linked to leadership and management, albeit differently. "Positional authority" is associated with management whereas influence, which is related to leadership, can be exercised by anyone regardless of designation (Bush, 2008, p. 277). In this chapter (see p. 176) I examined the way I made decisions when I was the SEM in charge of the Richmond Ward. In spite of having positional power, I adopted a consensual decision-making approach as I influenced the schooling community in the direction of the vision we had created. As a service provider working with school management teams, I extended this practice further as I sought ways to transform the way they worked to improve teacher and learner performance. Wendy

Heard, a research participant reviewed the manner in which I interacted with the school management teams and made the following comment (see Chapter Five p. 128).

*You recognised within the SMT their professionalism as well. You also saw [them as] professionals and you never sort of undermined them or spoke down to them ... you didn't sort of see yourself as an expert and you allowed them space and recognised the roles that they played. I would say that you are very democratic and participative ... you like to bring people in and [you are] people orientated. You are not only task focused or goal directed. You want what's best for people and what they value.*

I took a “person-centred” approach (Singh, 2013, p. 497) in leading and managing the people I worked with, recognizing the value of authentic care and respect which when ethically used could be used as a lever of positive influence (Mahsud et al., 2010). I looked at the members of the school management teams as professionals and encouraged them to take ownership of the developmental plans that were collaboratively produced. In turn I found that the “respectful leadership” that I demonstrated was reciprocated by the school management team members as they too desired to be treated with consideration and courtesy (Van Quaquebeke & Eckloff, 2010, p. 2). This approach together with “behavioural integrity” not only fostered healthy working relationships but also supported the achievement of organizational goals (Leroy et al., 2011, p. 261). Caldwell and Dixon (2010, p. 97) in a similar manner confirm “the importance of leadership principles that put people first in creating relationships with others.” Authentic leaders can contribute to their workplace well-being by developing organizational climates that “are more inclusive, caring, engaged, and more oriented towards developing strengths” (Gardner, et al., 2005, p. 367).

As an educational management coach I adopted an inclusive and collaborative stance and was mindful of the individual and collective needs of the school management teams as well as the work that was necessary to improve the performance of the schools. My background in counselling came to good use as I used these skills to attend to personal and group needs and was able to establish rapport as I influenced the principals to reflect on and change the way they led and managed their schools. Adair (2009, p. 7) observes that leadership is a continuous engagement with others as leaders work towards achieving the “common task”, “work as a

team” and “respect and develop its individual members.” I discussed the literature that I was drawn to as an emerging leader in particular Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s Mahavakya on Leadership by Chibber (2010) which stirred me and this book became the inspiration for my leadership practice (see Chapter Two, p. 17). In this work I was exposed to Adair’s (2009) “functions of leadership” which incorporated “needs for achieving the task”, “needs for developing individuals” and “needs for building the team” (Chibber, 2010, p. 27). For Adair (2009) awareness, understanding and skills are required to carry out the leadership functions and by attending to all three functions simultaneously leaders are most effective (Rutherford, 2006).

Leadership and management is a complex undertaking (Fullan, 2007) and calls for a different repertoire of skills as context and settings change. Pravin Thakur recalled that at the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled, I monitored the team’s performance and took measures to ensure that our goals were achieved (see Chapter Four, p. 101).

*The first thing is a recognition [of a] need which, others didn't see. In your case you identified the goal, you drove it and when it was slackening you pushed and then we achieved. ... those are fundamental characteristics of leaders. They will be bold, make moves and take decisions and get things done [and] desire ... everyone to be accountable for what they were supposed to do.*

As the chairperson of the club I took my responsibilities seriously and when we had collectively reached a decision, planned an activity or chose to embark on a particular course of action, I diligently ensured that we were on track to realise our objective. In my experience I realised that it was important to monitor performance and that sometimes people need a little “push” to get them to achieve. By monitoring progress I also had the “opportunity to adjust and fine-tune the goals” (Beghetto & Ketterlin-Geller, 2006, p. 305). At meetings, which I chaired, members were held accountable and they were expected to report on the progress that they had achieved. Feedback on performance was given, successes were recognised, challenges were acknowledged, and support mechanisms were identified (Bush & Middlewood, 2013).

Earlier in my leadership practice my enthusiasm and passion sometimes got in the way, as I tended to micro-manage people unaware that a “micromanager can be much more than just a

nuisance in today's complex organization” (White, 2010, p. 71). “Pushing” people is a delicate and sensitive matter and if done correctly it may yield the expected results. However, if the pressure is exerted in an insensitive and disrespectful manner it has the risk of upsetting people and resentment may set in. Setting high performance standards and striving to get things done “better and faster” and pin pointing poor performers may overwhelm people, affect morale and destroy climate (Goleman, 2000, p. 86). The “pacesetting style has its place in the leader’s repertory, but it should be used sparingly” (Goleman, 2000, p. 86). I have observed that leading and managing people requires sound interpersonal skills and wisdom, as people are not easily influenced to do things, especially if they are coerced. The insights that I draw from the way I have led and managed people revealed that collaborative decision-making, patience and care is more likely to yield positive results.

### **7.2.7 Organizational culture and climate**

Organizational culture and climate are overlapping constructs even though they are distinct and not interchangeable (Van Houtte, 2005). Culture refers to the shared values and norms whereas climate indicates the shared perceptions in an organization (Macneil, Prater & Busch, 2009). Culture incorporates the complex elements of values, rituals and traditions, tacit rules and assumptions, language, symbols and artefacts. These everyday, taken-for-granted assumptions influences the way people think, feel and act in the organization (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Climate on the other hand embodies the ethos, spirit, feeling and tone of the organization. It is the “emotional content of the relationships” and the morale of the organization (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 9).

In my experience as a SEM and as a school management coach I was exposed to schools where “toxic cultures” festered, engendering unhappy and unproductive work environments (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 2). In such schools there was an absence of a shared vision; staff felt disconnected from their school; attitudes of indifference and mediocrity prevailed; and negativity, rumour mongering and conflict characterised exchanges between staff members (Peterson & Deal, 2009, p. 178). As the director of SAISSE, I took steps to encourage and grow a positive culture to promote the organizational goals in a collegial and collaborative manner. Bowie Pillay, an executive member of SAISSE reflected on the culture that prevailed as the

team of professionals worked together to turn around the schools in its care (see Chapter Five p. 132).

*I think your participative management style has really grown SAISSE as a group. So the ethos of the group then is really focusing on serving because I think that underpins our role as members in SAISSE ... You developed us as members of SAISSE ... in that interaction, open communication ... we could be frank with each other ... unifying us with a good team spirit, very positive team spirit. You've actually been able to unify us as a group ... You know a team that is very focused on delivering our different portfolio responsibilities. I think in terms of the actual culture we were able to focus on what we were supposed to ...*

Strong personal and professional relationships were fostered as members worked together, supporting each other to complete tasks identified in the strategic plan. A culture of caring professionalism (Taggart, 2011) emerged as respect for each other, empathy, openness and freedom to express differing views were encouraged. Through professional interaction and good interpersonal relationships, a climate of “emotional security and open communication” prevailed, enabling risk-taking and professional growth (Nias, 1999, p. 74). The “culture of care” that Nias (1999, p. 66) describes, motivated the executive members to strive for the excellence that was envisioned for the Sathya Sai Schools. The inclusive approach in decision-making, which I discussed in Section 7.2.4 in this chapter (see p. 176) also contributed towards the positive organizational culture. Research indicates that there is a positive relation between follower participation in decision-making processes and organizational commitment (Hulpia & Devos, 2010). Positive organizational culture in turn fosters the “establishment of consensus, participative decision-making, harmony and solidarity” among the members (November, Alexander, & van Wyk, 2010, p. 790).

According to Gardner et al. (2005) the organizational climate plays a pivotal role in leadership development as it provides the context and space for authentic leadership to emerge. The organizational climate not only shapes authentic leadership behaviour but it provides leaders with opportunities to shape the organization. If the climate is positive, authentic leadership growth and development is facilitated. On the other hand when there are uncertainties and disruptions authentic leadership may be accelerated if leaders engage in self-awareness and self-

regulation (Gardner, et al., 2005). When leaders demonstrate authentic behaviours they co-create organizational cultures that promote cohesiveness through relational transparency.

Relational transparency, an element in authentic leadership theory, refers to leader behaviours that encourage trust and openness through disclosures, sharing of information and expressing “true thoughts and feelings” (Walumbwa et al., 2011, p. 6). This is linked with positive organizational outcomes such as higher follower commitment, job satisfaction and lower workplace deviation (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013; Walumbwa et al., 2011). When leaders demonstrate trust and freely exchange information they may have “significant effects on teams” (Hannah, Walumbwa & Fry, 2011, p. 794). Such behaviours may encourage team members to emulate or model these practices and as these behaviours are replicated, stronger and cohesive teams develop (Hannah, Walumbwa & Fry, 2011). Group energy, positive group mood and high performance teams arise out of positive organizational cultures (Yammarino, Dionne, Schriesheim & Dansereau, 2008). I have therefore come to the realization that organizational culture and climate must be cultivated and carefully nurtured because of its significance in achieving organizational and personal goals.

### **7.2.8 Conflict management**

The school is a diverse community made of learners, educators, non-educators and parents with “differing values, interests and cultures” with the potential for conflict, which, can be considered as an “inevitable part of a school community’s life” (Trinder et al., 2010, p. 85). My experience has shown that despite good intentions and well formulated plans, differences in opinions may arise and if they are not addressed and mediated early it has the potential of escalating into full-blown conflicts. In my personal history in Chapter Five (see p. 132) and in Section 7.2.3 (see p. 174) in this chapter, I discussed resistance to change at the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth. A handful of parents were unhappy with the transformational measures that SAISSE initiated to turn the school around and engaged in activities that I perceived to be hostile. I recollected a meeting that I chaired as being the single most difficult meeting in my life because the parents were emotionally charged, aggressive and insisted that their demands be met (see Chapter Five p. 132).

*Prior to the meeting I learnt that a parent had prepared pamphlets and was distributing them in the school car park to other parents and learners. At the*

*parent's request I agreed to meet him. When I went to the school to meet that parent I found a gathering of over 150 parents waiting at the school hall. It was a very difficult meeting as the parents were worked up and demanded explanations for the principal's "sudden resignation", the apparent "lack of consultation" with the change of uniforms and the "illegality" of the way in which the governing body was constituted. They were aggressive and refused to accept the explanations that were offered to them.*

I was of the view that the parents' actions were not justified and I adopted a position that they should defer to SAISSE and the SGB as they were acting beyond their powers. I believed that because SAISSE, the SGB and the parent teacher association had collaboratively made decisions to improve the school, the parents should co-operate with the legitimate structures. At that time, as the newly appointed director, I assumed that my position gave me certain powers and I was taken aback when the parents resisted and showed that they resented having power exercised over them (Pieterse et al., 2012). My naive notion that I could exercise "power over" the parents and get them to co-operate was met with greater resistance and the conflict intensified (Smeed, Kimber, Millwater & Ehrich, 2009, p. 34). The parents vigorously engaged with the school community, sometimes resorting to behaviours that I thought was unethical because they perceived that their voice was not heard and that they were being dominated. "Where there is domination, resistance is a likely reaction" (Karikan, 2011, p. 39).

Micro-politics reared its head, hostilities intensified and the school became an "arena of struggle" (Ball, 2012, p. 19). In my personal history (see Chapter Five, pp. 133-139) I described the state of affairs that prevailed at the school.

*After the principal's resignation was effected, the new principal was subjected to hostility and the school became a battleground as the handful of parents resisted the changes and developmental programmes that the Institute and the governing body initiated. I was exposed to micro-politics and found it difficult to navigate in these difficult times ... I continued to engage with the members of the governing body and the Institute to find solutions to stabilize the school and found the unrelenting pressure disturbing ... I was so caught up in action that I failed to read contextual clues that emanated from the few people who were disgruntled and reflect on who I*

*was and what I was doing. I underestimated the power that a few people had to disrupt the Institute and felt let down by the majority of people who chose to be silent.*

The parents constituted themselves into a group of “concerned parents” and used informal power to achieve their goals, taking “conflictive actions” as they engaged in a micro-political struggle (Blase, 1991, p. 11). They demonstrated that “power arises from the human capacity not only to act or do something, but to join up with others and to act together with them” (Habermas, 1982). The group used their power to influence the school community and their actions were often “unspoken and not easily observed” as they formed “informal coalitions and pacts, understandings, bargains, agreements, protracted criticism and gossip” to wage a struggle against SAISSE, the SGB and the school (McKeith, 2001, p. 17). Attempts to meet with the parents and find a lasting solution failed because of the power differentials and unwillingness of both parties to shift from the positions that they held steadfastly. “When the negotiated order is thus disturbed, renegotiation and reappraisal are called for, but ‘successful’ renegotiation is not always easy or possible” (Hannan as cited in Ball, 2012, p. 20). Regretfully, the situation degenerated and with no hope of a solution, some of the parents transferred their children out of the school and eventually I tendered my resignation.

Ball (2012, p. 28) offers the insight, which I was oblivious to at the time, which is that “the politics of change” is linked to micro-politics and conflict. Change and innovation may bring to the surface conflicts and differences that were previously concealed or “glossed over” in the daily routines of school life (Ball, 2012, p. 28). After reflexively examining this experience with my research mentor and critical friends I am of the opinion that this conflict could have been better managed. With the awareness I now have, I realised that the parents would have interpreted my actions as someone wielding power which is “conceptualised as the capacity of powerful agents to realise their will over the will of powerless people, and the ability to force them to do things which they do not wish to do” (Mills, 2003, p. 34). “Power over” people suggest “dominance or control” and may be linked to an authoritarian leadership style (Smeed et al., 2009, p. 34). The positional power stance that informed my actions was parochial as I excluded the “productive use of power” as a “process for consensus through social interaction” (Karikan, 2011, p. 36-37).

Self-awareness is a “key cornerstone” in authentic leadership (Diddams & Chang, 2012, p. 596). As leaders demonstrate understanding of their strengths and weaknesses they “make sense of the world” (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009, p. 424). Balanced processing a component in authentic leadership theory focuses on the manner in which, leaders appraise themselves and the contexts in which they work. Authentic leaders demonstrate that they are honest and open, accept responsibility, and have accurate and realistic appraisals of situations (Walumbwa et al., (2011). They actively seek input and “non-defensively” consider the views of others as they gather and make sense of self-relevant information (Diddams & Chang, 2012, p. 597). Adopting a self-critical and introspective approach facilitates leadership growth and development. When balanced processing is heightened it moderates leader self-awareness, allowing for a more realistic appraisal. Diddams and Chang (2012) propose that “greater epistemic humility” will moderate the effects of self-awareness. In my personal history (see Chapter Five, p. 139) I poignantly reflect on my tenure as director of SAISSE and the effect of this conflict.

*This self-study was born out of this anguish and has given me the space to be reflexive about my practice.*

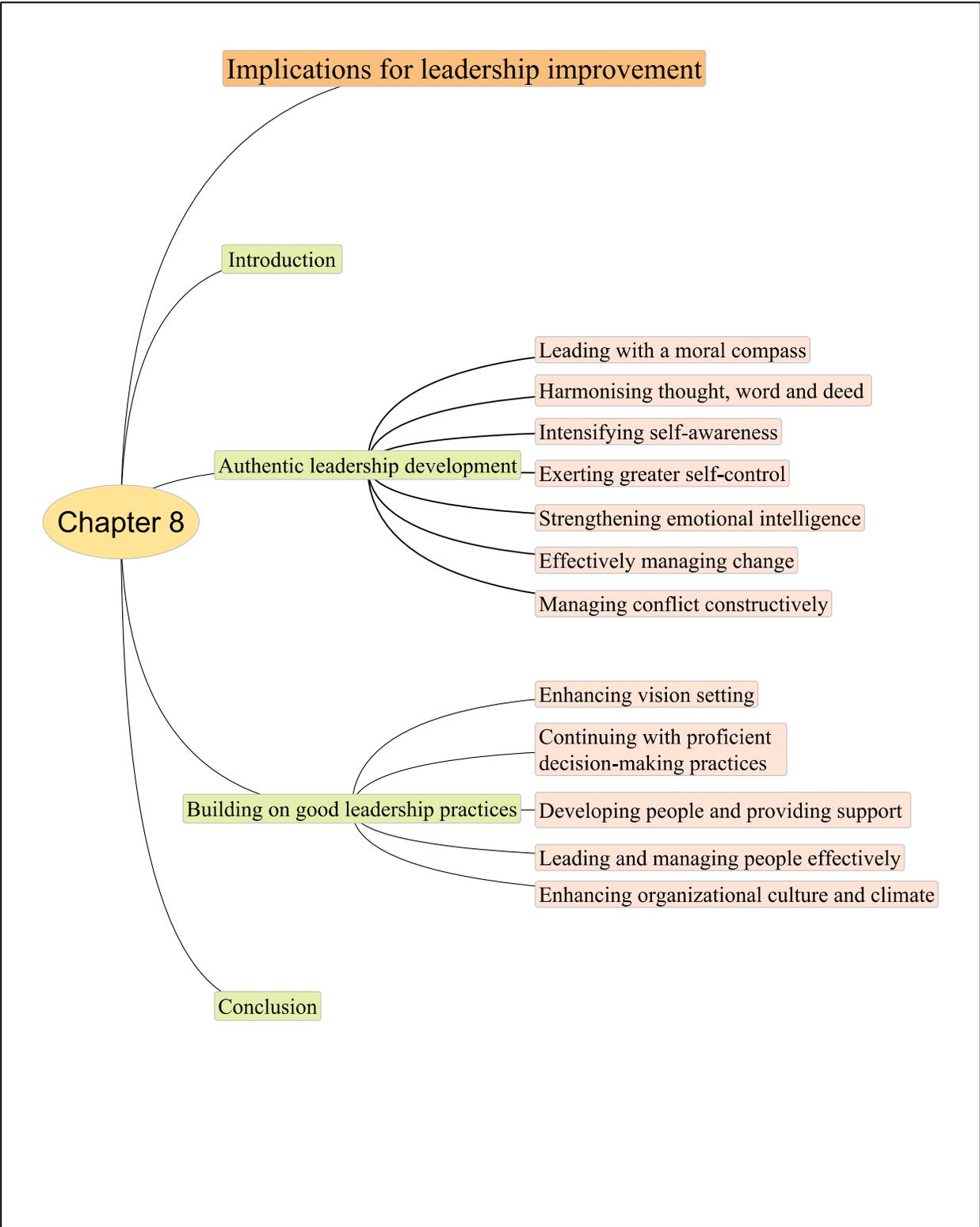
In constructing and deconstructing the narrative of this conflict, hidden ideology and discourse surfaced allowing for new and different interpretations and meanings to emerge. In the narrative I disclosed that I was so engrossed with the conflict and used most of my time and energies reactively without paying much attention to the environment. I did not look within and critically examine my behaviour, beliefs and values, which may have offered insight into my practice and possibly shifted my thinking and actions. On interrogating the power issues that were embedded in the micro politics I realised that the positional power stance that informed my actions was parochial. The “To see” element in the Mahavakya theory of leadership incorporates leader awareness of context, background and environmental realities to generate information that guides decision-making (Chibber, 2010).. Authentic leadership goes beyond the physical environment and includes the inner landscape of leaders. Scharmer (2009, p. 10) states that the “interior condition [and] inner place” of the leader must be examined to understand why he or she leads in the way he or she does.

### **7.3 CONCLUSION**

Self-study has given me the space to be reflexive as I examined snapshots of my leadership practice from different perspectives, which also included the views of other significant people. Drawn from the nodal leadership experiences, I have interrogated aspects of my practice to not only describe my practice but to also examine the rationale for my decisions, actions, attitudes, beliefs and values. In this chapter, I have critically examined vision setting, emotionally intelligent leadership and self-awareness, change management, decision-making, developing people, leading and managing people, organizational culture and climate and conflict management. Interrogation of these practices has revealed the influences that have come to bear on my leadership. The factors that shaped my practice included role models such as my father and Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The literature that I was exposed to as an emerging leader also influenced the way I led. Furthermore, my experiences and reflections on these experiences shaped my implicit theories of leadership, which guided my actions as a leader.

Notwithstanding the rich insights that emerged, I am mindful that this knowledge is not exhaustive. Even with more scholarship I will not be able to claim with conviction that I have a full and complete picture of my leadership practice because each insight opens up new inquiries. Weick (2003, p. 71) describes this succinctly; “the more one knows, the more one realises the extent of what one does not know.” In the following chapter, I explore the developmental implications that have arisen from the critical review of my leadership practice as I look for ways to improve my practice.

Figure 38: Outline of Chapter Eight



# CHAPTER 8

## IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP IMPROVEMENT

*“There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self.”*

Aldous Huxley

### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Seven (see p. 169) I critically explored my leadership practice to get a sense of how I enacted leadership. Snapshots of my leadership practice were presented to answer the research question “what is my leadership practice and why do I lead the way I do?” Arising out of the themes that emerged from my personal history (see Chapter Four and Chapter Five, pp. 77-106) I interrogated my leadership practice to reveal the way I engaged with vision setting, emotional intelligence, change management, decision-making, developing people, leading and managing people, organizational culture and climate and conflict management. The examination of these leadership practices has not only given me deep insights into what I do but also offers explanations for the way my leadership is enacted. As a consequence of my critical enquiry, hidden ideologies and discourses surfaced allowing for new insights into my practice to emerge as I reflexively engaged with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends.

In this chapter I draw from the insights of my multiple selves and my leadership practice that I explored in Chapter Six (see p. 141) and Chapter Seven (see p. 169) respectively to respond to the research question, “What are the implications of this self-study for the improvement of my leadership practice?” In Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, I made certain inferences about my practice and in this chapter I explore the gaps that I have identified and consider strategies for improvement. The inferences that have emerged from the analysis of my data are italicized and are considered as a starting point of conversations to improve my leadership practice. Engaging critically and reflexively with my leadership practice has created the space for me to consider opportunities for personal and professional improvement. Drawing from the analysis of the data in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven I also consider good practices that are worthy of strengthening.

## **8.2 AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The dilemmas that I encountered in the nodal experience as the director of SAISSE were ethical and moral in nature and these challenged what I considered to be my authentic self/selves. Authentic leadership, which is a significant element of the theoretical framework that underpins this study, offered insights into what I do as a leader as well as opportunities to improve my leadership practice. Values, ethics and dilemmas, congruence, self-awareness and self-regulation are considered in this section as areas of potential growth for authentic leadership.

### **8.2.1 Leading with a moral compass**

An internalized moral perspective, which includes values and ethics, is a key construct in authentic leadership theory (Hannah, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2011). Values and ethics are the “conscious or unconscious influences on attitudes, actions, and speech” (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007, p. 400). As the director of SAISSE responsible for human values and character development education, I had an awareness of the core values, which guided my personal and professional self, which is consistent with Begley and Stefkovich (2007) proposition that “leaders should know their own values and ethical predispositions.” I also had a very good understanding of the values that informed the philosophy and pedagogy of human values education that was delivered at the Sathya Sai Schools (Naicker, 2011). However, in spite of this awareness and knowledge I did not feel that I was on terra firma with the values I espoused, articulated and enacted. In Chapter Five (see pp. 149-150), I reflected on my leadership practice and made the following inference.

*“I have found it to be a challenge to live by my values especially in moments that were difficult, stressful and demanding as pragmatism and expediency demanded otherwise ... I have noted that living by truth and integrity is a challenge as power and influence imperatives in some leadership contexts dictated otherwise.*

As I tried to make sense of my discomfort I realised that having an understanding of my own value system was not adequate and that I needed to consider the values of the people that I worked with and served. It is posited that leaders need to “become more sensitive to the value orientations of others” as well (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007, p. 399). In my leadership practice I did not consciously apply my mind to the value orientations of others and now appreciate that

this knowledge has the potential of facilitating a better understanding of people, what drives their behaviour, and allow for “shared values and understandings” to emerge (Swaffield & Dempster, 2009, p. 114). Shared values and meanings are essential enabling factors to get people to act with common purpose. Where teams share common values, the organizational climate is positive and the likelihood of conflict is diminished (Klein, Knight, Ziegert, Lim & Saltz, 2011). The likelihood of shifting my practice further along the continuum of authentic leadership may be accelerated through a deeper awareness of my own values and ethics together with an appreciation of other peoples’ value orientations.

The ethical dilemmas that I experienced would have been easier to resolve if I was more open to sharing them with others and trusting myself that debate and different views may produce more effective means to solve problems. The practice of reflexivity, the rigour of self-study, the exposure to authentic leadership theory and the Mahavakya leadership theory has opened up new pathways for me to follow in working with ethical dilemmas. Collaborating with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends has made me aware that I did not have a well-defined personal code of values and ethics to guide my actions and behaviour. I had a tacit understanding and appreciation of my value system but I did not share, discuss or clarify them with other members of SAISSE. As ethics and values ground leadership practice (Burnes & By, 2012), this insight has implications for my development. Begley and Stefkovich, (2007) propose that leaders develop personal and professional codes of ethics, write and reflect on critical incidents, discuss and present their dilemmas to others and conduct a value audit process for leadership development. It is also suggested that leaders construct narratives around “important turning points” and share these with followers to strengthen self-awareness (Weischer, Weibler & Petersen, 2013, p. 490) and clarify personal and organizational values.

Notwithstanding that these strategies that could enhance my moral and ethical development, I am acutely aware that this development requires constant inner vigilance and a life-long commitment. Begley and Stefkovich (2007, p. 401) offer wise guidance.

The study of ethics should be as much about the life-long personal struggle to be ethical, about failures to be ethical, the inconsistencies of ethical postures, the masquerading of self-interest and personal preference as ethical action, and the

dilemmas which occur in everyday and professional life when one ethic trumps another.

### **8.2.2 Harmonising thought, word and deed**

In Chapter Six (see p. 150) I examined the tensions and contradictions I experienced as I grappled with dilemmas in certain nodal experiences.

*In such dilemmas I felt tensions and conflicts within myself as I struggled to shift from my actual self to my ideal self, which for me represented the congruence between my espoused and lived values.*

According to Argyris (2006, p. 274) “people consistently act inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their espoused theory and their theory-in-use, between the way they think they are acting and the way they really act.” However, I was mostly aware of the values I espoused and through reflection I checked whether it was in alignment with my lived practice. In spite of this awareness and reflection I was not satisfied that my espoused values and lived values were to the state I idealised. My experience is consistent with what Diddam & Chang (2012, p. 597) describe as “recurring [levels] of non-congruence” which authentic leaders are cognisant of as a “sense of self that is only partly self-determined.”

*I consciously made efforts to maintain the congruence in what I thought, what I said and what I did but am aware that I have not yet perfected this state of being* (see Chapter Five, p. 150).

The Mahavakya theory of leadership, which I discussed in Chapter Two (see p. 32) emphasises leaders demonstrating consistency in thought, word and deed as they seek to influence others (Chibber, 2010). When leaders are perceived as “walking the talk, delivering on promises, and aligning words and deed” they demonstrate “behavioural integrity” (Leroy et al., 2011, p. 261). Leaders who remain true to their self and are “open and non-defensive in their interaction with others” generate trust, which enhances follower role performance and greater organizational commitment (Leroy et al., 2011, p. 261). Drawing from this, I realise that if I am to narrow the gap between the states of congruence and incongruence I also need to consider the way I relate

to others. Behavioural integrity together with being non-defensive and open to different views offers possibilities of improving congruency in my thoughts, words and deeds.

Somatic or body awareness (Weischer et al., 2013) is coupled with the physical self which is “the embodiment of that ‘true self’ that leaders are perceived as authentic or not” (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010, p. 64). Self-awareness in a somatic sense has relevance for leaders who desire to understand and improve their practice. This study has made me sensitive to my emotions and the way they manifest in my body. Being mindful of what the body feels is an indicator to the emotions that may be below the radar. Emotions that manifest as bodily reactions such as “butterflies in the tummy, the headiness of elation, or the queasiness associated with uncertainty” (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010, p. 66) are cues that could direct or redirect my leadership behaviour. Furthermore, the way followers perceive leaders expressing themselves “is critical to followers' experience of authentic leadership” (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010, p. 64). Follower perception is based on leader behaviours, which are usually the outer, visible physical and nonverbal actions. Nonverbal behaviour “plays an important role in credibility judgments” (Weischer et al., 2013, p. 479). I am now cognisant of the effects of congruence or lack of congruence and the way my nonverbal responses are perceived by others. I am aware that it is imperative that there is harmony not only between what I think, say and do but as well as my nonverbal cues, if others are to trust me. The insight of embodied authenticity (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010), somatic awareness (Weischer et al., 2013) and aligning my nonverbal actions to my thoughts, words and deeds offers possibilities for leadership practice improvement.

### **8.2.3 Intensifying self-awareness**

Self-awareness is a key construct in both authentic leadership theory (Hannah et al., 2011) as well as emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013). In this section I examine the implications of self-awareness as it relates to authentic leadership behaviours. Whetten and Cameron (2011) traced the history of self-awareness and its effect on management effectiveness over different time periods and conclude that self-awareness is inextricably tied to growth and development. Knowledge of the self is central to improving leadership and management skills and there is evidence of the importance of self-awareness for perceived effective leadership (Butler, Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2014). Self-awareness is more than extensive knowledge about

one's thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Diddam and Chang (2012, p. 597) suggest “authentic leaders are also aware of their own ambiguities, inconsistencies and limits to self-knowledge.”

In spite of the virtue of self-awareness leaders may be discouraged from turning inwards as the new knowledge may prove to be too painful (Whetten & Cameron, 2011). “We tend to be afraid of any knowledge that would cause us to despise ourselves or to make us feel inferior, weak, worthless, evil, shameful” (Maslow, 1999, p. 71). Accessing self-knowledge is further confounded by defence mechanisms which we use to “avoid becoming conscious of unpleasantness or dangerous truths” (Maslow, 1999, p. 71). This probably explains why leaders “rarely have easily accessible information about themselves” and they tend to have biased views of themselves (Diddams & Chang, 2012, p. 596). Notwithstanding the pain and discomfort that I faced, I persevered with the inner journey to discover who I was and to find ways of improving my leadership practice.

*Feelings of inadequacy, self-efficacy questioning and confusion provided the energy and momentum to withdraw from the outer world and look within myself for answers to issues that puzzled me* (see Chapter Seven, p. 173).

The existential angst that I experienced prompted the inner search for meaning not only of my life but also of my leadership practice. The mental anguish, existential crises and spiritual pain proved to be the “building blocks of growth” and this “self-examination” was the “preparation for insight, a ground breaking for the seeds of self-understanding which [would] gradually bloom into changed behaviour” (Brouwer (1989, p. 17).

Brouwer (1989, p. 17) argues that insight precedes change in behaviour as “real psychic pain” may sometimes reveal “insights – real, genuine glimpses of ourselves as we really are.” Whetten and Cameron (2011, p. 58) suggest that self-awareness may be enhanced when leaders are mindful of “the sensitive line” which is the point when they become “defensive or protective” when others make available information which is inconsistent with what they believe about themselves. Through discussions with critical friends, resistance to self-examination may be overcome as interaction and self-disclosure with others offers possibilities of becoming open and receptive to differing views. With the awareness of my thoughts, emotions and behaviours

through reflection and reflexivity I am better placed to address the failings, ambiguities and contradictions in my leadership practice. However, I am of the view that self-awareness too is a life-long practice and that it is a habit that has to be constantly nurtured if it is to yield results.

#### **8.2.4 Exerting greater self-control**

*I was aware of the sensitivity and tact that was needed at times when I felt that some of the ideas were not viable ... The self-awareness and self-regulation I demonstrated made the principals feel that their ideas were genuinely welcomed and this inspired them to participate more actively in the decision-making process (see Chapter Six, p. 177).*

In this leadership experience I exercised self-restraint and control as a consequence of being aware of my thoughts and feelings. With this and other life experiences I consciously made efforts to adopt a measured and tempered approach to leadership issues and sometimes I have been described as someone who is “diplomatic.” I understood that authenticity of leadership is diminished when self-awareness and self-regulation are absent (Waite, McKinney, Smith-Glasgow & Meloy, 2013). I am acutely aware of the necessity to exercise self-restraint, govern myself internally and avoid acting impulsively. “Self-awareness is the basis for self-regulated development” (Avolio & Luthans, 2006, p. 137). The first steps for me are the awareness of what I am thinking and feeling and then use this awareness to check my thoughts, words and deeds. Nevertheless I am mindful that self-regulation like self-awareness is an enduring journey and that care and vigilance need to be exercised at all times.

Balanced processing extends the self-regulatory process (Wong & Cummings, 2009) as objective and bias free information processing challenges deeply held positions (Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang & Wu, 2014), which may result in leaders acting in a heedful and considered manner. For leadership to be authentic, a “balanced approach to processing information about one’s self” is an imperative (Diddams & Chang, 2012, p. 594). Accurate information about ones’ self reduces distortions, exaggerations and personal biases as a more complete and fuller picture of the self emerges. Leaders are encouraged to actively seek input from others and non-defensively consider ideas from other people. Seeking feedback, particularly adverse feedback

from those who are independent and not obligated to the leader will more likely generate accurate information (Diddams & Chang, 2012). The implications for me are that I must continue with reflexive dialogs with critical friends to obtain feedback that will bring to the surface hidden dimensions, especially those truths that are difficult to face. A 360-degree approach to gathering information about myself and being open to information even if it is an inconvenient truth, is a tool that could grow and enhance my leadership competencies.

Relational transparency a construct in authentic leadership promotes “positive relationships” through open sharing of information which includes the “leader’s true thoughts and feelings” (Hannah et al., 2011, p. 562). Demonstrating transparency through “openness and appropriate self-disclosure of values, emotions, and motives/goals” enhances trust and authenticity (Wong & Cummings, 2009, p. 525). By nature I am a private person and I do not easily share my feelings with others especially in contexts like work. However, I do appreciate the value of relational transparency and understand that if I am to develop as an authentic leader, then this is an area that requires development. Attending to self-regulation, balanced processing and relational transparency offers possibilities and opportunities for me to consider in developing my “learning agenda” (Boyatzis, Smith, Van Oosten & Woolford, 2013, p. 19) and use them as tools to check impulsive actions and exercise self-restraint.

### **8.2.5 Strengthening emotional intelligence**

The subject of emotional intelligence has generated substantial interest from researchers (Pool & Qualter, 2012) and results indicate that emotional intelligence “may indeed be a key determinant of effective leadership” (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton & Boyle, 2006, p. 275). Research findings show that it is possible to improve the management of emotions and develop “emotional understanding abilities” (Pool & Qualter, 2012, p. 310). The scrutiny of my leadership practice has exposed inadequacies and deficiencies in the way I managed my emotions. On examining the data, the inference that I make is that,

*greater emotional awareness which emanated from my self-study has made me conscious of how my passion, stubbornness, impatience and critical view of underperforming individuals has got in the way of my leadership practice (see Chapter Seven, p. 174).*

I referred to Goleman's (2003) framework of emotional intelligence, which is relevant for my personal and professional self (see Chapter Two, p. 29). The emotional intelligence framework constructs of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relational management shares some commonality with the self-awareness, self-regulation, balanced processing and relational transparency of authentic leadership theory. Therefore the implications for improvement that I discussed in sections 8.2.3 and 8.2.4 in this chapter (see pp. 195-198) are also relevant for the growth of my emotional intelligence.

When leaders are aware of their own feelings as well as those of others they “read people, groups, and organizational cultures accurately and they build lasting relationships” (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 4). Being in tune with others is the resonance that emotionally intelligent leaders capitalize on as they build “shared purpose” and “shared caring” when they pay attention to themselves and others (Boyatzis et al., 2013, p. 19). This led me to believe that “connecting with others at an emotional level makes work more meaningful” (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2013, p. 21). The critical and reflexive review of my leadership practice has revealed that my leadership practice may improve if I am mindful of what I am feeling and how those around me perceive my emotions and their accompanying energies. The four pillars of Goleman's (2003) emotional intelligence framework together with the renewal keys of “mindfulness, hope and compassion” are useful tools that offer possibilities of heightening the way I resonate and lead with emotional intelligence (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005, p. 8). Awareness of my emotions and the way I respond to others will restrain me from acting impulsively.

It seems that “most sustainable behavioural change is intentional” (Boyatzis, Lingham & Passarelli 2010, p. 64). Drawing from Higgins (1987) self-discrepancy theory, the intentional change theory foregrounds the differences between the leaders' real self and ideal self. The strengths and weaknesses identified are used to develop a “learning agenda” which are implemented as leaders experiment with changes and eventually use these learnings as best practice (Boyatzis et al., 2013, p. 19). With the inconsistencies and disparities that I have identified in my real self/selves and ideal self/selves (see Chapter Six and Chapter Seven) I have insights that will inform my “learning agenda.” As I experiment and learn from the innovations,

there are possibilities that I will grow into becoming an emotionally intelligent and resonant leader who is in sync and in harmony with others around me.

### **8.2.6 Effectively managing change**

The critical review of the approach I followed in leading and managing change when I was the director of SAISSE has implications for the way I engage in future transformational initiatives (see Chapter Seven, p. 175).

*My reflexive assessment on the changes that SAISSE instituted reveals that too many changes were effected too soon and because there wasn't sufficient buy-in of the various stakeholders, resistance was generated. The reform programmes were bold and ambitious and went against the best practice of "reform by small steps" (Glatter & Kydd, 2003, p. 237).*

I was passionate and cared deeply about making a difference and this was the energy that on reflection was a contributory factor for the resistance that was generated. Fullan's (2001) insightful observation aptly describes the way I managed or in hindsight mismanaged the change process. "Moral purpose is usually accompanied by a sense of urgency. Leaders in some such cases are in a hurry. If they are in too much of a hurry, they will completely fail - you can't bulldoze change" (Fullan, 2001, p. 9). I realised from this reflection that enthusiasm must be tempered with thoughtfulness because change is a complex process that elicits varying responses, views and emotions (Hellman, 2012) and therefore needs thorough planning, careful managing and attentive monitoring. I have also learnt that change is more sustainable and is less stressful when small changes are made incrementally (Lewin, Weigelt & Emery, 2004).

I naively believed that the changes would occur because my intentions were good. A limited knowledge of the change process, coupled with poor understanding of power issues aggravated the situation (See Chapter Seven, p. 175). In retrospect I realised that the members of the schooling community were poorly prepared for the changes. The "consultative meetings" were primarily used to communicate decisions that were already made rather than meaningfully engaging in the transformational discourse. Instead of embracing "conflicts" I chose to suppress "conflicts" which are "necessary to enable alternative understandings of organizational reality"

(McClellan, 2011, p. 471). I am mindful that the resistance to change arose not only because of inadequate communication but because I did not provide “opportunities for new meanings to emerge” (McClellan, 2011, p. 471). Drawing from this I recognise the value of authentic engagement with people who have views that challenge transformational measures and allow for the co-creation of “alternative meanings” (McClellan, 2011, p. 471). If I were to embrace conflict and uncertainty in my present and future leadership practice possibilities of sustainable organizational changes may occur.

*On interrogating the power issues that were embedded in the micro politics I realised that the positional power stance that informed my actions was parochial.*

(see Chapter Seven, p. 188).

On closer analysis of the resistance to change that I encountered, I accept that I was uncritical and mostly unaware of the power discourses that were at play. I attributed the contestation to the perception that people were simply resisting because they were being moved from their comfort zones. This has now made me sensitive to people’s perception of being powerless when they experience dominance, control and closed behaviours that are suggestive of authoritarian leadership. I am mindful that when leaders and managers obliviously use positional authority to implement transformational programmes, the unequal power relations may generate resistance (Pieterse et al., 2012). Differentials in power relations maybe addressed through empowerment, shared leadership, open communication, close relationships that foster trust and collaboration as power is exercised **with** other people. Exercising power **through** others by being open to negotiation, facilitative, transactional and cooperative is another strategy that I could adopt to sustain change and minimise resistance (Smeed et al., 2009). As leadership is about influencing people, I see the wisdom of using power with and through people and will be circumspect when I leverage positional power to achieve goals, especially in the context of managing organizational change.

### **8.2.7 Managing conflict constructively**

In my tenure as director of SAISSE I experienced conflict that was not only intense but was also protracted. I critically examined this experience to identify opportunities for leadership improvement and development.

*In the narrative I disclose that I was so engrossed with the conflict and used most of my time and energies reactively without paying much attention to the environment. I did not look within and critically examine my behaviour, beliefs and values, which may have offered insight into my practice and possibly shifted my thinking and actions (see Chapter Seven, p. 188).*

This reflection has revealed certain weaknesses in the way I handled this particular situation and has forced me to re-examine the conflict management styles that I use. Conflicts arise from the way peoples' concerns about the things that they care about are managed and when there is dissonance, people act on a continuum that ranges between assertiveness and cooperativeness (Thomas, Thomas & Schaubhut, 2008). In Chapter Seven (see p. 189) I examined the conflict that occurred at the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth and on reflection I realised that my conflict management style was one of competition, which implied concern for my own goals. As the director I felt that I represented the interests of the establishment, which supported the transformational measures and therefore my actions were justified.

Knowledge of other conflict management styles such as accommodation may have yielded different results if I made sacrifices and conceded on certain matters. Compromising as a conflict management style, even though partially satisfying the different parties concerns could have also offered us a "middle-ground settlement" (Thomas et al., 2008, p. 4). The conflict management style that perhaps offers greater promise is that of collaboration or the integrating style, which seeks "win/win" solutions as both parties' concerns are meaningfully met. Drawing from this I realised the need to be mindful about the conflict management style that I use. In managing conflict in the future I will be more conscious of the "concern for self" and "concern for others" and will mediate, using the compromising and integrating conflict management styles (Rahim, 2011, p. 27). However, I am also aware that the conflict management style that I choose to adopt is contingent on the situation, circumstances and context I find myself in.

Literature indicates that there is a positive association between emotional intelligence and the compromising and integrating conflict management styles (Shih & Susanto, 2010). Furthermore, Shih and Susanto's study (2010, p. 159) found that emotional intelligence served as an antecedent for "people's decision in adopting integrating and compromising styles in conflict."

In section 8.2.5 in this chapter (see p. 198) I examined how *my passion, stubbornness, [and] impatience ... got in the way of my leadership practice*. The implications are that for improved practice to occur in managing conflict, I must work on the aspects of my emotions that come in the way I interact with others in situations especially where there is conflict. Through self-awareness and self-regulation my refined state of emotional intelligence may influence the conflict management style that I adopt. I now know that the compromising and integrating conflict management styles are more effective when compared to the competing and accommodating styles.

### **8.3 BUILDING ON GOOD LEADERSHIP PRACTICES**

A critical review of the way I led and managed vision setting, decision-making, developing and supporting people, leading and managing people and creating positive and healthy organizational climates has made me aware of certain good practices that I need to retain and grow in my repertoire of leadership knowledge, skills and attitudes. Continuing with these good practices, using a reflexive approach may improve and strengthen my leadership practice.

#### **8.3.1 Enhancing vision setting**

From the analysis of the data in two of the nodal experiences I am of the view that vision setting is an area of strength in my leadership practice.

*I am mindful that the resource centre became a reality because the principals and the community owned the vision. Similarly, the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled was able to improve the quality of life of its members because the vision was co-shared* (see Chapter Seven, p. 172).

Shared ownership of a vision is a key to leadership success and it is critical that all role players are enrolled. I appreciated the need to co-construct a vision and believe that this encouraged a collective effort to realise the goals that were developed (Nanus, 1995). Reflexivity has made me aware of the importance of others in vision crafting and the need for good and clear communication that meaningfully involves other people, thus facilitating shared visioning.

### **8.3.2 Continuing with proficient decision-making practices**

I usually adopted a consensual decision making approach and this fostered teamwork, cooperation and greater commitment. As a consequence I discovered that people actively participated in meetings and followed through with greater enthusiasm as the decisions were implemented.

*“I had intuitively stumbled upon the wisdom that people usually had ideas on how to approach issues and needed a good facilitator to elicit the ideas. This became the “living theory” that I used consciously when organizational decisions had to be made (see Chapter Seven, p. 176).*

The use of power **with** people and **through** people that I discussed in section 8.2.6 in this chapter (see p. 204) may also reduce conflict as consensual decision-making involves all people. The insights that I have gained about the way I made decisions encourages me to continue in this manner to promote organizational effectiveness, cohesiveness and team spirit.

### **8.3.3 Developing people and providing support**

*In my leadership practice I recognised that professional growth and development was critical for the organizations I worked in and I consciously strove to build capacity and empower members of staff (see Chapter Seven, p. 177).*

I appreciated the value of empowering others as I too had enjoyed the benefit of having good role models and mentors who made significant contributions to my leadership practice. In my experience I found that as people developed they became more productive and confident to take on new challenges and they made contributions to grow the organization. The success I experienced in developing others provided the platform for me to launch into a new career direction; teaching leadership and management and mentoring school management team members (see Chapter Five, p. 121).

As a school counsellor my feelings for other people’s pain and distress was heightened and I usually responded in an empathetic manner.

*I am of the view that most of the time people just need someone who is patient and willing to listen to them as they vent and give expression to their feelings ... Drawing from this I have learnt that closer relationships are forged and collegiality is strengthened, when authentic care is demonstrated (see Chapter Seven, pp. 179-180).*

Drawing on Adair's (2009, p. 7) "functions of leadership" which includes the need to be attentive to individual needs, my experience indicates that this practice should be continued and strengthened. I have found that there is value in attending to individual needs as well as developing individuals and groups to meet organizational goals.

#### **8.3.4 Leading and managing people effectively**

*I took a "person-centred" approach in leading and managing the people I worked with, recognizing the value of authentic care and respect which when ethically used could be used as a lever of positive influence (See Chapter Seven, p. 181).*

My experience has revealed that people usually carried out their duties when they felt inspired and motivated to do so and that a "person-centred" approach served me well in influencing others (Singh, 2013). When people saw me acting honestly and leading by example it was easier for me to influence their actions, as they perceived "behavioural integrity" (Leroy et al., 2011). Consensual decision-making, co-constructing shared visions, resolving conflicts using the compromising and integrating management styles and being emotionally intelligent are the good practices that will advance my leadership practice as I lead and manage people.

#### **8.3.5 Enhancing organizational culture and climate**

I used the knowledge of positive and toxic school cultures and climates, drawing on my experience as a management development practitioner, to promote a healthy organizational culture in SAISSE. My experience in SAISSE has shown me that

*Strong personal and professional relationships were fostered as members worked together, supporting each other to complete tasks identified in the strategic plan. A culture of caring professionalism emerged as respect for each other, empathy,*

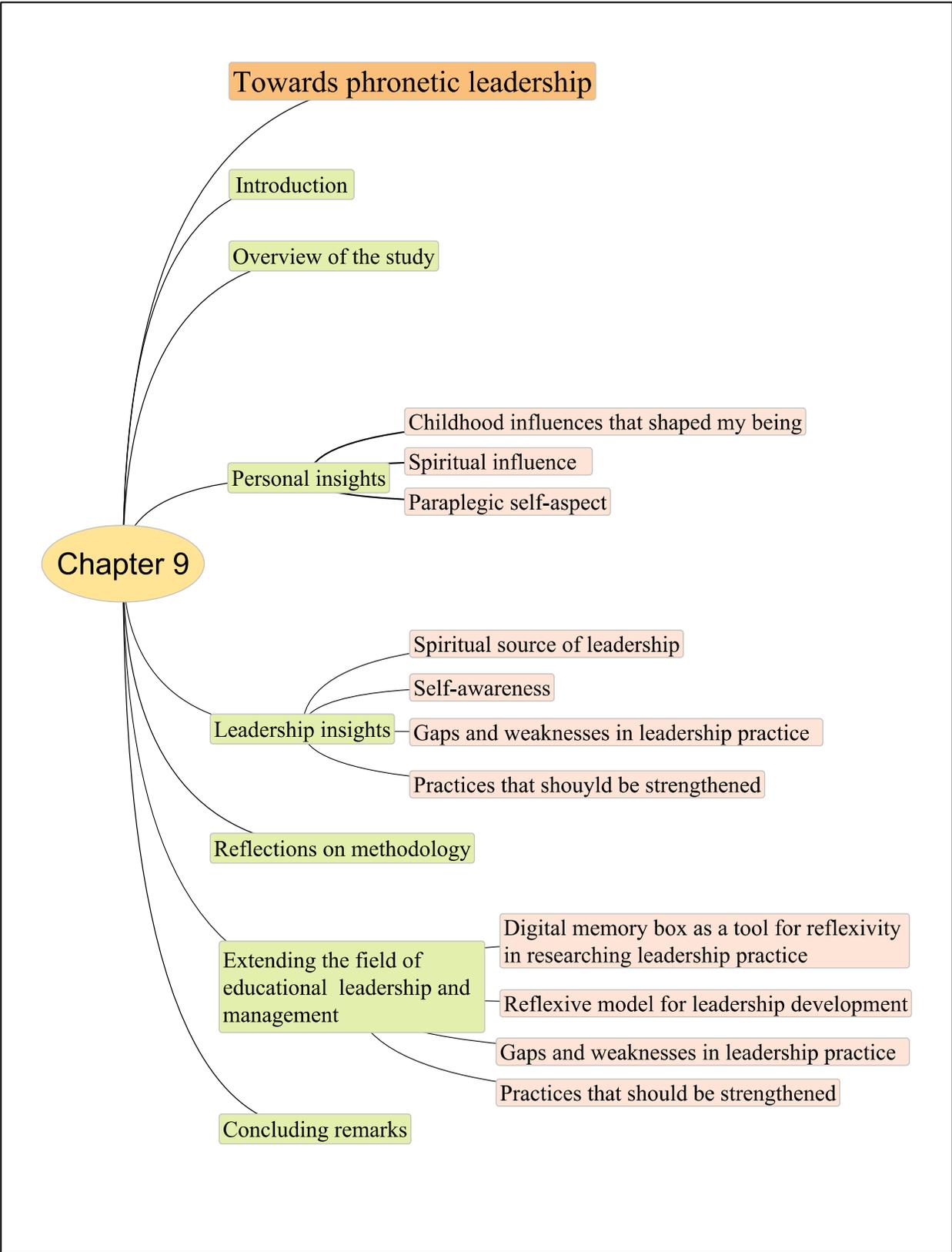
*openness and freedom to express differing views were encouraged ... when leaders demonstrate authentic behaviours they co-create organizational cultures that promote relational transparency (see Chapter Seven pp. 184-185).*

Emerging from this I recognised the role that leaders play in developing healthy organizational cultures in which the well-being of all people transcends narrow interests. This analysis has shown me that authentic leadership, caring and trusting relationships, consensual decision-making, and open communication are key elements that I need to continue with and develop further so that positive and healthy organizational cultures are fostered.

## **8.4 CONCLUSION**

The analysis of the data in the previous chapters brought to surface insights into what constitutes my leadership practice and the reasons why I enact leadership in the way I do. In this chapter I examined the implications for improved leadership practice and identified areas for growth and development. I explored the gaps in my performance as well as strategies to improve my leadership practice in the areas of authenticity, change management and conflict management. I believe that my leadership practice will improve if I demonstrate self-awareness and self-regulation and reflexively engage with others in an open and honest manner. Good practices in vision setting, decision-making, developing people, leading and managing people and creating healthy organizational climates were noted as areas to continue, grow and strengthen. In the chapter that follows I look at the implications of my self-study, review of self-study as a methodology and discuss key findings and contributions of the research.

Figure 39: Outline of Chapter Nine



# CHAPTER 9

## TOWARDS PHRONETIC LEADERSHIP

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost

### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter I examined the implications of the knowledge of my self/selves for leadership improvement. This together with the knowledge of my leadership practice, provided opportunities for me to engage with strategies to improve and grow my practice. I identified strategies to improve authenticity, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, change management and conflict management. Strategies to strengthen effective practices in vision setting, leading and managing people, developing people and creating healthy organizational cultures and climates were also identified.

In this concluding chapter I present a synopsis of my thesis, the implications of my self-study for my personal and leader self/selves, challenges of using a self-study approach and contributions to the field of educational leadership. Arising from my self-study I make known the influences that shaped by my personal, and leader self/selves. I also draw conclusions about my character, values and affinity for selfless work. The significance of paraplegia in my life is assessed and I draw conclusions on how this has altered and shaped my being. On reflecting on self-study as a research methodology I make known my personal experience as researcher and the one who is researched and make concluding statements on ethical considerations and trustworthiness. I bring this chapter and study to a close by discussing how it has extended the field of leadership and management and its implications for other leaders and managers.

## **9.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

In Chapter One, I introduced the notion of reflection and its relevance for educational leaders and managers and stated that the practice of reflection appealed to me at a time when I was seeking meaning in life and making sense of my practice as an educational leader. The rationale and motivation for my study was disclosed and the context of self-understanding and self-improvement was cited as the genesis of this research. I clarified key concepts that I used in my thesis namely leadership and management, leadership practice, reflection, reflexivity and co-flexivity. Arising out of the rationale and motivation for the study, my research questions sought to explain who I was and how this self/selves related to the leader self/selves. I wished to not only understand my leadership practice but to also identify strategies for improvement. The theoretical framework was introduced and self-study as the research design was briefly discussed. An orientation on how the data was generated was presented and thereafter I offered a brief explanation on the manner in which the literature review was integrated in my study. The chapter concluded with an outline of the thesis.

In Chapter Two, I described the theoretical framework of my self-study, which was a hybridization of aspects of authentic leadership theory, the Mahavakya theory of leadership and theories of self/selves. I traced my search for an appropriate theory and advanced reasons for making a decision to use a theoretical framework drawn from several theories. Definitions of authentic leadership were considered and a discussion on the key concepts that constitute authentic leadership theory followed. I discussed the Mahavakya theory of leadership and its relevance to my study and thereafter unpacked the key concepts. I then explained the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and multiple self/selves theories (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; McConnel, et al., 2012; Sai Baba, 2000).

In Chapter Three I discussed how the intention to understand my leadership practice and myself led me towards the interpretive paradigm. However, since I desired more than an understanding of phenomenon, I was also drawn to critical paradigm, which sought to interrogate power hegemonies at work as well as transformation. Self-study as the selected research design was discussed as well as the methods of personal history narrative and memory work. I explained how I adapted Samaras's (2011) five foci framework, which was developed for teachers and

teacher educators in mind, for the study of my leadership practice. The nodal leadership moments were considered and I described how I worked with research participants to generate data as well as the ethical considerations that I observed. The manner in which the data was analysed was described and I disclosed the efforts that I made to ensure trustworthiness.

In Chapter Four and Five I presented my personal history narrative, which was reconstructed by using artefacts in digital memory boxes and interviewing research participants in the leadership nodal moments that I identified. The co-constructed narrative explored my formative experiences as a child, emerging leadership experiences in school, university and as a school guidance counsellor. In Chapter Five I traced my formal leadership experiences as a ward manager in Richmond and the establishment of the Masakhuxolo Education Resource Centre. I narrated my work experiences as a leadership and management consultant and the work I engaged in building the capacity of school management teams. Finally, I related my tenure as director of SAISSE, which led me to explore notions of the self and who I really am as I struggled to make sense of my leadership practice.

Chapter Six engages with the critical question of who am I and who am I as a leader. I presented the themes that emerged from my personal history narrative and used the lens of the authentic leader self/selves framework that I described in Chapter Two (see p. 39) to explore aspects of my self that were below my radar. I examined the formative influences in my life, early childhood and family context, my father as a role model, and the influence of spirituality. I then reflected on the impact of paraplegia and how it altered my being and steered me towards becoming an advocate and champion of people with disabilities. Snapshots of my leadership experiences were interrogated to reveal aspects of leader self/selves that provided more clues as I put the leadership puzzle together. The complexity of the self/selves which is/are constantly in flux and change, presented irregular forms without clearly defined boundaries, making it very difficult to identify the self/selves in absolute discrete terms.

In Chapter Seven I engaged with the data to examine my leadership practice. I identified the following themes from my personal history narrative to understand what I do as a leader and the reasoning that underpins my practice that is vision setting, emotional intelligence, change

management, decision-making, developing people, leading and managing people, organizational culture and climate, and conflict management. My self-study provided the space for me to be reflective and reflexive about my practice and conversations with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends forced me to re-examine my values, assumptions and beliefs, which influenced the way I enacted leadership. This insight added more pieces to the puzzle that I was building and a tentative picture of who I was as a leader emerged.

Chapter Eight draws from the insights that I derived after I engaged with the research questions of who I was, who I was as a leader, what is my leadership practice and why do I enact my leadership practice in the way I do. I used these insights to identify strengths, weaknesses and gaps in my leadership practice and used this knowledge to develop broad strategies to improve my leadership practice. I observed that my leadership practice must improve in the areas of authenticity, change management and conflict management and could be strengthened in vision setting, decision-making, developing people, leading and managing people and creating healthy organizational climates.

In the section that follows I discuss my findings and reveal the insights that I obtained which has implications for the improvement of my leadership practice.

### **9.3 PERSONAL INSIGHTS**

As I engaged with the data and the research questions several personal insights emerged and I took the pieces of the puzzle to generate a picture of who I was. This included my childhood experiences, the influence of spirituality and the effects of becoming a paraplegic.

#### **9.3.1 Childhood influences that shaped my being**

In Chapter Six (see p. 141) I used theories of multiple selves (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Higgins, 1987; McConnel, et al., 2012; Sai Baba, 2000) to discover who I was and how these selves manifested. Using the puzzle metaphor, I tried to fit the pieces together to generate an understanding of who I was and what I was doing as a leader. The analysis of the data from my

personal history narrative has revealed that my experiences in my early childhood played a significant part in shaping the leadership occupancy roles that emerged in later life. Coupled with an authoritative parenting style and privileges as a first-born male child in a traditional Indian family, these enabling environmental factors accelerated growth in my personal and leader self/selves. My father's influence as a role model in respect of his personal conduct as well as interest in spirituality, selfless service and leadership shaped my being on a personal and professional level. I was influenced by the values and aspirations that he espoused and sought to emulate him. He shaped my political beliefs and heightened my awareness of the unjust nature of apartheid in South Africa. I am of the view that in some ways I am my father's son, though we differ in so many other ways.

### **9.3.2 Spiritual influence**

Significant pieces of the puzzle clustered around spirituality and they are linked to Sri Sathya Sai Baba whose teachings made an indelible impression on me. I realised that spirituality is the common thread that runs through much of who I am. Divinity frames the puzzle of my life and gives it shape and meaning in my quest for self-realization. I expand on the implications of spirituality and how it has shaped my being in the following sections.

#### ***9.3.2.1 Values, ethics and principles***

Sri Sathya Sai Baba heightened my awareness on values, ethics and principles when I became exposed to his programme of education in human values. Whilst I consciously strove to live in congruence with the values I believed in, I was challenged when I encountered situations that put me in an invidious position. In these situations I felt a discomfort that forced me to review my thoughts, feelings, words and behaviour. According to Whitehead (2009) such living contradictions lead to modifications. As a litmus test whenever I encountered a dilemma I asked myself whether my actions were politically motivated or whether I had the higher good of others at heart. I am satisfied that conversations with myself/selves in reflection and with others in co-flexive dialogue have heightened my conscience. The insights that have emerged from my study point to the notion that I am reflective by nature and that I often review my actions in a contemplative mode. In my search to understand who I am I and how my values shape me and

guide my behaviours, I have also come to the realization that it is easier to espouse, articulate and preach about values than to live by them.

### ***9.3.2.2 Selfless service***

Sri Sathya Sai Baba inspired me to work towards the upliftment of people who were disadvantaged and marginalized. My altruistic motives driven by spiritual notions of interconnectedness and oneness motivated me to make a difference in the world and in so doing sought to transform myself in this process. I had discovered my life's higher purpose in serving others and in this process I acquired valuable leadership knowledge and skills. My experiences in serving a disadvantaged community living in informal conditions and people with disabilities provided the platform for me to later grow as a leader in professional settings. I have now come to understand that the sincere desire to serve others precedes leadership and that leadership in itself becomes an act of service.

### **9.3.3 Paraplegic self-aspect**

The motor accident that led to my becoming a paraplegic at the peak of my youth altered my being significantly. Even though 29 years have gone by I still experience a sense of otherness as paraplegia differentiates me from "able-bodied people". This experience has heightened my sense for justice, equity and fair play and I have become a champion campaigning for the rights of people with disabilities. My inner strength and resilience has helped me to cope and forge ahead in spite of the barriers that disable me. I am of the view that I can still realise my life's purpose and transform myself into becoming the best that I can be. Paraplegia describes my physical state but it does not define who I am.

## **9.4 LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS**

In this this section I reveal the insights that surfaced after I interrogated the data to answer the research questions of who I am as a leader, what is my leadership practice and what informs my leadership practice.

### **9.4.1 Spiritual source of leadership**

I am aware that I am a spiritual being and I try to live in this consciousness. It is inevitable that this awareness has permeated my leadership self/selves as I bring in my spiritual self/selves to enact leadership. I saw Sri Sathya Sai Baba as a transformational leadership (Piccolo et al., 2012) and the Mahavakya theory of leadership (Chibber, 2010) crystalized the sum distillate of leadership for me. Consciously through life and in leadership roles I made a serious effort to be true to the Mahavakya theory of leadership and conclude that it is a cornerstone of my leadership practice in spite of the challenges, tensions, contradictions and conflicts that it arouses within me.

### **9.4.2 Self-awareness**

In constructing my personal history narrative and deconstructing this narrative I am of the view that reflexivity in private and public spaces (Samaras & Freese, 2006) has lead to a heightened awareness of who I am and what I do. Engaging with a research mentor, research participants and critical friends has allowed for different interpretations and viewpoints of my self/selves to surface. I have become sensitized to the notion of self-awareness from the perspective of authentic leadership and emotional intelligence and this has generated new knowledge of my leadership practice. Discrepancies between my actual self/selves and ideal self/selves were exposed, for example the instances when I was impatient, overbearing and intolerant and how this conflicted with my desire for harmony and pleasant working relations.

Self-awareness of my values, identity, emotions and motives or goals made it possible for me to narrow the gap between my actual self/selves and ideal self/selves. This study has shown me the “interior condition [and] inner place” that Scharmer (2009, p. 7) urges leaders to examine so they understand what they do as leaders. I have not only recognised the value of self-awareness for leadership practice improvement but also appreciate that it will also accelerate personal growth as well. Greater emotional awareness, which arose from my self-study, has made me aware of how my poorly managed emotions came in the way of my being an effective leader. In my current practice I am aware of what I feel and this “mindfulness [which] resembles reflection-before-action” has the potential of better influencing possible outcomes (Bolton, 2010, p.15). I am also aware of the emotions that others are experiencing and together with the

insights of my own emotional state it places me in a better place to curb impulsive behaviours, exercise self-control and respond with sensitivity.

### **9.4.3 Gaps and weaknesses in leadership practice**

Through self-awareness, reflexive practice and co-flexive dialogues my limitations in managing organizational change and conflict management have been exposed and this has implications for improvement. This self-study has made me aware that my knowledge of change management and conflict management is inadequate. Furthermore, I now realise that I did not have the skills to cope with micro politics and resistance. I have since learnt that small, incremental changes should be made instead of far reaching organizational wide reforms. In a similar manner I became aware of the discourse around power and power differentials and how they contribute to conflicts. Emerging from the deconstruction of the personal history narrative, I realised that in managing conflict I did not examine my behaviour, beliefs and values, which may have changed the decisions I had arrived at. A glaring weakness was that I was myopic and did not undertake a 360-degree assessment.

### **9.4.4 Practices that should be strengthened**

This self-study has alerted me to certain leadership practices that were positive and resulted in success. Tacit knowledge in these areas has become explicit. I have learnt that in some instances where I helped to co-construct inspiring visions, positive outcomes were realised through shared ownership. My consensual decision-making practice also strengthened teamwork as power was used “with” and “through” others. Continuing with this practice may promote organizational cohesiveness and effectiveness. The scrutiny of my practice in developing people has confirmed that empowering others leads to efficiency and effectiveness and caring for the needs of individuals is not only the right thing to do, but it also feeds into an organizational culture based on care and respect. In the organizations I worked in, I was conscious of the impact of the organizational culture and the effects of the organizational climate. I consciously tried to develop a culture of respect and through authentic leadership practices, consensual decision-making processes and emergence of co-shared values, positive healthy organizational cultures were fostered. I believe that if I continue enacting these successful leadership practices in a reflexive mode I would be able to lead and manage effectively.

## 9.5 REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY

In this self-study I adopted a reflexive stance to explore how I enacted leadership to generate insights for practice improvement. I believed this approach would challenge me to go deep within and explore the existential crises that I experienced in a meaningful and productive manner. Introspection was complemented with reflection that involved looking backwards to reconsider my thoughts, feelings, experiences and actions. As a researcher I engaged with my study in a reflexive mode. I became mindful of my values, beliefs and assumptions and how I located myself in the study. Working with a research mentor as a dialogical partner and a group of critical friends generated perspectives that I was unaware and revealed hidden meanings and assumptions that I was ignorant of. Introspection and reflection were processes that occurred at the individual level and within private spaces, whereas co-flexivity extended my enquiry, as I engaged with others in conversations about my work (Pithouse-Morgan, et.al. 2014). This methodology not only generated rich data but also allowed for a deeper and more comprehensive account of who I am and my leadership practice as self-awareness and self-knowledge was heightened.

My initial engagement with the literature in autoethnography and self-study made me aware that the gaze would be on me but I was not too concerned because I was earnestly looking for answers to issues that puzzled me. As I moved beyond the cerebral understanding of self-study, I began to experience certain emotions that disturbed me. I experienced a range of feelings that included anger, hopelessness, worthlessness, disbelief, depression, anxiety and embarrassment. I became defensive as I found it very difficult to admit to inconvenient and hurtful truths about myself. My engagement with a sensitive, supportive and understanding research mentor helped me to grow in confidence with the reflexive methodology and I became more comfortable in revealing my innermost thoughts and feelings. My critical friends in the Transformative Education/al Group asked me probing questions and gently persuaded me to relook at issues from alternate perspectives. Notwithstanding, the personal and emotional support that I enjoyed, I still found it difficult to confront certain truths. I believe that self-study is not for the faint hearted, as it demands total honesty with oneself and other selves. I was fortunate that the motivation for my personal enquiry was compelling enough for me to discard the anxieties and conflicting tensions I experienced and I summoned courage to face my inner demons. My background as a school counsellor, experiences as a paraplegic and deep interest in spirituality

were enabling factors. I am of the view that novice self-study practitioners must be alerted to the possible emotional trauma that they may experience and that support mechanisms and programmes should be in place before they undertake their research.

I was also challenged to present a trustworthy account of my personal history narrative and was conscious of the temptation to be narcissistic and romantic, the pitfalls that researchers in self-study should be mindful of (Samaras, 2011). Several drafts of my personal history narrative were written and I gave these to my research participants, research mentor and critical friends to read. On the basis of their feedback and my own critical reflection, several revisions were made. I noticed that blame apportioning, anger and resentment towards others diminished as I focused on myself and critically looked at my behaviours. As I rewrote my personal history narrative I left out sections that implicated others and focused on my self and felt a cathartic sense of relief as much of the anger, disappointment and disillusionment dissipated.

In constructing the digital memory boxes I experienced challenges as some of the photos were old and I could not trace people to obtain informed consent. Furthermore, there were people in group shots that I did not recognise. I was in a quandary whether to digitally alter their photos to mask their identity or leave it as it was because it would have detracted from the authentic experience and perhaps hinder memory recall. I discussed my dilemma with my critical friends and eventually resolved to uphold the dignity and worth of all the individuals and cautiously used the photographs in a respectful, sensitive and caring manner.

## **9.6 EXTENDING THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Literature has shown that the scholarship using self-study in leadership and management is in a nascent stage and scholars have suggested that self-study offers the promise of improving leadership practice (Manke, 2007; Frick & Riley, 2010; Brown, 2010; Naidoo, 2013). I have found that by using self-study as a research methodology I have become acutely aware of my leadership practice and it has offered insights, which, may transform my practice as “wisdom, discernment and self-awareness dawns” (Naicker, 2014, p. 61). My study will add to the body of

knowledge in leadership, management and administration practices in educational settings and will show that through deeper self-understanding, improvements in leadership practice may occur.

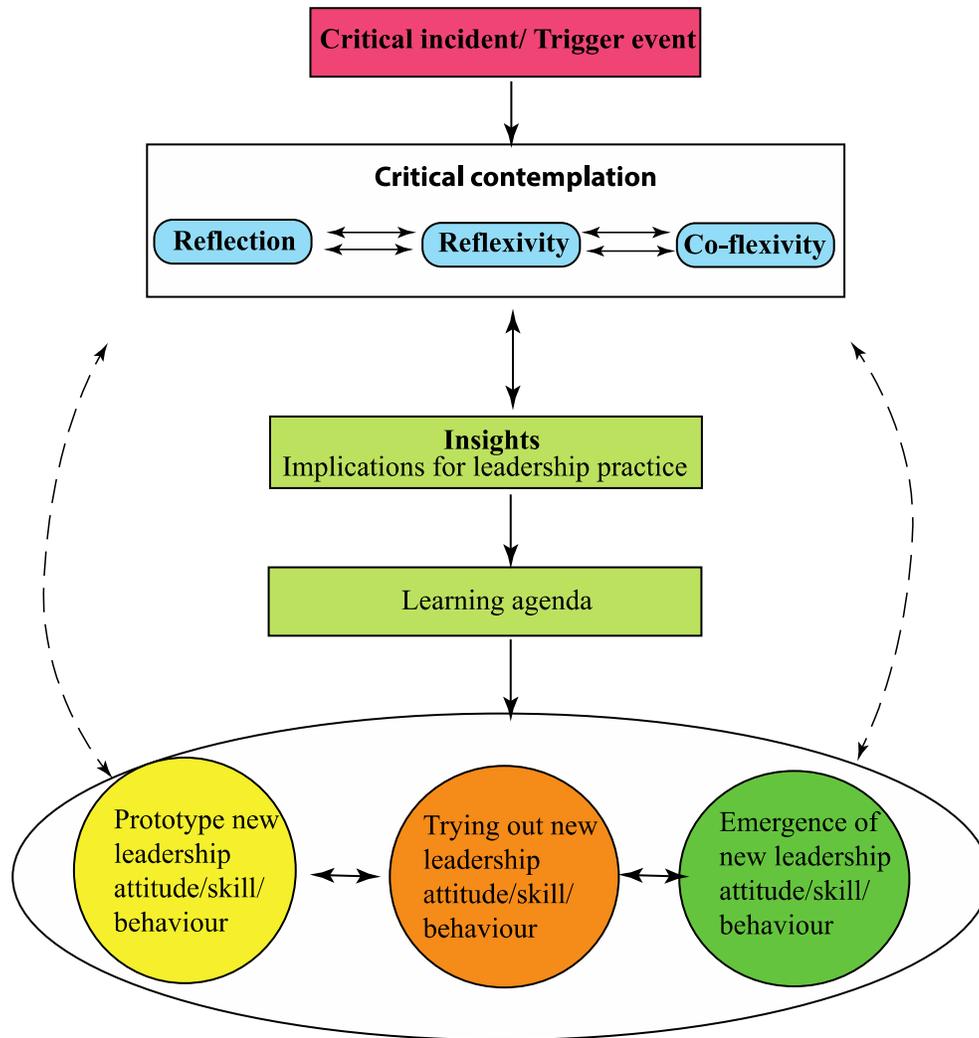
Drawing from the insights of my self-study I recognised that other leaders too could understand and improve their practice through reflection, reflexivity and co-flexivity. The digital memory box and the reflexive leadership development model (see figure 40) are tools that leaders could use to initiate self-inquiries and start conversations about their leadership practice. My self-study is an exemplar that other educational leaders and managers could critically evaluate and draw ideas to examine their practice and generate strategies to improve themselves and those that they lead.

### **9.6.1 Digital memory box as a tool for reflexivity in researching leadership practice**

A survey of the literature indicates that scholarship in how leadership is researched is limited (Warwick, 2011) and there is a heavy reliance on methodologies such as surveys or case studies (Muijs, 2011). I have found that using digital memory boxes offered insights into my leadership practice and was an effective tool to stimulate reflexive and co-flexive conversations (Naicker, 2014). A peer reviewed article based on my work, “Digital Memory Box As A Tool For Reflexivity In Researching Leadership Practice” was published in the *Educational Research For Social Change* journal in November 2014 (See Annexure 1).

### **9.6.2 Reflexive model for leadership development**

When I obtained insights into who I was and what I was doing as a leader I looked for ways to improve my performance in areas where weaknesses were identified. As a consequence of the interrogation of my leadership practice with research participants, critical friends, and working with a research mentor I developed a reflexive model for leadership development.



**Figure 40: Reflexive model for leadership development**

In my personal history narrative I disclosed a critical incident in my tenure as director of SAISSE that forced me to relook at who I was as a leader and how I enacted leadership. The critical incident forced me to go into a mode of deep critical contemplation as I tried to make sense of what was happening within me and around me. The critical contemplation involved sense making and looking for perspectives that I may have missed in my initial assessment of the situation. When I reflected, I tried to reconstruct the events as they occurred but I was aware that this was a subjective process. As a researcher I was also aware of how I positioned myself in understanding the critical incident and how others positioned me (Kirk, 2005). Using a reflexive stance I was mindful of my values, assumptions and beliefs and how these influenced my interpretations of the critical incident. The co-flexive dialogues with research participants,

critical friends and my research mentor gave me different perspectives as they asked me questions that challenged my assumptions and pointed out alternates that I had not thought of. The process of critical contemplation, which is random, has no fixed beginning and end point and is iterative by nature. Reflection may inform or arouse reflexivity and reflexivity in turn may generate a more accurate reflection of the event. Private reflection and reflexivity may give way to public co-flexivity as others engage in critical dialogue and these conversations may generate further reflexive awareness that reflect a richer or render a more complete representation of the event or incident.

Drawing from the insights that emerged from the critical contemplation process, I was able to identify the areas in which my performance was inadequate. I became aware of the leadership knowledge and skills gap. The insights that emerged were subjected to the critical contemplation process and were used to develop a learning or improvement agenda. I also became aware of the areas in which I also performed well. I used these insights to develop a learning agenda to intensify and build on the strengths and close the gaps in the areas that I flagged as problematic. Arising from conversations with my self/selves and others I developed prototype attitudes, skills and behaviours to try out in order to improve my practice. Experiences with the prototype behaviour were again critically contemplated on as the new attitude, skill or behaviour was enacted. On the basis of critical contemplation adjustments or revisions were made. If need be the prototype behaviour may be abandoned and a fresh start is made or the prototype is adopted as a new leadership attitude, skill or behaviour. The new behaviour is again subjected to the process of critical contemplation and refinements are made.

## **9.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

I used the puzzle metaphor to describe the complexity, uncertainty, messiness and challenges I experienced in discovering who I was and how I enacted leadership. I attributed some of the difficulty in piecing together my leadership puzzle to the following; I did not have a picture of the completed puzzle before me and I had not idea what the completed puzzle would look like; many of the pieces were lost in memory; some of the pieces were irregular and just did not fit or connect; it was frustrating as I did not have an idea where to start; and in puzzles there are boundaries but in real life there are no clear boundaries or straight lines. Through this self-study

I was able to locate some of the puzzle pieces and in some instances I was able to connect some of the pieces together. As knowledge of the self/selves and leader self/selves became available a tentative picture of who I was and what I was doing as a leader emerged. However, with pieces lost in time, memory degradation and the complex interplay of others in dynamic social and cultural settings, possibilities of a finally completed puzzle are like the illusionary mirage that constantly shifts. Close examination of the multiple self/selves that constitutes my personal and professional identity provided rich insights into who I am, who am I as a leader and my leadership practice. Notwithstanding this, the puzzle is not complete; the fragmentary understanding of the self/selves provide/s significant clues to who I am and who I am as a leader but owing to the complexities of time, space and context the complete self/selves still remains enigmatic and elusive.

In spite of these limitations, this research has profoundly changed the way I view my leadership practice and myself. It has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to effect further transformation and get closer to the goal of self-realization through self-awareness and authentic conduct. With the knowledge that my self-study has produced about my leadership practice and the improvement strategies that have been identified I am well placed to better lead and manage people. Nelson Mandela's (2010, p. vii) wisdom on introspection resonates with my experience in this scholarship and perhaps is a fitting manner to bring this thesis to a close.

In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such as one's social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education. These are, of course, important in measuring one's success in material matters and it is perfectly understandable if many people exert themselves mainly to achieve all these. But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being. Honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, pure generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve others – qualities which are within easy reach of every soul – are the foundation of one's spiritual life. Development in matters of this nature is inconceivable without serious introspection, without knowing yourself, your weaknesses and mistakes.

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## APPENDIX 1<sup>3</sup>

### ARTICLE THAT WAS PUBLISHED IN A PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL

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### **Digital Memory Box as a Tool for Reflexivity in Researching Leadership Practice**

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#### **Abstract**

Competent leadership plays a significant role in organizational effectiveness. While this is known, there seems to be a dearth of scholarship on how leadership is researched. Literature suggests there is a paucity of reflexive studies that examine the self as leader. Given this, the focus of this article is on the use of the digital memory box as a tool for reflexivity in researching one's leadership practice. The article draws on personal history self-study research in which digital memory boxes were used to generate reflexive data about my leadership practice. Using a narrative approach, I make visible the processes involved in the construction of my digital memory boxes, the manner in which they were used to prompt reflexivity of my leadership practice, and the evidence they produced with regard to my leadership practice. The findings point to the generation of complex notions of reflexivity involving researcher, participants, a dialogical partner, and critical friends (Samaras, 2011) in the co-construction of meanings and interpretations of leadership practice. A digital memory box can therefore be a useful tool for reflexivity in researching leadership practice.

**Keywords:** digital memory box, leadership, leadership practice, reflexivity, self-study

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#### **Introduction**

There is a significant corpus of scholarship that addresses a positive correlation between competent leadership and effective organizations (Bush, 2010a). There is even a proliferation of literature on leadership theories and styles (Moos, 2011). However, a survey of the leadership literature reveals a dearth of scholarship on how leadership is researched and written about in academia, and its relevance for leadership practice (Warwick, 2011). The sparse body of literature that does interrogate how leadership is researched seems to indicate a heavy reliance on methodologies such as surveys or case

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<sup>3</sup> The published article can be accessed from the following websites:

[http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/view\\_edition.php?v=3&n=2](http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/view_edition.php?v=3&n=2)

<http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/articles/Vol 3 No 2 Naicker pp 51 to 65 November 2014.pdf>

studies in leadership research (Muijs, 2011). Reflexive studies that examine the self as leadership practitioner with the aim of both improving one's practice and simultaneously offering valuable insights for others are few, and far between. Socrates put reflexivity in perspective when he declared that the "unexamined life is not worth living" (as cited in Brickhouse & Smith, 1994, p. 201). He consequently advised that we must constantly and vigilantly examine all aspects of life, using the powers of reason that we have available to us. Inferring from Socrates, there is therefore a need for leaders to examine their practice. They need to engage in deep reflexivity to excavate multiple layers of the self in order to reveal the complexities and nuances that characterise their practice and, at the same time, to serve as a springboard for transformed practice.

Given this, could a digital memory box be a key to triggering reflexivity when studying one's leadership practice? This article explores the use of digital memory boxes as tools for reflexivity in personal history self-study research into my leadership practice. In so doing I make visible the processes involved in the construction of digital memory boxes, the manner in which they were used to prompt reflexivity of my leadership practice, and the evidence they produced with regard to my leadership practice. The article also highlights the role played by my research mentor, Inba Naicker, as dialogical partner in the self-study of my leadership practice.

The article commences by unpacking what is meant by leadership and leadership practice. It goes on to explain what constitutes a digital memory box and thereafter, I interrogate different notions of reflexivity. Next, a brief description of the methodology is presented. This is followed by narrative accounts of the construction of the digital memory boxes, how the digital memory boxes were used to evoke reflexivity, and the insights the digital memory boxes provided into my leadership practice. The aim of these narrative accounts is to offer "more than the telling of stories ... [by also considering] ... the way we create and recreate our realities and ourselves" (Giovannoli, 2013, p. 2). I conclude the article by looking at the implications of digital memory boxes as tools for reflexivity in researching leadership practice.

## **Leadership and Leadership Practice**

Leadership is a contested concept and is used differently in different countries by different people (Grant, 2009). This is not surprising because leadership is contextual, that is, structurally and culturally specific (Muijs, 2011). This notwithstanding, I draw on Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) who referred to leadership as a higher set of tasks encompassing goal setting, visioning, and motivating. Leadership, however, cannot be fully understood without reference to management. The two processes complement each other and both are needed for an organization to prosper (Grant, 2009). To illustrate the close relationship between leadership and management, Schley and Schratz (2011) drew on the yin-yang symbol as metaphor to emphasise how the two terms are intertwined. Management was viewed as an aspect of leadership concerned with the maintenance of performance through planning, organising, co-ordinating, and controlling (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). Thus, in this article whenever the term *leadership* is used, *management* is subsumed in the discourse.

The central building blocks in educational leadership and management are, "policy, research, practice, and theory" (Bush, 2010b, p. 266). In this article, I foreground two of the building blocks namely, leadership practice and research. Leadership is a practical activity that takes place in institutions all over the world. It is part of the social world of the institution and is intrinsically linked to the everyday interactions that take place there. In this article, leadership practice refers to the particular instances of leadership as they unfold in the moment-by-moment interactions in a particular place and time (Harris, Moos, Moller, Robertson, & Spillane, 2007). It has to do with what leaders do and the moves they make as they execute tasks in their day-to-day work (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Thus, a school

principal encouraging a group of teachers at a staff meeting to improve learner performance is considered an example of leadership practice. Research, on the other hand, is often used to understand or to interrogate practice so that it can be disseminated. Research reports are intended to make good leadership practice available to a wider audience thereby providing the potential for systemic improvement (Bush, 2010b).

## **Digital Memory Box**

A memory box is a physical box created to store letters, photographs, tapes, or any object relating to what is of significance to the box maker (Ebersöhn, Eloff, & Swanepoel-Opper, 2010). The box, in essence, contains the story of the box maker. Everything the box maker puts into the box serves as prompts for memory. Artefacts such as music, photographs, sounds, narratives, colours, and smells may help to invoke memories and the remembering process (O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2002). Visual materials such as photographs help to stimulate memories and serve as triggers to others (participants and/or critical friends) to understand, and experience the moment (Roberts, 2011). A memory box can thus be used as a tool in the study of one's leadership practice because it provides cues or triggers for the self and others (participants and/or critical friends) to recall key moments of one's practice. As Manke and Allender (2006, p. 249) put it, this can contribute to the "revealing nature of the self" and "[open] evocative methodological paths". However, with the advent of technology, the memory box has evolved to embrace innovation. Consequently, Manohar and Rogers (2010) advocated for a digital memory box because it allows users to browse through images, audio, and video data with ease. It has the added benefit of plentiful and cheap storage that encourages more memories to be captured for "personal reflection and analysis" (Czerwinski et al., 2006, p. 47).

## **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity can be described as an exploration of the "ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, act[s] upon and informs such research" (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p. 228); it is the practice of being cognisant of one's views, values, and social position, and of the effect that these may have on the research process and on those being researched. This consequently calls on researchers to reflect on their individual histories and theoretical stances, and on the way in which these influence their research (McCabe & Homes, 2009; Vickers, 2010). Reflexive thinking provides researchers with the tools to open up spaces for alternative views thereby allowing them to find the voice of others; it is the recognition of the value of a plurality of views, perspectives, and responses (Vickers, 2010). Heidegger suggested that reflexivity is concerned with understanding the grounds of our thinking by opening ourselves to the hidden nature of truth (as cited in Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). For Heidegger this means emptying ourselves of acceptable ways of thinking and opening ourselves to other possibilities (as cited in Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In particular, it means engaging in the reflexive act of questioning the basis of our thinking, surfacing the taken-for-granted rules underlying our decision-making, and examining critically our own practices and ways of relating with others (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005).

Researching one's leadership practice calls for conscious self-reflexivity wherein we examine our values and ourselves by exercising critical consciousness. The reflexive process includes a continuous consideration of the spaces in which one locates oneself, as well as the positions one is placed in by others, through constant enquiry, "listening [to,] and [acknowledgement] of inner voices, doubts and concerns as well as pleasures and pride" (Kirk, 2005, p. 233). Engaging in reflexivity of researching one's leadership practice goes deeper than reflecting on an event or a situation; it is a dialogue with the self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting. In this dialogue, we question our core beliefs and our understanding of particular events (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In his role as a dialogical partner, Inba consistently made me aware of this. He often questioned my beliefs and values and the

extent to which I brought my beliefs and values into play in researching my leadership practice. This excerpt of a conversation that we had, illustrates the reflexive process that we engaged in:

*Inba: Tell me, how did you select the artefacts for the digital memory boxes?*

*Sagie: I looked at the documents, photographs, and newspaper clippings and selected what I thought was relevant for each nodal experience.*

*Inba: Were there any other considerations?*

*Sagie: I also chose artefacts that I thought the research participants could relate to and included those in which they were depicted.*

*Inba: How would you respond, if I said that you were engineering the process so that the participants recalled what you wanted them to remember about your leadership practice?*

*Sagie: I didn't see it in this way. . . . You have a point, the participants' recollection of events could be influenced.*

*Inba: How would you accommodate for this limitation?*

*Sagie: Perhaps I could ask open-ended questions to get the participants to speak about events, experiences, or memories that I did not include in the memory box.*

## **Methodology**

The personal history self-study research on which this article draws was qualitative and aligned with the interpretive research tradition. Qualitative approaches, according to White and Raman (1999), are preferable where the goal is to seek an understanding of a process and/or phenomenon. This was congruent with my aim to understand how a digital memory box can be used as a tool for reflexivity in researching my leadership practice. With regard to data, the article draws on the work in progress of my research into my leadership practice, which was granted ethical approval by the university where the project was registered. I engaged in a personal history self-study of my leadership practice and used digital memory boxes as tools to generate data. As part of the self-study, I presented the digital memory boxes to two purposively selected participants and asked for their responses. The participants were Gill Bruyns, a former school principal with whom I had worked as a superintendent of education management, and Bowie Pillay who served as an executive member of the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education when I was the director. After viewing the digital memory box, the participants were asked to respond to a set of open-ended questions that related to my leadership practice. In order to enhance the trustworthiness of my self-study, I presented the digital memory box to my dialogical partner, Inba, and a group of critical friends for comment and improvement prior to the data generation phase. The critical friends are students and academic staff members who belong to the Transformative Education/al Studies group, which supports and promotes reflexive studies. At different stages of my research I presented my work and was questioned about my assumptions, beliefs, and values that influenced the research. I used the new insights and different perspectives to reconsider my study.

In this article, the real names of the research participants and the organizations involved are used. Permission was granted (in writing) from the research participants, and the identities of the organizations are in the public domain, namely newspaper articles that relate to the issues discussed.

## **Construction of the Digital Memory Box**

I used memory work as a self-study method to recall, reconstruct, and review nodal experiences of the past that have contributed to the formation of my personal and professional self. The decision to select

memory work as a research method from a bouquet of self-study methods was not an easy one. I had to engage in a process of “fit for purpose”. At times, I had to immerse myself in an “internal dialogue” in order to ensure that I was making the correct choice with regard to the self-study method (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). Drawing on Samaras (2011, p. 88), I had to ask myself “would using memory work by searching through artefacts of my past enlighten my understanding” of my personal and professional self? Still unsure of my choice of method, I consulted my dialogical partner in order “to open up spaces for alternative views” regarding my choice of method (Vickers, 2010, p. 275).

I used artefacts such as photographs, newspaper clippings, documents, e-mails, video clips, and audio clips that were representative of my personal and professional self to act as memory prompts to remember events, and evoke memory and emotion. Selecting what I deemed to be appropriate and relevant proved to be a challenge because I had to make decisions on what I included and what I excluded. Being mindful of Wolcott’s (2001, p. 92) assertion that you “need to be assured that you are secure in the position from which you do your viewing and that your selection of a position is a reasonable and reasoned one”, I became cognisant through conversations with my dialogical partner of how my selections of the artefacts could influence the participants’ memory of my leadership practice. From the array of artefacts I had at my disposal, I selected those that I thought would serve “as a tool for reflection” (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2012, p. 419) for me and my participants and reveal implicit dimensions of my leadership practice that were hidden from me (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2007).

Instead of carrying my artefacts in a scrapbook and/or box, I scanned them and converted them to electronic files to make the artefacts digitally accessible and public (Hoban, 2002). I further included some background audio (music) and curated the photographs and newspaper clippings to form a video clip that could be easily played from a computer, tablet, or smart phone. A different digital memory box was developed for every participant, and these included artefacts that each could identify and relate to as within his or her realm of experience. In addition, background audio was selected to elicit emotions and “evoke autobiographical memory” (Cady, Harris, & Knappenberge, 2008, p. 157). The artefacts were presented in a chronological sequence to facilitate memory recall, interpretation, and sense making, allowing for the participant’s version of the nodal experience to emerge.

Self-study as a research genre encourages collaboration with critical friends to challenge assumptions, view ideas from multiple perspectives, and be opened to different possibilities in enacting reflexivity (Samaras, 2011). Consequently, in order to be true to the principles (methodological components) of self-study, I presented my ideas for using a digital memory box as a tool to my dialogical partner and my critical friends in order to test my thinking and to expose potential contradictions, dilemmas, and possibilities of my work in progress (Vickers, 2010). My dialogical partner was of the opinion that because I selected the artefacts, I directed my participants to remember certain experiences and that this could potentially narrow the range of data. In order to try not to limit my participants’ views or responses on my selected artefacts, I developed a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions to be used in conjunction with the memory boxes. My intention was that the open-ended questions would create the space for the participants to respond freely, share their sense of the nodal experience, and comment on aspects of my leadership practice. This was done to minimise possible limitations that could arise as a result of my selection of the artefacts, and to facilitate a co-construction of the narrative that emerged to constitute my personal history.

Further, it was brought to my attention by my critical friends that my participants might not share negative experiences or point out my weaknesses and leadership lapses in a face-to-face interview. This was indeed a valid point given the power disparity within social relations such as that of the researcher and participants (McCabe & Holmes, 2009). However, I did not think that the participants, who have

known me for a long time, would feel that I was exercising power over them, but rather with and through them (Smeed, Kimber, Millwater, & Ehrich, 2009). I was mindful of my dialogical partner's and critical friends' concern as I read more carefully into the data and looked out for awkwardness and silence that provided clues when my participants were holding back (Weber & Mitchell, 2002). With this insight, I adopted a heightened critical stance as I examined the data to surface insights about my leadership practice even when they were hurtful, unpleasant, and inconvenient. I further enhanced trustworthiness by sharing my digital memory boxes, interview schedules, interview transcripts, and my personal history narrative with the participants as a form of member check, and received feedback by email (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### Video 1

#### [Education Resource Centre](#)



### Video 2

#### [South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education](#)



Video 1 and Video 2 are the digital memory boxes I constructed and used as tools to generate data of my leadership practice. Because some of the photographs in the memory boxes were old, and I did not recognise some individuals in group shots, I was in a quandary whether to use them in the digital memory boxes because I was not able to obtain consent. The alternatives of increasing the pixelation to blur the faces or masking the eyes was not appealing because the research participants knew some of the individuals and I felt that this would also distract from an authentic experience and hinder memory recall. I discussed my dilemma with my critical friends and eventually resolved to uphold the dignity and worth of all the individuals and cautiously use the photographs in a respectful, sensitive, and caring manner. My research participants who feature in some of the photographs have given me written consent to use their photographs and the organizations referred to are in the public domain via newspaper clippings and YouTube.

### Using the Digital Memory Box to Stimulate Reflexivity

The research participants and I were in agreement that the digital memory box triggered memories and aroused emotions as we reminisced over past experiences. More than simply recollecting the past, the participants also shared their interpretations and perspectives and gave me another viewpoint of the nodal experience, which I incorporated in my personal history narrative for my self-study. It allowed for "an awareness of the way I am experienced and perceived by others" (Bolton, 2010, p. 14). It brought to the surface hidden memories and together we made meaning of what the experience evoked. To paraphrase Talucci (2012), these were deep reflexive moments where we collaboratively engaged in joint sense making and interpretation of our experiences of my leadership practice. The digital memory boxes served as tools to remember the past and augment the memory lapses I experienced as the participants wove in their recollections to form a more complete picture. Embracing the interpretations of my participants was not an easy task for me. It meant that I had to make radical shifts in my thinking and open myself up to the possibilities offered by the participants (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). In our co-construction of meanings, my participants and I journeyed from "living [and] telling" to "retelling [and]

reliving stories of experience” as we explored my leadership practice (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013, p. 574).

On viewing the artefacts, I too found myself reminiscing as I started to rebuild connections with the past and started to reflect on the ways I have changed and grown (Allender & Manke, 2004). I felt emotions of satisfaction and joy as I reminisced over projects that were successfully completed and slipped in to despair and despondency when I recollected experiences that were painful and where I had failed. It brought to the surface thoughts, memories, and emotions that shaped my personal and professional self and explained why I hold certain assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values. The digital memory boxes not only brought back the past but were used as tools to interrogate recollections so that they could be used in a positive and productive sense (Moletsane, 2012). I was troubled with what I remembered and chose to remember. I found resonance with Bochner’s (2007, p. 198) words, “I want to be faithful to the past, but what I remember of my history is anchored by what summons me now to remember, and my memory is, in part, a response to what inspired my recollections.” The impetus for my remembrance was my self-study, which explored my identity, my leadership practice, and possibilities for practice improvement (Samaras, 2011).

As I reviewed the artefacts I asked myself questions of why I remembered the experience in this particular way and not differently; why did I feel this way when I looked at the artefact; what did I leave out or forget about the experience and what were the “blanks and silences” (Weber & Mitchell, 2002, p. 122)? I found myself cropping certain parts as I concentrated on what I wished to see. People, thoughts, and emotions were thus filtered as I reconstructed what the self wished to see in the artefact. I interpreted the artefacts and observed how I looked then, how I have changed, how similar or dissimilar my thinking is. I asked myself, how did I do that, what if I did things differently? I fantasised about endings that are quite different from the ones that played out (Roberts, 2011). Questions of who I am, what I was, and who and what I could be, intrigued me as I looked at the artefacts. The photograph I saw in front of me was an image that mirrors reality, which is to say that I recognised myself and others and saw other elements, which put the photograph into context. This is the initial description of the image, which is still to be seen, where meaning and interpretation has not yet occurred.

At times when I looked at a photograph, it was as if I had looked through an opaque screen that prevented me from seeing more in the picture as I struggled to unearth memories that were obscure and hidden as the present self protects and hides it. When I looked at other photographs, it sometimes felt as if I was looking through a window as the image opened up new possibilities and fantasies of what might be. At other times a filter of “frostiness . . . [or] . . . cloudiness” permeated and my memory was hazy and unclear (Roberts, 2011, p. 14). Sometimes I got to see bits and pieces as the memory was unclear and the complete picture was elusive—as if I looked through a veil or beaded curtain. As I looked deeply, I used a magnifying glass to enlarge parts to make sense of what I was looking at, and searched for clues that told me something about my leadership practice and myself. The mirror image, which is a simple “anticipated, unreflexive truth”, gave way to a “deeper self-observation” with a “questioning or search for self” (Roberts, 2011, pp. 14–15).

### **Insight into Leadership Practice**

As work in progress of a self-study, I make visible snapshots of my leadership practice that emerged from generating data using a digital memory box. The data that was generated was then used to write my personal history narrative. I make reference to four aspects of my leadership practice namely, vision setting, emotionally intelligent leadership, change management, and decision-making to demonstrate the reflexivity that the digital memory box evoked in researching my leadership.

### **Vision setting.**

Creating a compelling vision and getting others to share in that vision, is one of the core ingredients of leadership (Brecken, 2004). Nanus (1995, p. 186) captured the spirit and energy of visioning as he argued “there is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared.” When I was appointed Superintendent of Education Management (SEM) of Richmond, a town in rural KwaZulu-Natal besieged with political violence of unparalleled levels, I realised I had to mobilise resources to improve the delivery of educational services. Rurality, political violence, and scarce resources were huge barriers to overcome and educators who were dispirited, compounded this. My digital memory box helped my participant and me to recall the vision I shared with the community of Richmond—that it will arise like the mythological phoenix from the ashes to encourage and motivate the teachers, school managers, and school governing bodies. My participant, Gill Bruyns, and I recalled the vision I had of building an education resource centre. At circuit meetings, I popularised the vision and got some of the principals excited about the project.

Gill Bruyns, a former principal in Richmond, observed that the vision I shared was a driver that provided focus and impetus for my leadership practice. She said:

*But I think your strengths were that you actually had this vision and you were not going to be deterred from it. It underpinned what you wanted to do for Richmond . . . you were absolutely determined . . . I knew that you were always there for Richmond in that respect. I was absolutely thrilled to see those children in the classrooms now utilising that resource centre which was what both of us had dreamed of. It was lovely to see the maths being taught and knowing that those science and biology laboratories were being used by the children and that expertise would ultimately enhance the community because of the children . . . really well-educated would come back and bring something back into Richmond which is I think our dream really.*

Vision crafting is predominant in most models of leadership and is often cited in academic and practitioner literature (Bush, 2007; Martini, 2008). Effective leaders are depicted as visionaries who know what their institutions and organizations should look like in the future and their vision statement is a symbol that provides direction and momentum for stakeholders (Kowalski, 2010). Leaders who exhibit visionary leadership behaviour are those who adopt challenging visions and share the ideal by communicating and persuading others to become so committed that they devote their energies and resources to achieve the vision (Nanus, 1995). The vision of Richmond rising from the ashes like the phoenix was an evocative image of hope that stood in contrast to the violence, devastation, and deprivation the schooling community was experiencing. Arising from my collaboration with Gill Bruyns, I am mindful that the resource centre became a reality because the principals and the community owned the vision. I appreciate and understand that it is not only critical to co-develop a vision with others but it is imperative that it is clearly communicated so that shared understanding emerges. In spite of this goodwill, there were difficulties and tensions because violence flared up, which resulted in the project plans being shelved for a very long time. The building costs escalated and the committee had to find alternate sources of funding to make up the shortfall. Achieving the vision of the resource centre demanded effort, commitment, resilience, and courage in the face of adversity; however, the reward of seeing the project come to fruition was very satisfying. In this instance, working collaboratively with research participants (which the digital memory box allowed me the space to do) and a dialogical partner “has allowed for heightened self-awareness of the importance of others” in researching my leadership practice (Pithouse-Morgan & van Laren, 2012, p. 425).

### **Emotionally intelligent leadership.**

In my personal history, I narrated my experience of leading a group of educational consultants who were commissioned to support selected schools to develop their school budget. On reviewing the artefacts in my digital memory box and writing about this experience, I noted certain aspects of my leadership practice that bothered me, and this aroused greater self-awareness. I was passionate about what I was doing and, at times, I adopted an inflexible stance when I believed a certain idea would yield the desired results. This approach sometimes created tensions and affected working relations. In my personal history narrative, I made the following observation:

*It was not always fun as we sometimes disagreed about the way things should be done. Sometimes the arguments almost got out of hand and after people took time off and reassessed the situation, we found ways to overcome our differences. My passion for excellence and attention to detail was a significant contributing factor. I could also be very obstinate and fixed about the ways things could be done.*

Bowie Pillay, one of my research participants, underscored the high expectations I have of the people I work with and my impatience when they do not perform as expected. She said:

*But I think for me, maybe just a level of impatience with stakeholders, and maybe one example would be the SGB [school governing body] or the concerned parents group because I think that took the mickey out of you [laughter]. Also when I speak of the SGB, maybe, and it's just an observation in terms of high expectations . . . your high expectations you know . . . and therefore the assumption that everybody understands what's expected of them . . . could have been why you were impatient with them.*

Authentic leadership theorists advance the notion that awareness of emotion and its effect on others has implications for leadership development (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). This view is consistent with Goleman (2003) who advanced a framework of emotional intelligence, which consists of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relational management. Self-awareness is being cognisant and attentive to emotions so that they can be sensed, articulated, and reflected upon (Goleman, 2003). Emotionally intelligent leaders have a heightened sense of self-awareness, which gives them the capacity and ability to be cognisant of not only their emotions but also those of others, and this understanding curbs impulsive reaction to feelings (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Gardner et al., 2005). The data that the digital memory box produced, and which I used as a stimulus to write about my personal history, made me aware, as Vickers (2010) pointed out, of the effect my values and my corresponding actions have on other people especially those within my work place. In constructing my personal history narrative and deconstructing this narrative, I am in agreement with Samaras and Freese (2006) that reflexivity in private and public spaces may lead to heightened awareness of who I am and what I do. The greater emotional awareness that emanated from my self-study has made me conscious of how my passion, stubbornness, impatience, and critical view of underperforming individuals has got in the way of my leadership practice. In my current practice, I am aware of what I feel and this “mindfulness [which] resembles reflection-before-action” (Bolton, 2010, p. 15) has the potential of better influencing possible outcomes.

### **Change management.**

The South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE), of which I was the director, conducted a baseline survey to assess the schools under its oversight and undertook reform measures to align the schools to recently approved guidelines from the international parent body. This put SAISSE and the stakeholders on a tenuous course as educators, parents, and school managers wrestled with the changes that were implemented. Far-reaching reform measures included rationalising staff to make the

schools viable, introducing new school uniforms, constituting school governing bodies, and overhauling the systems and procedures by which the schools were led and managed. The school governing body and SAISSE were subjected to resistance as micro-politics surfaced at the Sathya Sai School in Chatsworth and I found myself in unfamiliar terrain and out of my depth. All the leadership knowledge and experience I had was not sufficient to cope with the siege that engulfed the governing bodies and the Institute. In my personal history narrative, I described the confusion, anguish, and emotional roller coaster ride I experienced as follows:

*I could see that implementing turnaround strategies required a great detail of sensitivity to people's feelings and that I was so caught up in action that I failed to read contextual clues that emanated from the few people who were dissatisfied at the Sathya Sai School. I underestimated the power that a few people had to disrupt the Institute and felt let down by the majority of people who chose to be silent. This self-study was born out of that anguish and has given me the space to be reflexive about my practice . . . if I look back at myself . . . I think that if I had been a little more patient with the parent body and I think that if I had to do something differently now I'd do a lot more consultation . . . more widespread and more broad-based than assuming that because people are not complaining that people are happy . . . I learned the lesson that when people are quiet that's the time you really worry.*

Much has been written about the slow speed at which schools change, the sustainability of reform measures, as well as the resistance that change generates (Starr, 2011). My reflexive take on the changes SAISSE instituted reveals that too many changes were effected too soon and that because there was insufficient buy-in by the various stakeholders, resistance was generated. Change is a complex process that elicits varying responses, views, and emotions and therefore needs careful managing (Hellman, 2012). The recollection of this incident has made me reexamine my thinking, acting, and thinking about my acting, in the same way that Warwick (2011) described. I was focused on improving the schools and was not sensitive to the opinions and feelings of what I thought to be a handful of parents. As the director of SAISSE with positional power, I exercised power over the parents who resisted the changes. A critical perspective in change management literature emphasises the role that power and discourse plays in resistance (Pieterse, Caniëls, & Homan, 2012). Unequal power relations in the form of leaders and managers using positional authority to make people do what they would otherwise not have done are associated with resistance. When there is misalignment in the discourse embodied in language and texts in formal and informal settings, resistance to change may occur because “varying interpretations prohibit the development of shared mental models” (Pieterse et al., 2012, p. 802). In discussion with my research participants, different perspectives of the change management process emerged and I became aware of the gaps in my performance. This reflexive stance has led me to critically reflect on my leadership practice, and I have become not only aware of lapses but also acquired knowledge and skills to better manage change in the future.

### **Decision-making.**

In reflecting on the artefacts in the digital memory box, Gill Bruyns made the following comments regarding the way decisions were made at meetings of the Richmond Circuit of Education:

*It was a very inclusive leadership . . . you know a description to me is like a fried egg . . . you know with the yolk in the middle and the people around. The yolk is the important part, and you were the decision maker. The white . . . you took all of us . . . you took our suggestions and you incorporated them. You did not throw out any suggestions that just did not make*

*sense. You threw very few . . . you guided our discussions [in] the correct way . . . I don't mean that you had decided on the end product at all. You kept us [from] going off the track. It's the way I want to put it. So I felt that as much as you listened to us you wouldn't let us go off the track, which was very good.*

Decision-making is one of the most important duties of leaders and managers because the results have a profound influence on the organization and its people (Gülcan, 2011). In time I realised that if I was to influence others to do what was needed to achieve mutually desired goals, it was necessary to, meaningfully, involve people in the decision-making process. I had intuitively stumbled upon the wisdom that people usually had ideas on how to approach issues and needed a good facilitator to elicit the ideas. This became the “living theory” that I used consciously when organizational decisions had to be made (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1). However, on reevaluation this was not easy because I had to patiently guide meetings to arrive at appropriate decisions. I was aware of the sensitivity and tact that was needed at the times when I felt that some of the ideas were not viable. The self-awareness and self-regulation I demonstrated made the principals feel that their ideas were genuinely welcomed and this inspired them to participate more actively in the decision-making process. Faraci, Lock, and Wheeler (2013) attributed ownership, commitment, and teamwork to the consensual leadership style and by using this approach I was able to meaningfully involve the principals in joint decision making. Somech (2011) suggested that in addition to harnessing collective wisdom to solve problems facing schools, participative decision-making has the potential for promoting school effectiveness. In spite of the effort that consensual decision-making demands, I am convinced that the benefits it yields outweigh the difficulties it may pose. The review of my decision-making style reaffirms and validates what I intuitively came to accept as my “living theory” (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1). The examination of my beliefs and decision-making practice has shown that there is alignment and by being reflexive, it has generated a theory of my lived practice in decision-making.

### **Implications for researching leadership practice.**

This article is about one leader’s experiences of using digital memory boxes to stimulate and sustain reflexivity in the research process of leadership practice. While this may not have generalisability, it nonetheless provides leaders interested in researching their practice with an exemplar of a tool for promoting reflexivity. In constructing my personal history narrative, the digital memory boxes not only produced cues to trigger memories as my participants and I reconstructed nodal experiences, but also provided a forum for multiple voices to reflexively engage with my leadership practice (Vickers, 2010). For example, reflexivity brought to the surface issues of power as my dialogical partner questioned decisions I made in selecting the artefacts. My intentions were challenged as the digital memory boxes were constructed. Looking back, I can now see that while my research participants did engage meaningfully with the artefacts, more value could have been leveraged if I had asked them to bring their own artefacts that were relevant to the nodal experience.

The digital memory box served as a catalyst to illuminate the complexities of my leadership practice and brought to the surface hidden dimensions, especially aspects that showed me in a less flattering light. I took comfort from the fact that the critique of my past practice would serve me well because this awareness has the potential to transform my present and future leadership practice. For example, reflexively engaging with a dialogical partner, critical friends, and research participants has revealed the importance of emotional intelligence and its implications for leaders (Goleman, 2003). The recognition of my emotions and their impact on the way I respond to others may curb impulsive actions. Further, I am convinced that when visions are created they must be co-constructed and shared in a way that inspires all stakeholders (Nanus, 1995). In leading and managing change, I am mindful of the need to act with greater caution and examine power differentials to minimise resistance (Pieterse, Caniëls, & Homan, 2012). I have learnt that change is more sustainable and is less stressful when small changes

are made incrementally (Lewin, Weigelt, & Emery, 2004). When making decisions, I have realised that it is good practice to meaningfully involve those who are affected in order to foster teamwork and generate commitment (Faraci, Lock, & Wheeler, 2013). Using digital memory boxes as tools to research my leadership practice has offered insights into transforming my personal and professional self as wisdom, discernment, and self-awareness dawn. I have found that a digital memory box is a useful tool to promote reflexivity of leadership practice between both the researcher and the participants.

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## APPENDIX 2:

# ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



13 August 2012

Mr Dhanasagan Naicker 200500458  
School of Education

Dear Mr Naicker

Protocol reference number: HSS/0665/012D  
Project title: Spiritual anchors in leadership: A self-study of practice

### EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

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)

/pm

cc Supervisor: Dr Inbanathan Naicker & Dr Pholoho Morojele  
cc Academic leader: Dr Davids Davids  
cc School Admin: Mrs Sindhomoney Naicker

Professor S Collings (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
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Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

Inspiring Greatness



## APPENDIX 3:

### SAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM

77 Iris Avenue  
Kharwastan  
Durban  
4092

7 March 2014

Mr Clive Waddy

**Request For Permission Participate In Research: Research title: Piecing together the leadership puzzle: A Self-Study of Practice**

I am currently pursuing a Doctorate in Philosophy Degree in Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The following table provides information that you may find useful.

<i>Full Name and Surname</i>	Dhanasagaran Naicker
<i>Student Number</i>	200500458
<i>Discipline</i>	Education, Development, Leadership & Management
<i>School</i>	Education
<i>Faculty</i>	Humanities
<i>Campus</i>	Edgewood
<i>Existing Qualification</i>	B.Paed. (Arts); B.A (hons); B.Ed.; M.Ed.
<i>Proposed Qualification for Project</i>	Ph.D.
<i>Contact details</i>	031-4011133 cell: 0845856908
<i>Email</i>	sagie@newagestrategies.co.za
<i>Name of Supervisor</i>	Dr. Inbanathan Naicker
<i>Contact details</i>	Tel +27 (0) 31 260 3461
<i>Email</i>	Naicker1@ukzn.ac.za

I am looking for ways to understand my leadership practice as well as explore my identity as an educational leader. My self-study is a critique of my leadership practice that seeks to unveil hidden dimensions so I can become reflexive in my practice. Questions of what should be improved, why it should be improved and how it should be improved will be considered as my leadership practice is examined and possibilities for improvement are explored. Leadership practice, self-identity, possibilities, challenges and implications for improved leadership in an educational context will be theorized.

Data will be generated using personal history and memory work, artifacts and interviews with research participants. Interviews with selected participants will re-examine issues and experiences for hidden meanings to surface as nodal experiences in my leadership interaction with the participants are reconstituted.

For my personal history to be authentic I have decided to identify the research participants and organizations to provide context to this study. Participation in the study will be voluntary and at any time you may decide to withdraw from the study. A copy of the transcript and personal history will be forwarded to you for your review and approval before it is used in the study. I will also give you an opportunity to comment on the chapters in which the evidence is deconstructed and interpreted.

I request permission for you to participate in the research and for the information you have helped generate to be used in this study, subsequent papers and presentations. At all times as a researcher I will strictly adhere to all ethical considerations governing research.

Yours faithfully



\_\_\_\_\_  
D. Naicker  
(Sagie)

-----  
I hereby grant permission for Mr. D. Naicker to interview me in the research outlined above and for the information to be used in this study and in related papers and presentations.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Clive Patrick Waddy!  
Name

8 March 2014

.....  
Date

-----  
I grant permission for Mr. Naicker to use photographs and other artefacts in which I feature or appear to be used in this study and in related papers and presentations.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Clive P. WADDY!  
Name

5 September 2014  
Date

## APPENDIX 4:

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – FORGET-ME-NOT SPORTS CLUB FOR THE DISABLED NODAL EXPERIENCE

Good afternoon Pravin. Thank you very much for making time to see me and for agreeing to be a research participant in my study. You are aware I am presently reading for a Ph.D. degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my research topic is “Piecing together the leadership puzzle: A self-study of practice.” I am examining my leadership practice and am using self-study as a methodology to reveal strengths and discover shortcomings and deficits to improve, enhance and grow as a leader.

I value and appreciate the time and effort that you putting in my study and more importantly agreeing to be the mirror so that I can reflect on past experiences and bring to the fore my blind spots. I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in this research and help establish trustworthiness in the data that I generate. I am going to ask you to go back in time and **reflect critically** on a few incidents in my interactions with you as a member of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled. In my mind I have an idea of what the events were, how I handled them and what I thought the outcomes were. As a person of integrity that you are, I invite you to be **candid** in your recollection of the experience, issue or situation as we reflect on the nodal experiences to reveal something about my leadership practice.

#### **Digital Memory Box**

To get your mind around these nodal experiences, I would like you to look at the artefacts that I have put together in a digital memory box. Extracts from documents, photographs newspaper clippings and a video clip have been included to serve as prompts and trigger off certain memories and associations.

Discussion on digital memory box

## **A. Nodal Experience: Founding Chairperson and current Chairperson of the Forget-Me-Not Sports Club For the Disabled**

Let us now examine a few themes in our engagement as members of Forget-Me-Not Sports Club for the Disabled.

The first nodal experience that I would like you to reflect on is the leadership that was offered to improve the personal and social being of physically challenged individuals through sports. As you would recall a few individuals like Lil Bhagwan, Lesley Naidoo, Jace Nair and myself realised that disabled people living in Durban South had limited opportunities and that societal barriers such as prejudice prevented disabled people from being integrated into mainstream society. The Forget-Me-Not Sports Club was launched to address the needs of disabled people in an apartheid South Africa.

1. Please comment on the leadership that I displayed in starting the club. Review the structures that were put place i.e. the executive committee, drafting of a constitution, membership drive, and establishing the needs of the members.
2. What leadership was shown in addressing challenges such as limited funding and transporting members to venues where activities were held. I am going to remind you of the Chatsworth Fair “Hot dog stalls”, the play “Off side” and negotiations with the Aryan Benevolent Home for transport and negotiations with the Checker’s Trust for funding.
3. What were some highlights that stand out in your mind in the first 10 years of the club’s existence and relate them to the leadership that I provided?
4. Critically comment on the leadership style, decision-making process and interpersonal relationship skills that I demonstrated in the formative years of the club’s existence.
5. What strengths or traits did you consider that were worthy?
6. What gaps in leadership, lapses in decision-making, errors in judgment did you observe in my leadership as chairperson of the club in the early days?

**B.** The Second nodal experience is the leadership that was provided in milestone events of Forget-Me-Nots history for e.g. the Club commemorated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year. It also celebrated milestone anniversaries with big events such as the blind navigator's rally, a fun sports day for disabled persons and a fun walk "The Forget-Me-Not Challenge.

1. What leadership did I show in organising these events?
2. Describe the culture that operated within Forget-Me-Not?
3. What values emerged as I offered leadership to the members of Forget-Me-Not?
4. How would you describe my leadership style? What qualities, habits or behaviour did you find displeasing or irksome?
5. What lapses in leadership did you observe? Why do you think these lapses occurred?
6. How would you describe my leadership skills in managing differing views, disagreements and conflict? Please share examples.
7. What did you think I could have done differently? What suggestions would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
8. What leadership insights, wisdom, skills or expertise did I demonstrate in this particular nodal experience?
9. Did Forget-Me-Not under my leadership improve the quality of life people with disabilities? Please elaborate. How would you assess my performance in achieving the vision and strategic goals that we set?

**C. General observations**

1. Is there congruence between my espoused values and the values that I live by?
2. Over a period of time in our long association have you seen any change or development in my leadership practice? Please elaborate.
3. What guidance would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

Pravin, thank you very much for your candid thoughts and reflections. They are most useful and will form an important part of my study.

## APPENDIX 5:

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – RICHMOND NODAL EXPERIENCE

Good morning Gill. Thank you very much for making time to see me and for agreeing to be a research participant in my study. You are aware I am presently reading for a Ph.D. degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my research topic is “Piecing together the leadership puzzle: A self-study of practice.” I am examining my leadership practice and am using self-study as a methodology to reveal strengths and discover shortcomings and deficits to improve, enhance and grow as a leader.

I value and appreciate the time and effort that you putting in my study and more importantly agreeing to be the mirror so that I can reflect on past experiences and bring to the fore my blind spots. I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in this research and help establish trustworthiness in the data that I generate. I am going to ask you to go back in time and **reflect critically** on a few incidents in my interactions with you as a Superintendent of Education (Management). In my mind I have an idea of what the events were, how I handled them and what I thought the outcomes were. As a person of integrity that you are, I invite you to be **candid** in your recollection of the experience, issue or situation as we reflect on the nodal experiences to reveal something about my leadership practice.

#### **Digital Memory Box**

To get your mind around these nodal experiences, I would like you to look at the artefacts that I have put together in a digital memory box. Extracts from documents, photographs newspaper clippings have been included to serve as prompts and trigger off certain memories and associations.

Discussion based on the digital memory box.

**A. Let us now examine a few themes in our engagement as members of the sub-committee that developed Masakhuxolo.**

I would like you to reflect on the leadership that was offered to improve the educational resources and facilities in Richmond. As you would recall Richmond was embroiled in violent political turmoil for many years and the army was deployed to stabilize the area. The schools that were historically disadvantaged faced severe resource constraints and this impacted on their performance

1. Please describe the schools in the Richmond Circuit as it was then called at the time when I was appointed superintendent of education. What was the state of the schools and what resources were available to them?
2. How well were the educators, principals and governing body members prepared for their responsibilities?
3. What gave rise to the Masakhuxolo Project? Comment on my role in initiating the Masakhuxolo Project.
4. What leadership was shown in addressing challenges such as
  - a. Negotiating with the Richmond Municipality for land
  - b. Securing a buy in and approval from the Department of Education
  - c. Negotiating for funding from the Kwazulu-Natal Peace Initiative
5. Critically comment on the leadership style, decision-making process and interpersonal relationship skills that I demonstrated in this project.
  - a. What strengths or traits did you consider that were worthy?
  - b. How would you describe my leadership style?
  - c. What qualities, habits or behaviour did you find displeasing or irksome?
  - d. What gaps in leadership, lapses in decision-making, errors in judgment did you observe in my leadership?

## **B. Tenure as Superintendent of Education (Management)**

1. As a superintendent of education how did I respond to the professional needs of the schools e.g. professional development programmes, support to governing bodies etc. ?
2. Describe the culture that operated within the schools and the circuit office?
3. What values emerged as I offered leadership to the Richmond circuit of Schools?
4. How would you describe my leadership skills in managing differing views, disagreements and conflict? Please share examples.
5. What did you think I could have done differently? What suggestions would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
6. What leadership insights, wisdom, skills or expertise did I demonstrate as a superintendent of education?
7. Did the Richmond Circuit of Schools under my leadership improve the quality of education? Please elaborate. How would you assess my performance in achieving the vision and strategic goals that we set?

## **C. General observations**

1. Is there congruence between my espoused values and the values that I live by?
2. What guidance would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

Gill, thank you very much for your candid thoughts and reflections. They are most useful and will form an important part of my study.

## APPENDIX 6:

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – EDUCATIONAL MENTOR AND COACH NODAL EXPERIENCE

Good morning Clive. Thank you very much for making time to see me and for agreeing to be a research participant in my study. You are aware I am presently reading for a Ph.D. degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my research topic is “Piecing together the leadership puzzle: A self-study of practice.” I am examining my leadership practice and am using self-study as a methodology to reveal strengths and discover shortcomings and deficits to improve, enhance and grow as a leader.

I value and appreciate the time and effort that you putting in my study and more importantly agreeing to be the mirror so that I can reflect on past experiences and bring to the fore my blind spots. I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in this research and help establish trustworthiness in the data that I generate. I am going to ask you to go back in time and **reflect critically** on a few incidents in my interactions with you as an education management consultant. In my mind I have an idea of what the events were, how I handled them and what I thought the outcomes were. As a person of integrity that you are, I invite you to be **candid** in your recollection of the experience, issue or situation as we reflect on the nodal experiences to reveal something about my leadership practice.

#### **Digital Memory Box**

To get your mind around these nodal experiences, I would like you to look at the artefacts that I have put together in a digital memory box. Extracts from documents, photographs and newspaper clippings have been included to serve as prompts and trigger off certain memories and associations.

Discussion on memory box

## **A. Nodal Experience: Understanding School Governance and Towards Effective School Management**

Let us now examine a few themes in our engagement as materials developers and school management master trainers. As you would recall I served under you in the governing body project and in the Towards Effective School Management project I was the materials development team leader.

I would like you to reflect on the Understanding School Governance Project and Towards Effective School Management (TESM) Project and give me your perspectives on the following matters.

1. Briefly give an overview of these projects and please include:
  - a. The strategic objectives to be achieved
  - b. The materials that were produced
  - c. The training of trainer
2. What knowledge, insights, skills and wisdom did I bring to these projects
3. What was it like to work with me in the governing body project? What was it like to work with me in the TESSM project?
4. What leadership did I show in addressing challenges such as
  - a. Meeting deadlines
  - b. Negotiating with funders, the implementing agency, suppliers and the department of education
5. Critically comment on the leadership style, decision-making process and interpersonal relationship skills that I demonstrated in these projects.
  - a. What strengths or traits did you consider that were worthy?
  - b. How would you describe my leadership style?
  - c. What qualities, habits or behaviour did you find displeasing or irksome?
  - d. What gaps in leadership, lapses in decision-making, errors in judgment did you observe in my leadership?
6. What values emerged as I worked in these projects?
7. How would you describe my leadership skills in managing differing views, disagreements and conflict? Please share examples.

8. What did you think I could have done differently?
9. How would you assess my performance in achieving the vision and strategic goals that were set?

**B. General observations**

1. Is there congruence between my espoused values and the values that I live by?
2. What guidance would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

Clive, thank you very much for your candid thoughts and reflections. They are most useful and will form an important part of my study.

## APPENDIX 7:

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – EDUCATIONAL MENTOR AND COACH NODAL EXPERIENCE

Good morning Wendy. Thank you very much for making time to see me and for agreeing to be a research participant in my study. You are aware I am presently reading for a Ph.D. degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my research topic is “Piecing together the leadership puzzle: A self-study of practice.” I am examining my leadership practice and am using self-study as a methodology to reveal strengths and discover shortcomings and deficits to improve, enhance and grow as a leader.

I value and appreciate the time and effort that you putting in my study and more importantly agreeing to be the mirror so that I can reflect on past experiences and bring to the fore my blind spots. I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in this research and help establish trustworthiness in the data that I generate. I am going to ask you to go back in time and **reflect critically** on a few incidents in my interactions with you as a Superintendent of Education (Management). In my mind I have an idea of what the events were, how I handled them and what I thought the outcomes were. As a person of integrity that you are, I invite you to be **candid** in your recollection of the experience, issue or situation as we reflect on the nodal experiences to reveal something about my leadership practice.

#### **Digital Memory Box**

To get your mind around these nodal experiences, I would like you to look at the artefacts that I have put together in a digital memory box. Extracts from documents and photographs have been included to serve as prompts and trigger off certain memories and associations.

Discussion on memory box

**A. Nodal Experience: New Zealand AID: Support for school based care givers of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and support to school management teams in the Isibalo project.**

Let us now examine a few themes in our engagement as a service provider. I would like you to reflect on the OVC project and Isibalo Project and give me your perspectives on the following matters.

1. Briefly give an overview of these projects and please include:
  - a. The strategic objectives to be achieved
  - b. The project description and design
  - c. Impact of these projects
2. What knowledge, insights, skills and wisdom did I bring to these projects?
3. What was it like to work with me in the OVC project and the Isibalo project?
4. What leadership did I show in addressing challenges such as
  - a. Meeting deadlines
  - b. Negotiating with funders, the implementing agency, suppliers and the department of education
5. Critically comment on the leadership style, decision-making process and interpersonal relationship skills that I demonstrated in these projects.
  - a. What strengths or traits did you consider that were worthy?
  - b. How would you describe my leadership style?
  - c. What qualities, habits or behaviour did you find displeasing or irksome?
  - d. What gaps in leadership, lapses in decision-making, errors in judgment did you observe in my leadership?
6. What values emerged as I worked in these projects?
7. How would you describe my leadership skills in managing differing views, disagreements and conflict? Please share examples.
8. What do you think I could have done differently?
9. How would you assess my performance in achieving the vision and strategic goals that were set for the OVC and Isibalo project?

**B. General observations**

1. Is there congruence between my espoused values and the values that I live by?
2. What guidance would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

Wendy, thank you very much for your candid thoughts and reflections. They are most useful and will form an important part of my study.

## **APPENDIX 8:**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – DIRECTORSHIP OF SAISSE**

Good afternoon Bowie. Thank you very much for making time to see me and for agreeing to be a research participant in my study. You are aware I am presently reading for a Ph.D. degree with the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my research topic is “Piecing together the leadership puzzle: A self-study of practice.” I am examining my leadership practice and am using self-study as a methodology to reveal strengths and discover shortcomings and deficits to improve, enhance and grow as a leader.

I value and appreciate the time and effort that you putting in my study and more importantly agreeing to be the mirror so that I can reflect on past experiences and bring to the fore my blind spots. I am grateful that you have agreed to participate in this research and help establish trustworthiness in the data that I generate. I am going to ask you to go back in time and **reflect critically** on a few incidents in my interactions with you as a member of the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education. In my mind I have an idea of what the issues were, how I handled them and what I thought the outcomes were. As a person of integrity that you are, I invite you to be **candid** in your recollection of the experience, issue or situation as we reflect on the nodal experiences to reveal something about my leadership practice.

#### **Digital Memory Box**

To get your mind around these nodal experiences, I would like you to look at the artefacts that I have put together in a digital memory box. Extracts from documents, photographs newspaper clippings and a video clip have been included to serve as prompts and trigger off certain memories and associations.

Discussion on memory box

## **A. Nodal Experiences: Directorship of the South African Institute of Sathya Sai Education (SAISSE)**

The first nodal experience that I would like you to reflect on is the leadership that was offered to improve the quality of the secular and spiritual education programmes in the Sathya Sai Schools in South Africa. This included developing turn around strategies to transform practices at Sathya Sai Schools through the formulation of a strategic plan, establishment of structures, development of systems, formulation of policies, initiation of staff development programmes and the leadership style that I used as director of SAISSE. I would also like you to reflect on the culture we created within SAISSE and the schools and the shared values that emerged. Let us look at the Sathya Sai Schools of Chatsworth, Lenasia and Newcastle and review the leadership that was offered to grow these schools.

1. Briefly describe the condition of the schools as we found them when we assumed our positions in 2010.
2. What leadership did I show on assuming the directorship of SAISSE?
3. Did SAISSE under my leadership improve the quality of teaching and learning at the Sathya Sai Schools? Please elaborate. How would you assess my performance in achieving the vision and strategic goals that we set?
4. Describe the culture that operated within SAISSE and the schools?
5. How would you describe my leadership style? What qualities, habits or behaviour you found displeasing or irksome?
6. What lapses in leadership did you observe? Why do you think these lapses occurred?
7. What values emerged as I offered leadership to turn the schools around and strive for excellence?
8. What did you think I could have done differently? What suggestions would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
9. What leadership insights, wisdom, skills or expertise did I demonstrate in this particular nodal experience?

## **B. Conflict management**

The second area that I would like to explore is the management of conflict, controversial decisions and challenging situations I experienced as director of SAISSE. In the process of transforming the Sathya Sai Schools a few sensitive matters stand out in my mind. These include the change of leadership in the Sathya Sai Schools, the rationalization of staff to cope with limited funding, introduction of new uniforms, increase in parent contributions and the closure of the Sathya Sai School of Cape Town.

1. What are your views in the way I managed the following matters as the director of SAISSE?
  - a. Change of principalship at the Sathya Sai Schools of Newcastle and Chatsworth
  - b. Introduction of new school uniforms
  - c. Rationalization of staff at the Sathya Sai School of Chatsworth
  - d. Closure of the Sathya Sai School of Cape Town
2. How would you describe my leadership style in managing conflict?
3. What values emerged as I managed differences in opinion and conflict?
4. What lapses in leadership did you observe in the context of conflict management and controversial decision-making? Why do you think I responded the way I did?
5. What did you think I could have done differently?
6. What leadership insights, wisdom, skills or expertise did I demonstrate in this particular nodal experience?

## **C. General observations**

1. Is there congruence between my espoused values and the values that I live by?
2. Over a period of time in our association have you seen any change or development in my leadership practice? Please elaborate.
3. What guidance would you offer to improve my leadership practice?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on?

Bowie, thank you very much for your candid thoughts and reflections. They are most useful and will form an important part of my study.

# APPENDIX 9:

## TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

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PIECING TOGETHER THE LEADERSHIP PUZZLE: A SELF-STUDY OF PRACTICE  
DHANASGARAN NAICKER Student number: 200500458 A thesis

submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** School of Education, College of  
Humanities University of KwaZulu-Natal

25

South Africa November 2014 Supervisor: Dr. Inbanathan Naicker DECLARATION  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS I DEDICATION II ABSTRACT In today's rapidly changing world,  
educational leaders are swamped by competing priorities that make inordinate  
demands on their time, energy and focus. They are consumed with operational matters  
such as teaching and learning activities, school management and administrative tasks  
and extra-curricular programmes, which leaves them with little time for reflection  
(Day, 2000; Rosenberg, 2010). As a consequence they put themselves and their  
schools at the risk of doing more of the same and achieving the same results. Drawing  
from the literature that suggests the value of reflection for leaders, I decided to  
undertake a self-study of my leadership practice with the intention of acquiring  
insights that had implications for improvement. For this dissertation I used self-study  
as a methodology to critically examine my leadership practice and generated data with  
the personal history narrative and memory work methods. Interviews with research  
participants in nodal experiences using artefacts in a digital memory box, served as  
prompts to re-member, re-construct and re-story events to co-develop my personal  
history. The multiple perspectives that critical friends, research participants and a  
researcher offered, challenged my assumptions, informed my perspectives and

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## APPENDIX 10:

### LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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## Dr Saths Govender

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12 NOVEMBER 2014

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to inform that I have read the final version of the thesis titled:

**PIECING TOGETHER THE LEADERSHIP PUZZLE: A SELF-STUDY OF PRACTICE** by D. Naicker, student no. 200500458.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the standard of language meets the stringent requirements for senior degrees.

Yours faithfully



**DR S. GOVENDER**  
B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.  
Cambridge Certificate for English Medium Teachers  
MPA, D Admin.