



UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

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**STORIES OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
RELATIONSHIP EXPERIENCES AND MEANINGS SHAPING
THE MAKING OF TEACHER LEADERS**

by

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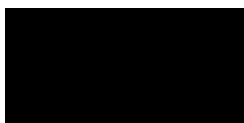
Supervisor: Professor Daisy Pillay

2024

DECLARATION

I, Vomandhree Samantha Pillay, declare that:

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SUPERVISOR'S AUTHORISATION

As the candidate's supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Supervisor: Professor Daisy Pillay



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ABSTRACT

This study, titled *Stories of Personal and Professional Relationship Experiences and Meanings Shaping the Making of Teacher Leaders*, explored the lived experiences of four South African teachers from two different schooling contexts (Quintile 1 and Quintile 5). The investigation zoomed into four teachers' personal and professional relationships with significant others to understand the meanings they made and the beliefs they acquired in constructing the self. The findings were achieved by eliciting data on how they negotiated everyday relationships and situations as teachers.

This study was framed by Hunsicker's (2017) conceptual visual model, which assisted me in conceptualising what it means to be a classroom teacher leader, how classroom teacher leaders position themselves in everyday situations (i.e., as situational leaders), and the opportunities teachers have for developing themselves as teacher/developing teacher leaders. Understanding these teachers' past and current experiences was critical for gaining a deep insight into their lives and understanding how they had become what they were as informal teacher leaders.

This study utilised narrative inquiry to explore the past and present stories of the participating teachers. The methods used to generate data were arts-based, including artifact inquiry (particularly the memory box method), memory drawings, and unstructured interviews. These data collection methods provided the teacher participants with a free, safe, and open space to share their deep and complex storied experiences of their personal and professional relationships. These reconstructed teacher stories that emplotted their personal and professional relationships assisted me in understanding the process of developing into teacher leader.

This study deepened my understanding that the 'teacher leader' concept means that such teachers are at post level 1 without formal leadership titles (such as Head of Department or Deputy Principal). By zooming into the selected teachers' personal and professional relationship experiences, I could explore their beliefs of themselves through outside expectations and stereotypical roles. Evidently, these informal leaders in the educational context embraced supportive and caring relationships that opened up ways for what they wanted to become as individuals and how they transformed their beliefs and embraced new learnings of what is possible within and outside of their lives as classroom teachers. Forming

new relationships engenders a new outlook on existing beliefs. As was the case for my four participants, new ways of thinking can expose new learning spaces and development where ‘ordinary’ teachers can find their ‘extraordinary’ attributes and position themselves in making themselves informal teacher leaders.

DEDICATION

I thank my faithful God for making this research journey possible. You have never failed to help me achieve my dreams.

I dedicate this study to two special people who are no longer with me:

- My Grandfather, Gabriel Samuel Pillay. You may not physically be here, but I know that you have become my guardian angel as I navigate through life. I know you are watching over every step that I take.
- My first teacher, Mrs V. Muruvan. You were instrumental in building the foundation that has shaped me into a determined and committed teacher. Your love, care, and support towards me as a learner have been a guiding light along my journey.

To my parents, Dhanpal Pillay and Roshini Pillay, I am who I am because of your love and guidance. Thank you for your never-ending support.

To my brother, Ashlin Pillay, challenges are easier to face with you by my side. Thank you for being my sunshine on a rainy day.

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Dr Mkhize, leader of the Masters Support Group, thank you for arranging weekly support sessions for us to share ideas and learn with our group.

My research participants, thank you for your contribution to this study. Without your shared stories, this dissertation would not have been possible.

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

SA	South Africa
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DOE	Department of Education (prior to 2009)
CAO	Central Applications Office
EA	Educator Assistant
CV	Curriculum Vitae
HOD	Head of Department
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme

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CHAPTER ONE

MAPPING OUT THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

As I accept that every day is an opportunity to learn, today I find myself more confident than I was before. I am ready to take risks, to learn, to grow and to develop into a better teacher. Both my positive and negative relationship experiences have helped me make myself a better teacher so that I can deliver the best education to my learners (Miss Spark, 2024).

The above excerpt is from a storied narrative of one of the teacher participants in this study titled *Stories of Personal and Professional Relationship Experiences and Meanings Shaping the Making of Teacher Leaders*. I begin this chapter by clarifying what evoked my curiosity in teachers' stories of personal and professional relationships, as I wanted to understand what had turned them into informal but powerful teacher leaders. According to Ross (2019), informal teacher leaders go above and beyond their job description to engage in professional learning and collaboration to enrich their teaching practice. Such teachers positively impact their students, colleagues, and schools despite not holding a formal leadership title. Grant (2006) argues that teacher-leaders positively influence instruction and learning as their influence goes beyond their classrooms. I drew on scholarly methodologies to support my study focus and discussions on teachers' everyday lives. As required by the topic, I focused on selected teachers' personal and professional relationship experiences as critical spaces where they made meaning of the beliefs that had shaped the self and performed as informal teacher leaders without formal titles such as Head of Department or Deputy Principal.

What unfolds in this chapter is an overview of the focus and purpose of this research study as I discuss my personal, professional, and contextual rationale for exploring these selected teachers' stories. I also present the research questions, discuss the methodological approach and the conceptual framework in which the study was embedded. The first chapter is concluded with an overview of the seven chapters of this study, each presenting the storied life of a participant. I present my scholarly exploration of their lived relationship experiences during their childhood years and as adult teachers.

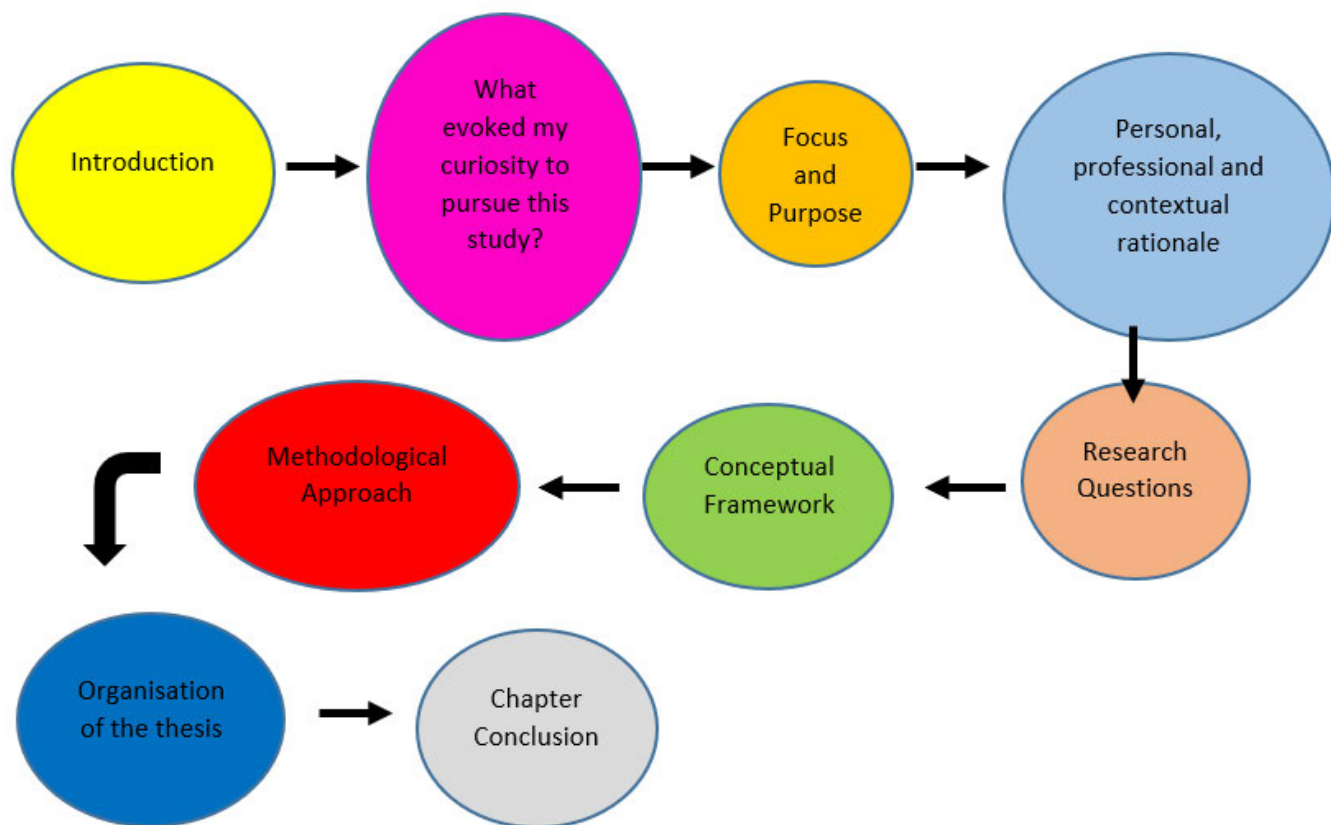


Figure 1.1: Diagrammatic presentation of Chapter One

1.2 Background to the Study

Even before conducting this study, I was curious to learn more about the qualities and attributes of teacher leaders. Research has generally focused on teachers in promotion positions and the steps they have taken to become leaders with a formal title. Conversely, I wanted to understand how everyday post-level 1 teachers could transform into leaders, and I wanted to achieve this by zooming into such teachers' stories to explore how they developed and influenced personal and professional relationships and what choices they had made in different situations and in various environments that made them stand out. My research, therefore, focused on understanding teachers' classroom practices and their influence on the world beyond the classroom environment. Using arts-based tools to generate data that would guide me to reflect on their past and present relationships was a way to creatively explore what it meant to be, to become, and to transform into the teachers they had aspired to be when they first entered the profession (Jefferson, 2021). I was curious to understand how using creative arts-based

methods would allow my participants to share the stories of certain pertinent past and present relationships. I used different methods such as artifact inquiry and memory drawings to spark my participants' memories and to encourage them to share deep and rich stories that would contribute to my understanding of teacher leadership and generate findings that would enrich the pool of scholarly knowledge. According to Geijssel and Meijers (2005), researchers in the field of teacher education have shown a growing interest in utilizing narratives to listen to the voice of teachers through stories of what motivated them to continue in the teaching sphere. As I read scholarly views on this topic, my curiosity was stirred, and I wanted to learn more and enrich my understanding of people who work in this field. I therefore utilized arts-based methods to generate data as I believed that this would open new doors of thinking and reasoning for me as a teacher who needed to navigate my own personal and professional relationship experiences. Being a Master's student, I also analysed my own stories to generate scholarly interpretations. I, therefore, reflected critically on the data to understand the significance of my own relationships that had shaped my beliefs about myself and what kind of teacher I intended to be.

1.3 Focus and Purpose of the Study

This study focused on exploring the stories of four teachers who were willing to share stories of their experiences of personal and professional relationships that had shaped their beliefs and thinking as they developed into teacher leaders. I intended to listen to and analyze the stories of the participating teachers' experiences to understand how their everyday lives and personal and professional relationships had opened up spaces for their ongoing learning and 'becoming' as teacher leaders. I also wanted to understand how their relationships with the self and significant others had transformed them into exceptional teachers. Questions such as: *What were these relational spaces? How did they work? and where they happened*, had to be addressed. I zoomed into the stories of their lived experiences to understand the critical element of the relationships they had forged and the meanings they attached to these relationships to understand their perceptions of themselves and how they negotiated their everyday situations inside and outside their primary school classrooms.

Grant and Khumalo (2006) state that teacher leadership "is not a positional concept". These authors argue that teacher leadership integrates teaching and leading and requires formal and informal leadership activities. Similarly, Nash (2003) explains that teacher leadership influences and improves teaching and learning practices within and beyond the classrooms of

such outstanding teachers. I thus explored the selected teachers' lived experiences to make sense of the personal-professional interconnectedness of their practices and highlight how self-meanings were formed and reformed through their relations with significant others. I wished to deepen my and other scholars' understanding of the processes that individuals adopt and the shifts they take to negotiate different relationships in their personal and professional lives (Grant & Khumalo, 2006).

1.4 My Personal Rationale for Conducting the Study

According to Terada (2019), teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement as they boost students' confidence to become successful individuals. As a learner, I was taught by one of the greatest teachers in my Foundation Phase years. This teacher related to us with love and care as she created an environment where we felt safe and could share our personal stories and experiences to improve our understanding of our world without being criticized and alienated. These years of sharing and learning respectfully and trustingly allowed me to gain self-confidence and boosted my self-esteem. I recalled these youthful experiences as follows:

I remember the day I had to share a story about my love for dancing with the other learners in the classroom. I felt acknowledged by her interest in my hobby rather than just being interested in my grades and academic achievements.

The above excerpt from my storied narrative highlights that I felt acknowledged by my teacher. She guided our class in a manner that instilled the values of respect and the importance of hearing the voice of every learner. This way of learning deepened our understanding of the moral purpose of education as learners, and we were happy to learn in a climate of love, care, and respect. When it was time to choose a career and apply for enrolment at a university, I recalled those wonderful days in the junior primary phase when I enjoyed being in that specific teacher's classroom, where I felt safe and free to express myself as a child. I then decided that I wanted to be a teacher who changed the lives of learners just as my teacher had changed mine. Despite our society's many conflicts and negativities, our relationships with others are not always negative (Berry, 2019). Sometimes, we may not be courageous enough to overcome a particular challenge, but positive relationships with others can be powerful enough to motivate us to pursue our dreams (Marschall, 2021). I wanted to be a teacher who allowed children to enjoy school and learn the important values of care and respect through supportive and caring relationships with them. According to Cornu (2013), relationships that offer care and support are important for acknowledgment and self-development.

1.5 My Professional Rationale for Conducting the Study

I have often reflected on the idea that being a teacher is much more than how you look. As a new Matriculant in 2013, I needed to choose a career. I was at first negatively influenced by others who mocked teachers' lack of status and expounded on the dangers associated with teaching in South Africa. I often heard, "Teaching is not the same as it was in past years", or "What if you get placed in a rural area? How far will you have to travel? Will you be safe?" These comments made me question my desire to become a teacher, and I began to doubt my love for this profession.

Family and friends questioned my choice to become a teacher. They believed that my physical appearance and character traits (I am short and timid) would not allow me to succeed as a teacher.

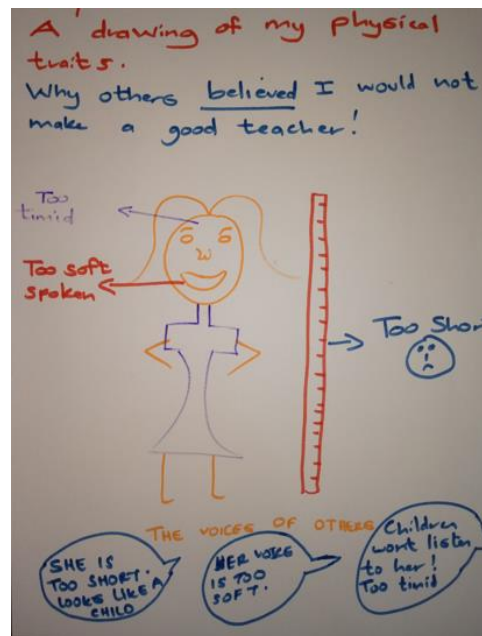


Figure 1.2: Self-portrait: A Short, shy girl who would not succeed as a teacher

In a book titled *That's Funny, You Don't Like a Teacher* (Weber and Mitchell, 1995), the authors write about people creating images in their minds that shape their opinions about who teachers are and what teachers do. However, being successful as an educator is not about how teachers look but it is about their beliefs, intellect, emotions, and motivation. Exploring what motivates individuals to want to 'be and do' within and beyond the classroom drove my curiosity and desire to conduct this study.

Some teachers may have been able to motivate themselves regardless of the negativity they faced from others, either in their personal or professional lives. In contrast, others may have been positively influenced by people who encouraged them to pursue a teaching career because they could not find their own inner motivation to do so (Henry, 2018). To address this issue, the following questions persisted in my mind: *What will the stories of my teacher participants tell? Did their relationships with others influence them more than their own internal motivation, or did their own inner strength motivate them more than the influence of others?*

In her article on the role of relationships in teacher resilience, Cornu (2013) stresses that significant relationships are important in making a teacher. Her study determined that the professional relationships most significant to teachers were the ones in which they had forged a strong bond with their students. This seems plausible because people become teachers mainly because they want to work with children. Cornu (2013) states that another significant relationship in the participating teachers' lives was their fellow teachers and leaders' roles. She found that positive relationships with colleagues engendered a sense of belonging and connectedness, particularly when the teachers' colleagues offered emotional and professional support. Cornu (2013) also found that teachers' confidence in their abilities grew when they were provided with learning opportunities. The aim was to empower them holistically in and out of the class and school environment. A third significant relationship that Cornu (2013) uncovered was the relationship of the teachers with their families and friends and the emotional support they offered. The teachers had learned to balance their time for their jobs with the time they spent with the significant people in their lives. Cornu (2013) also refers to the teacher's relationship with the self. She argues that the positive relationship one shares with oneself can provide inner motivation and encourage perseverance in difficult and challenging times.

Similarly, Berry (2019) states that teachers are the best people to forge relationships as they engage in various relationships throughout their careers, impacting who they are. Marschall (2021) argues that teachers can form strong new relationships in their personal and professional lives by overcoming the negative effects of prior relationships. Alastair (2018) argues that positive outcomes of effective relationships are the fact that it took time and effort to form the relationship and respect, trust, and mutual understanding of differences and similarities. From a teaching point of view, Marschall (2013) argues that teachers who work on their relationships with students, colleagues, or family members can improve their making of *who they are*.

Relationships can be formed not only with those who are like you but also with those who are different.

Exploring different experiences in relationships like those mentioned above was central to my study. I wanted to use the outcomes of my study to extend current debates on the relationships with self, as I believe it needs to be ongoing. It is critical to a teacher's self-transformation and making and remaking the teacher's self through everyday situations.

1.6 Contextual Rationale

Undeniably, social and political imperatives are intrinsic to teachers' work and their learning in South Africa. For instance, Legotlo (2019) argues that the South African education system faces challenges such as over-crowded classrooms, school violence, under-resourced facilities, and poor learning outcomes. It is also a fact that the schooling system has been transformed since the advent of democracy in 1994 as change has focused on desegregating schooling spaces. New policies have also focused on language barriers, diversity, and learning barriers. However, as the schooling system changed, teachers have also been required to change to negotiate the complexities of current educational and schooling experiences. The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (Department of Education, 2006, pp. 1-2) states:

The overriding aim of the policy is to properly equip teachers to undertake their essential and demanding tasks, to enable them to continually enhance their professional competence and performance, and to raise the esteem in which they are held by the people of South Africa.

Teachers are required to play many roles and accept many responsibilities because our schooling system involves learners of diverse backgrounds. The policy thus states that South African schools need teachers who do not only go into the classroom to deliver and implement content knowledge but teachers who are competent and who can adapt to many different roles are needed. The foregoing policy's principles are expressed in the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Basic Education, 2018). According to this policy document, a teacher is required to perform multiple responsibilities and roles, such as being a specialist in subject and learning areas, devising appropriate teaching and learning programs, understanding and applying the curriculum and assessment activities, do administrative tasks competently, have leadership and management skills, and engage in community involvement and pastoral

care. The professional implications of this policy for teachers are that it helps them execute the different roles they are expected to play as part of their daily responsibilities.

I was curious and wanted to understand how teachers must develop to fulfill all these roles. Teachers complete their training at university and enter the education system. Once in schools, they need to form relationships with different students and think of different strategies to teach in a diverse classroom; but who prepares them for these roles, and are there professional development facilities and programs to assist them in negotiating these multiple roles as set out in the policy? Drawing on my professional development experiences, I decided to develop myself further as a teacher as I felt there were not enough opportunities for professional development in the schooling system. I was fortunate as I forged a supporting and caring relationship with my supervisor, who helped me by sharing her ideas with me and encouraging me to be creative. I aimed to understand where teachers' support comes from and what relationships should be formed to assist teachers in negotiating their daily challenges and executing their multiple roles.

One of the roles teachers need to perform is leading and managing. I therefore aimed to understand how the teachers who participated in this study differed from other teachers by excelling in their multiple roles. This study focused on teachers from quintile 1 and quintile 5 schools. Hall and Giese (2008) state that quintile 1 schools in South Africa are the most economically disadvantaged, whereas quintile 5 schools are the most economically advantaged.

I analysed the stories of the selected teachers from these diverse schools to understand why they were driven to make their own choices. I focused on their relationships to determine how these may have shaped and continue to shape how they think about who they are as individuals (their beliefs and meanings of self) and how these shaped their perspectives and choices they made in their lives as classroom teachers. I thus set out to understand how these teachers navigated their daily encounters in the different contexts in which they worked and to explore how and why relationships were a fertile site for studying how they opened up certain beliefs of the teacher self and *made* themselves into what is beyond, to adapt to different teaching contexts.

1.7 Research Questions

Two key research questions were formulated to give impetus to this investigation. These research questions were:

1. *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?*

Teachers are exposed to various situations and experiences during their careers (Harris & Jones, 2019), and these experiences can be either positive or negative. This question sought to understand the complexity of the lived experiences of the teachers, from being novices to the point where they excelled as teacher leaders. To answer this research question, I used arts-based methods to explore and understand their stories of significant personal and professional relationship experiences.

2. *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

Every teacher is different and has a different story to tell (Fan, 2021) based on their individual experiences and relationships. These experiences were engendered through their relationships with others and with themselves (Murray, 2021). To address this question, the teachers' stories were explored to discover how they used their experiences and relationships to make decisions and how their actions and way of thinking positioned them as teacher leaders.

1.8 Concepts and theories that underpinned this study

Finding a theoretical framework to underpin this study was a challenge that I overcame with the assistance of my supervisor. The theories used by earlier scholars who had conducted similar studies did not frame mine. My supervisor and I perused an article by Hunzicker (2017), which focused on the progression from novice teacher to teacher leader. A conceptual framework using a visual model highlighted concepts and explained the relationship between concepts pertaining to that study. This was highly effective, and I decided to frame my study using a conceptual visual model to map out the significant concepts underpinning my research. These are further explained in section B of Chapter Two.

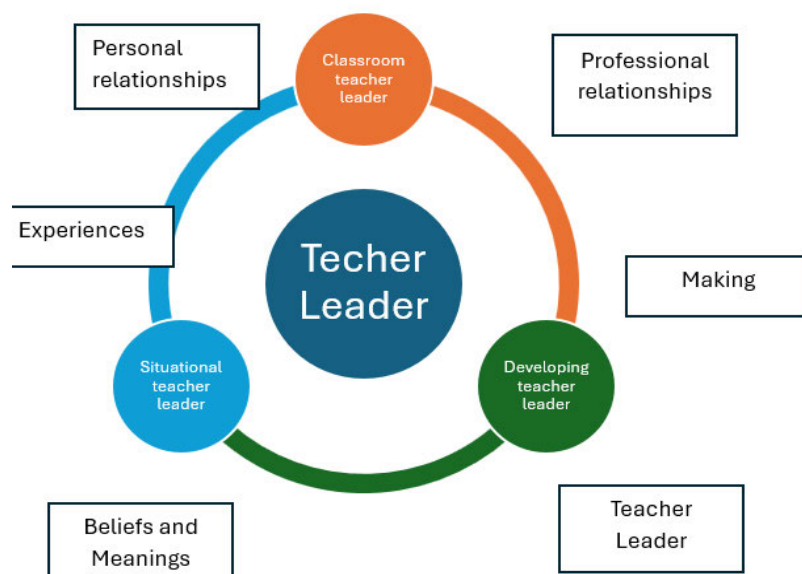


Figure 1.3: Visual model conceptualizing teacher leader

I adapted this framework and made use of a large chart. I used colourful sticky notes and jotted down the research topic and research questions first. These were placed in the middle of the chart paper. Thereafter, the concepts I wanted to explore were identified and placed on sticky notes around the topic. I used smaller sticky notes to link the concepts as I wanted to understand the relationship between them. A comprehensive diagram of this chart is presented in the conceptual framing section of this study.

The key concepts that are referred to in this dissertation are:

Teacher leader: I focused on understanding the concept of teacher leaders and how such people come to be and act as leaders in the educational context.

Making: This means that I explored the process of ‘being made into’ or ‘progressing into’ the teacher leader position. Understanding this process was key to the question that explored how teachers made themselves informal teacher leaders by forging relationships in which care and support were foregrounded.

Personal relationships: Such relationships emerged from my analysis of the teachers’ relationships in the home and school environments that influenced their beliefs about themselves and how these made them ‘to be.’

Professional relationships: I also explored the teachers’ relationships in the working environment to determine how their beliefs about their teaching practice and contextual setting influenced their leadership qualities.

Experiences: The teachers' experiences of relationships were shared through storied narratives. Exploring these experiences was critical in informing my understanding of the significant relationships these teachers had forged and the impact of these experiences on their self-perception and the meanings they attached to their natural leadership qualities.

Beliefs and meanings: These terms were attached to the stance the teachers took, their thinking, and the meanings they associated with how they perceived themselves and their situational environments.

Utilising these concepts assisted me in understanding their relationship with the making of a teacher leader. I was curious to understand how experiences of personal and professional relationships shaped the meanings and beliefs that these teachers formed when they faced particular situations and choices to overcome conflict and tension.

1.7 Methodological Approach

This research study used a qualitative research approach and was embedded within the interpretivist paradigm. Storied experiences of teacher participants' personal and professional relationships were generated to explore the process of their making into teacher leaders. Narrative enquirers mainly intend to explore participants' past and present experiences to gain an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences in their educational and often personal contexts (Clandinin, 2000). This study zoomed into the storied experiences of four teachers in two diverse school contexts in the Chatsworth and Shallcross areas in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The data I generated from each participant were gathered using a variety of arts-based instruments such as artifact inquiry (memory box), memory drawings, and unstructured interviews. As I analysed the data, I was able to create storied narratives from which I identified themes that addressed the research questions. The methodological approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter One provides an overview of this study. I refer to my curiosity and discuss the focus and purpose of the study. I present information on the conceptual framing and discuss how this lens enabled me to zoom into the storied lives of my teacher participants. To conclude, the two research questions that gave impetus to this study and the methodological approach that I engaged in are briefly presented. I also provide scholarly justification for using arts-based methods to generate data that would address the research questions.

In Chapter Two, I present the literature review and the conceptual framing for the study. Chapter Two is separated into two sections. In Section A, I discuss pertinent literature in support of my study, and in Section B, I unfold the conceptual framing of the study. I use a visual model to illustrate the relationship among the various concepts that were metaphoric ‘tapestry’ of the study. Three teacher leadership areas are discussed, namely, the classroom teacher leader, the situational teacher leader, and the developing teacher leader.

Chapter Three provides a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology I engaged in. I highlight the participant selection criteria and provide a descriptive profile for each participant. I also discuss why narrative inquiry rooted in the interpretivist paradigm was adopted and reflect on the methodology I used to reconstruct the teacher participants’ stories. The discussion is enriched by linking it to debates by key scholars in the teacher leadership field. The trustworthiness, believability, and reliability of this study are also presented. I conclude this chapter by discussing the ethical considerations I adhered to and I acknowledge the limitations of this study.

In Chapter Four to Chapter Seven, I present, analyse, and interpret the storied narratives of the four research participants, each in a separate chapter. I first pose research question 1 (*What are the lived experiences that shaped the making of a teacher leader?*) and present relevant excerpts from each participant’s stories. I also analyse and interpret these stories to address research question 2 (*How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*). I conclude each chapter with a synthesis of the participant’s experiences of relationships to provide answers to the research questions. I base my findings on the themes that emerged from the data.

In Chapter Eight, I provide an overall summary of the findings. My overall learning and understanding of the concepts in this study are highlighted, and I offer suggestions for future researchers in the field of teacher development.

1.9 Chapter Conclusion

I admitted that my curiosity had been evoked, even as a young novice teacher, to listen to the stories of teacher leaders and to understand what relationship experiences made them teacher leaders. I also discussed the study’s focus, purpose, and rationale and presented the two key research questions. I then briefly discussed the conceptual framing and methodological

approach that I employed. I also referred to scholars who prompted my interest in pursuing this field of study. The chapter concluded with a brief overview of all the dissertation chapters. In the next chapter, I present the literature review as well as the conceptual framing of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

2.1 Orientation

In the previous chapter, I presented an overview of the study's focus, purpose, and rationale. Chapter Two comprises two important sections: Section A offers a review of related literature, and Section B expounds on the conceptual framing of this study in relation to the making of teacher leaders.

2.2 Section A: Literature Review

This chapter highlights key information that I derived from the scholarly articles I perused. This review generated various ideas and perspectives in relation to teacher leaders and their process of enriching my focus and enhancing my scholarly lens as a researcher. The main aim of this chapter is to review prior and existing debates, trends, and contestations on and around personal and professional relationships and to review how lived and narrated experiences can provide a scholarly space for explaining the making of informal teacher leaders.

Much of the information in this chapter is presented in the form of a historical approach. This means that international and local information was explored to provide a brief overview of the shifts in empirical studies to understand teachers' lives and the meanings they attach to significant relationships, particularly those that shaped how and why they know, think, and act as leaders. This will guide the reader to understand how research theories and methods have changed over a period of time. I developed themes from the scholarly conversations of selected authors to illuminate their ideas and contributions to debates relevant to my study. These include:

- Understanding the concept of teacher leader;
- The making of a teacher leader;
- Storied experiences of teacher leaders;
- Teacher leaders' personal relationships;
- Teacher leaders' professional relationships; and
- Teachers' beliefs and the making of their *self* as informal teacher leaders.

The scholarly debates I explored guided my research and assisted this study in contributing to educational research. Below is a flow diagram that maps out the identified themes that emerged from the literature:

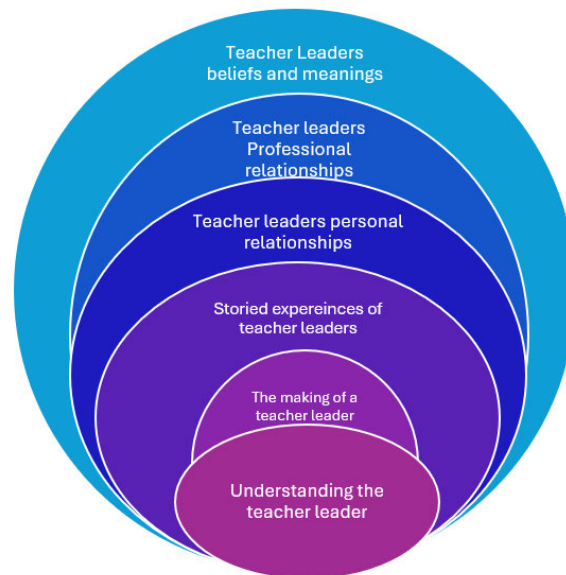


Figure 2.1: Onion structure: The layers of teacher leadership

The above diagram, also called an ‘onion diagram’, illustrates the different layers of a teacher leader. To understand the making of a teacher leader, I unpacked these layers, which I believe influence the making of teacher leaders, and I used these concepts to enrich my study findings. These concepts will be further explained in the conceptual framing section.

2.2.1 Understanding the teacher leader phenomenon

There is a trend in the educational field to shift away from attaching titles to teacher leaders and to embrace the concept of teacher leadership from a more informal, integrated approach (Hunzicker, 2017). Wenner (2016) defines teacher leaders as teachers who maintain classroom-based teaching responsibilities while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom. Teacher leaders are passionate about teaching students and mentoring fellow colleagues (Bryce, 2021). Nash (2003) explains that teacher leadership is evident when specific teachers influence and improve teaching and learning practices within and beyond their classrooms to benefit all students. Teacher leaders may collaborate with other school members, introduce new initiatives, and perform various leadership functions. Teacher leaders are effective educators who want to focus on classroom practices and stay connected to learners

(Jefferson, 2012). Apart from teaching students, teacher leaders also mentor and assist learners and colleagues while maintaining strong relationships with parents.

In her study on emergent teacher leadership, Grant (2006) defines teacher leadership as “leadership beyond headship or a formal position”, further stating that teacher leadership is based on the idea that members of an organisation can lead as a form of agency. Schott (2020, p. 2) states that leadership “is not a positional concept but a perspective that integrates the notions of teaching and leading that can be distributed or shared”.

Ultimately, teacher leadership aims to improve student learning and outcomes. By fostering collaboration, supporting professional growth, and advocating for best practices and in this way teacher leaders play a crucial role in enhancing educational quality (Hunzicker, 2017).

In summary, the teacher leader phenomenon emphasizes the transformative power of educators in shaping their schools and improving student achievement through collaborative and empowered practices (Jefferson, 2012).

2.2.2 Formal and informal teacher leaders’ activities

Many local and international initiatives reflect formal and informal teacher-leader activities (Khumalo & Grant, 2006). Coleman (2003) explains that the hierarchy of traditional leadership positions focuses on status and title rather than duty and responsibility. Singh (2007) argues that there has been a fundamental departure from traditional leadership that predominantly focused on appointed positions. Grant (2006, p. 4) associates leadership with four zones and states that traditional leaders focus predominantly on entitlement and power, whereas teacher leaders aim to flatten hierarchies by sharing power. The four zones mentioned are the classroom, the school, and the community, working together in extra- and co-curricular activities and involved in whole-school development (Grant, 2006).

2.2.3 Characteristics of teacher leaders

According to Brownlee (2018), teacher leaders demonstrate the capacity to influence leadership attempts and possess the following characteristics:

- They create a safe, welcoming learning environment while fostering encouragement, kindness, and respect.
- They guide collective responsibility and are open-minded.
- They are critical thinkers and problem solvers who encourage self-reflectivity.
- They demonstrate resilience, determination, and a willingness to take risks.
- They offer constructive feedback for professional development and are accountable and action-orientated.
- They are motivated and enthusiastic to make a difference and are passionate about education.

Lumpkin and Claxton (2014) also list 10 characteristics of teacher leaders, arguing that they show empathy and are analytical, adaptable, courageous, committed and motivated, possess communication and connection skills, are patient, love learning and engagement, and honor best practices. According to Schott (2020), teacher leaders can transform learning and educational strategies by focusing on student learning, being empowered, forming positive relationships, and collaborating.

In his article on informal teacher leadership, Whitaker (1995) argues that teacher leaders could be position holders such as heads of department, or they could be full-time classroom teachers without a formal title; yet, they assume leadership responsibilities under certain circumstances. From this definition, it is apparent that teacher leaders lead while teaching. Still, it is often not determined which leadership responsibilities such teacher leaders are responsible for as their roles vary in diverse settings. This means that such teachers function effectively without a formal task description or set of responsibilities, such as those that govern HODs and Deputy Principals.

By scrutinising and understanding these teacher leader characteristics, I could distinguish the characteristics of each participant and identify them as teacher leaders. This process is discussed in more depth in the analysis chapter.

2.2.4 What does it mean to be a teacher leader?

According to Harris (2003), research needs to move away from traditional task-oriented or position-focused teacher leadership investigations and examine the dynamic interactions between teacher leaders (with or without positions) and their tasks, with due consideration for

contextual variations. Such research focus will help to understand teacher leadership from a scholarly perspective as “leadership can be separated from person, role, and status” (Harris, 2003, p. 318).

To understand various scholars’ perspectives on teacher leaders, I created diagrams. In the diagram below, Hairon and Goh (2015) highlight the following three teacher-leader dimensions: (1) building a collegial and collaborative culture, (2) promoting teacher development and learning, and (3) enabling change in teachers’ teaching practices.

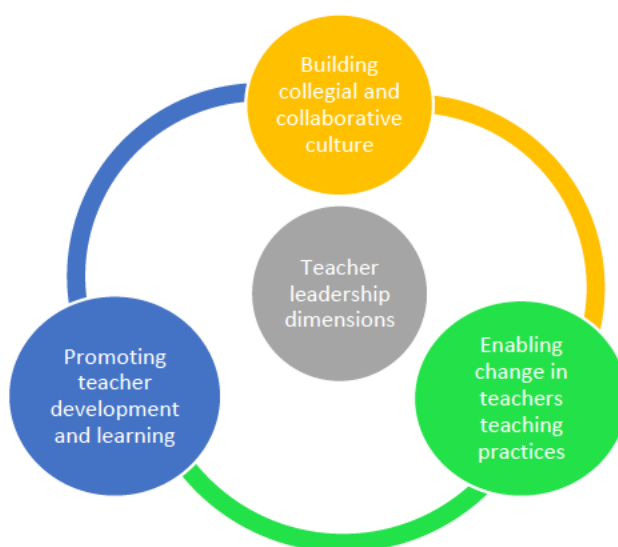


Figure 2.2: Teacher leader dimensions

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) assign three main attributes to teacher leaders as seen in the diagram below: (1) leadership of students or other teachers who fulfill the roles of coach, mentor, curriculum specialist, and leaders in professional development; (2) leadership of operational tasks for school operation and organizational tasks in various roles as department head or member of a task force; and (3) leadership through decision making or partnerships.

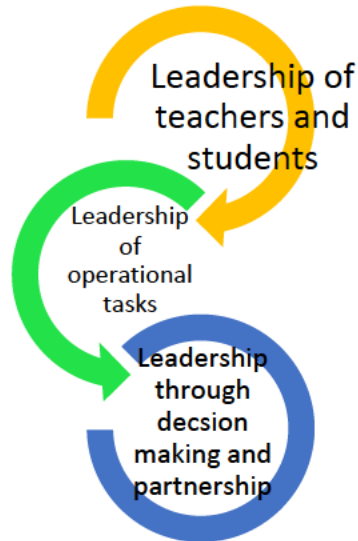


Figure 2.3: Areas of teacher leadership

Day and Harris (2002) suggest four discrete but discernible teacher leadership dimensions in the diagram below. The first dimension translates school improvement into individual classrooms, which the authors argue is the central responsibility of a teacher leader. The second dimension focuses on participative leadership, which means that all teachers are held accountable for positive change through a strong sense of ownership. The third dimension of teacher leadership is that teacher leaders are imperative sources of expertise and information, and such teachers often inform decision-making processes directly or indirectly. The last and most important teacher leadership dimension is their responsibility to foster a positive school climate and establish good relationships among teachers for collaborative learning.

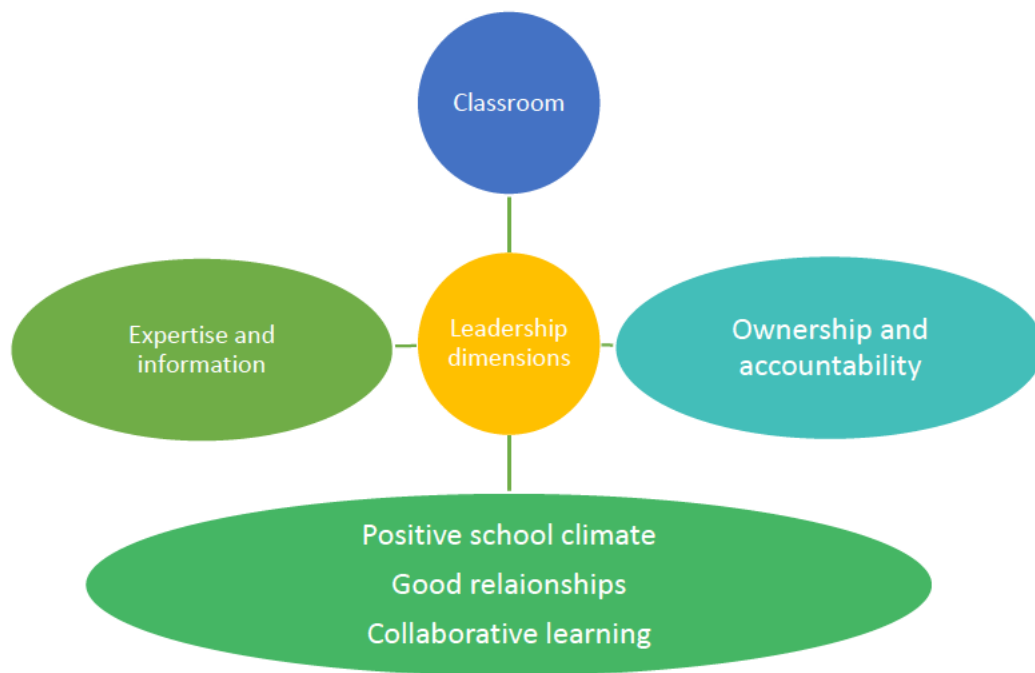


Figure 2.4: Leadership dimensions

As I summarised these dimensions, it was important to understand the link between these diagrams as teacher leaders often lead by performing tasks that are closely aligned with their expertise for instructional improvement and collective teacher professional learning, which are vital steps if schools wish to achieve success. First and foremost, teacher leaders are expert teachers who spend time in their classrooms and take on various leadership roles under different circumstances.

Drawing on the above literature pertaining to teacher leadership, this study aimed at identifying teacher leaders through the unique characteristics they possess which makes them stand out from other teachers. Leadership is the ability to influence, guide, or direct individuals or groups towards achieving common goals. It encompasses various skills, including communication, decision-making, and emotional intelligence. Leaders inspire trust, foster collaboration, and create a vision that motivates others.

Teacher Leadership refers to the role that teachers play in influencing educational practices and policies within their schools and communities. Teacher leaders take on additional responsibilities beyond their classroom duties, often engaging in activities such as:

1. Mentoring: Supporting and guiding new or less experienced teachers.

2. Curriculum Development: Collaborating with colleagues to improve or design curriculum and instructional strategies.
3. Professional Development: Leading workshops or training sessions to enhance the skills of fellow educators.
4. Advocacy: Representing the interests of teachers and students in discussions about school policies or reforms.
5. Collaboration: Fostering a team environment where educators work together to share ideas and best practices.

Effective teacher leadership can enhance student learning, improve school culture, and empower other educators, ultimately contributing to a more effective educational system.

2.2.5 Exploring the storied experiences of teacher leaders

Geijssel and Meijers (2005) confirm that, in recent years, educational researchers have become interested in listening to the stories and voices of teachers. Discovering and shaping their personal and professional identities happen when teachers engage in narrative theorising through the stories they tell, and this results in growth and learning. Teachers' narratives can potentially influence their practice in a positive way (Gade, 2011). Further to this, Justi and van Driel (2006) state that, to facilitate teachers' development and bring about change in their pedagogical practices, it is necessary to understand the processes that allow teachers to grow in their personal and professional lives. According to Guskey (1986), the process of becoming a teacher is influenced greatly by the types of experiences an individual has, and these experiences can influence a teacher's development either positively or negatively. While there is consensus about the importance of teacher growth, there is less consensus about how this process occurs and even less information about how the stories and experiences of teachers have caused their making into teachers (Justi & van Driel, 2006). It is, therefore, imperative to understand how the lived personal and professional experiences of teachers have shaped and will continue to shape them so that they revise their formulaic duties and responsibilities as teacher leaders. Therefore, I envisaged that my reflections on selected teachers' experiences would elicit a deep and insightful portrayal of their development as I rigorously analyse their unique stories of self. I believed the findings would enlighten my understanding of who they were, how they came to think, how and why they did things, and what they wanted to become. Thus, narrative inquiry provided me with opportunities to study selected teachers' past and

present experiences and explore how I could plan for my own current and future development (Lombardi, 2021).

In their paper titled *Stories of Experiences and Narrative Inquiry*, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) state that narrative inquiry has a long intellectual history both inside and outside education, and they argue that it is increasingly used in studies of educational experience. One theory in educational research holds that humans are storytelling beings who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of human narratives and in the context of this study, teachers experience the world. This general concept means that education and educational research can be used to construct and deconstruct personal and social stories so that learners, teachers, and researchers may become storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Bell (2002) argues that human beings make sense of random experiences by the imposition of story structures. Researchers may then select the elements of experiences to which they want to attend and they pattern those elements in ways that reflect the meanings that are entrenched in these stories. Bell (2002) agrees, arguing that examining their stories is key to understanding a person's experiences. Bell (2002) states that the shape of our stories, the range of the available roles in these stories, the chains of causation, and the sense of what constitutes a climax or an ending have all been shaped by our experiences since childhood.

In an insightful article titled *Teachers' Storied Experiences – Rules or Tools for Action*, Ottesen (2014) argues that the more experience a teacher has, the more effective their teaching becomes. The article (Ottesen, 2014) examines teachers' experiences by focusing on *what* and *how* teachers learn, and places strong emphasis on experiences as worthy narratives that can be used for particular purposes. Gove (2011) further states that teachers' effectiveness is measured by predefined standards of performance and by determining what they learnt from these experiences. In this context, Bruner (2006) states that storytelling may be used as a process through which teachers can transform experience into public and accessible knowledge; they can thus generate opportunities for the collective examination of such knowing. Similarly, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define story telling as a portal through which a person enters a world, and their experiences of that world are then interpreted and made personally meaningful through their stories. Both Bruner (2006) and Connelly and Clandinin (2007) view narratives as expressions of and a prerequisite for *being*. Clandinin (2007) states that when teachers' stories of their experiences are explored, it contributes to a deep understanding of teacher

knowledge, reflection, and identity. By telling and retelling stories, teachers make their ideas and understandings public and pave the way for new understandings that may change who they are, what they can do, and their work environment (Bamberg, 2006). Essentially, the substance of any story is experience, and teachers' stories are, therefore, transformed experiences.

Memory plays an important role in telling stories, and sharing one's stories from memory is viewed as an accomplishment, particularly if they are shared interactively. Therefore, when teachers narrate their experiences, it becomes a social act and a way of accomplishing a shared activity in the present by evoking the past appropriately and resourcefully (Middleton & Brown, 2005). Edwards (1997) avers that story - telling must be treated as performative while stories must be analysed to unearth what the teacher accomplished in the telling of a particular story.

Exploring the storied experiences of teacher leaders involves delving into their personal narratives, challenges, successes, and the unique insights they gain through their roles. Many teacher leaders share how their own experiences as students and teachers shaped their leadership philosophies (Bruner, 2006). Their paths often include pivotal moments that inspired them to take on leadership roles, whether through mentorship, professional development, or a desire for change.

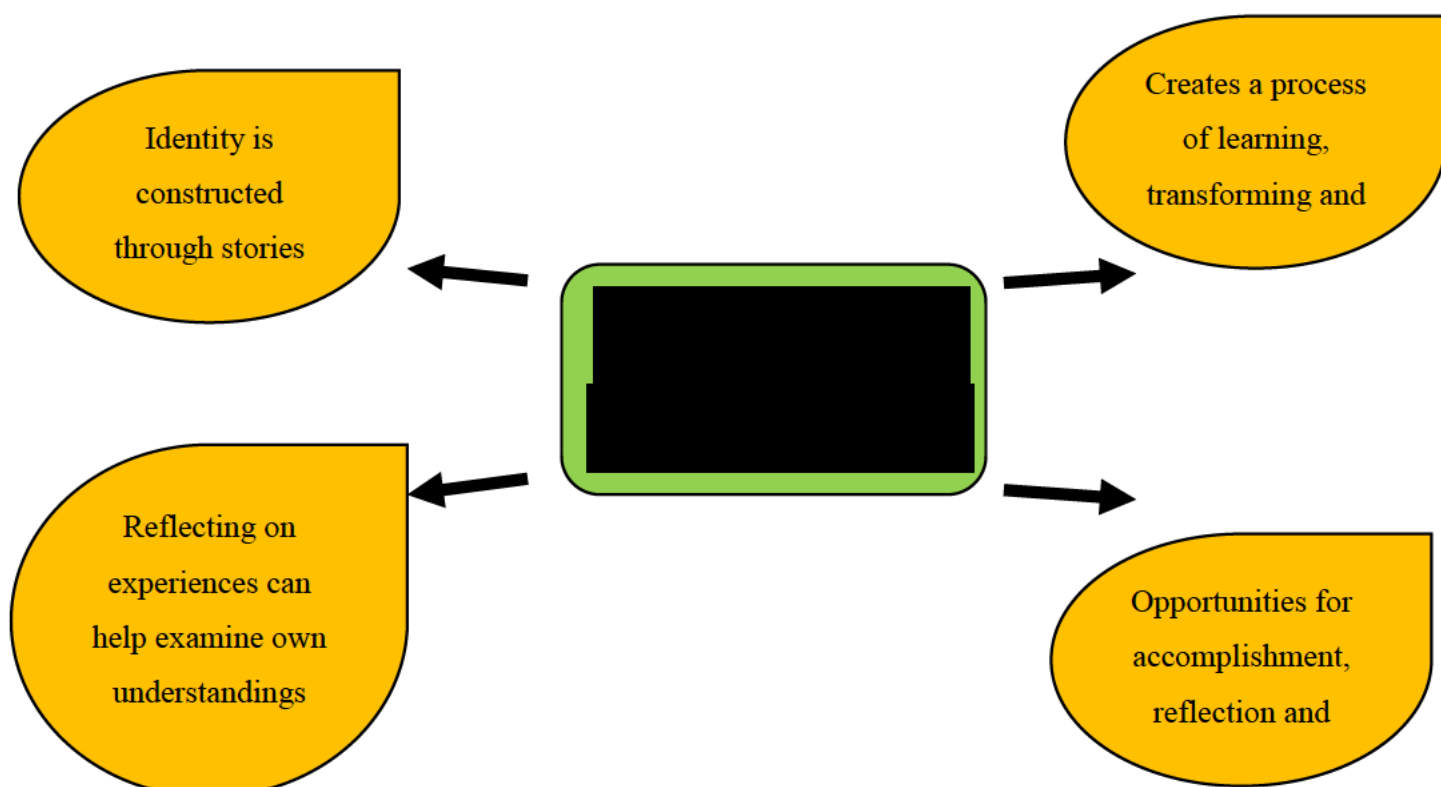


Figure 2.5: Why storied experiences were significant in this study

2.2.6 The making of teacher leaders

The making of teacher leaders involves a complex interplay of experiences, qualities, and opportunities that shape their development (Collinson, 2012). Engaging in self-reflection allows teachers to assess their strengths, weaknesses, and teaching philosophies. This process helps them identify areas for growth and develop a clearer sense of their leadership style. Teacher leaders often emerge from their commitment to advocating for their students and their profession. Learning to effectively communicate needs and ideas can empower teachers to take on leadership roles (Nicolaidou, 2010).

2.2.6.1 Teacher leaders as changing beings

According to Ignelzi (2000, p. 236), ‘making’ in the educational context refers to the process “of being made or developed”. It can also describe a person that will become known or recognized as something, in this case “the making of a teacher leader”. This making generally occurs over a period of time but can also occur over a short space of time. Ignelzi (2000) references Robert Kegan’s theory of meaning-making, which can be used to explore how a person’s understanding of their experiences, themselves, and their relationships with others mediates learning. Similarly, Mortimer and Scott (2003, p. 140) state that ‘making’ is a term that can be used to “describe the process through which people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and themselves”.

In their book on re-making teaching, Shacklock and Smyth (1998, p. 215) use teachers’ voices and narratives to allow them to speak for themselves about the ever-changing world that they live in. The authors identify the re-making of teachers as a process that drives dramatic and profound changes even in the classroom itself. They argue that, as the world changes, teachers also change, grow, and transform.

According to an online etymological source (i.e., the Webster Dictionary), poiesis is a Greek word that means ‘to make’. In English, poieses refers to an activity in which “a person brings something into being that did not exist before” (Webster, 2021). This definition is linked to this study, which viewed ‘to make’ as a process in which teachers had an active, creative experience of bringing some aspect, idea, or meaning into being and doing. This suggests that, to grow

and transform into something unique, one draws on personal experiences and relationships as practical craft knowledge that is acquired along the teacher development journey (Clandinin, 1994).

A key question to understand teacher leaders is: *How does a teacher progress from being an ordinary teacher to becoming a teacher leader i.e.? How does the ‘making’ of a teacher leader occur?* According to Smulyan (2016), the progression from teacher to teacher leader is a gradual, recursive process that occurs over a period of time that usually takes years. Poekert (2016) adds that this progression is not steady and linear because most teachers do not set out to be leaders. Rather, teacher leaders emerge in a recursive progression over time as they work to fulfill their teaching responsibilities and grow. Collinson (2012, p. 52) describes this progression as “a continuously evolving process of learning and refining ideals”. In other words, as teachers develop in their quest to improve their teaching practice, they progress to the point where they contribute to and influence their learners, colleagues, schools, and even the education district and the profession at large. This progressive process from being a teacher to becoming a teacher leader occurs implicitly as part of an ongoing process that is integrated into the normal working day (Nicolaidou, 2010). Such development becomes visible when a teacher has transitioned from influencing a few people to influencing many.

2.2.6.2 Teacher’s beliefs and the making of their self as informal teacher leaders

Teachers' beliefs are crucial in shaping their identity as informal teacher leaders (Poekert, 2016). Wenner (2016) attests that when teachers hold strong convictions about educational practices, student learning, and professional collaboration, they often assume leadership roles within their school communities. These beliefs drive them to initiate changes, mentor colleagues, and advocate for improvements in teaching and learning. Smulyan (2016) articulates that by aligning their actions with their beliefs, teachers can effectively influence their peers and contribute to their educational environment's overall growth and development. Therefore, understanding how teachers’ beliefs influence their leadership roles is essential for fostering a supportive and innovative school culture.

2.2.6.3 Teacher leaders’ personal and professional relationships

“An effective teacher leader must be able to lead [themselves] effectively before he or she can lead others within and outside the classroom” (Warren, 2021, p. 52). For instance, influencing one’s thinking, feelings, and actions to change one’s objectives and goals is a form of self-

leadership. Brown (2001) explains that self-leadership is characterised by how one can excel in the teaching profession and the classroom. Bernard (2014) argues that it occurs when one discovers oneself and shares one's knowledge and skills with others, which are important steps towards effective leadership. Self-discovery happens through self-reflection, which includes examining unique life experiences and how one responds to specific moments/experiences in one's life. Self-discovery is a process that allows teacher leaders to develop personally, improve their performance, and enrich their lives. To lead oneself, one must first accept oneself and choose to influence one's thinking, feelings, and actions. Teacher leadership therefore begins with good self-leadership so that the teacher can positively influence both learners and fellow teachers (Warren, 2021).

Parlor and Cansoy (2017) emphasise that the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and job satisfaction poses many challenges, and therefore scholarly evaluation of their self-efficacy is of great importance. Self-efficacy depends on how confident a person is in accomplishing a task or a goal (Chan, 2016), while it is also the extent of individuals' belief in themselves and the extent to which their positive behavior and thoughts can motivate them to achieve success (Bandura, 1977). More specifically, teacher self-efficacy is about achieving the desired learning outcomes in an educational setting and improving holistically as a teacher. Several personal and environmental factors influence a teacher's self-efficacy which include believing in one's capacity to accomplish a task, modelling successful people, and eliciting the support of others (Parlar & Cansoy, 2017). Research on teachers has shown that self-efficacy considerably affects their job satisfaction and performance.

Mahler (2018) argues that motivation matters to teachers who examine their relationship with their inner selves and are enthusiastic about their daily teaching experiences. Mahler (2018) states that motivation and knowledge are two unchallenged characteristics essential for successful education. Baumert (2013) also states that, while the relevance of teacher professional knowledge is important for success, a teacher's motivational orientations are just as important. Baumert (2013) further lists these domains as self-efficacy and enthusiasm for teaching and learning to achieve good teacher performance. The latter author argues that teacher enthusiasm is an effective teacher orientation that thrives on excitement, enjoyment, and pleasure, which are all emotions that are associated with a school subject and the activity of teaching. Thus, there are two main dimensions of teacher enthusiasm, and recognising these

two dimensions facilitates a detailed examination of what teachers are enthusiastic about (Mahler, 2018).

Hajovsky (2020) suggests that teachers who are confident in their abilities to teach and manage their duties are likelier to engage in practices that lead to supportive and secure relationships with students and other members within the teaching sphere. This statement suggests that a positive relationship with the self can lead to positive relationships with others. Moreover, according to Cornu (2013), the most significant relationships in the lives of teachers are those that they forge with their students, fellow teachers, leader colleagues, family and friends, and themselves. These relationships are important as they elicit empowerment, courage, confidence, emotional support, engagement, sharing, resilience, and enthusiasm, while they also inspire passion for the teaching career.

The interplay between personal and professional relationships is crucial for teacher leaders. By fostering trust, empathy, and collaboration, they not only enhance their own leadership effectiveness but also contribute to a supportive and dynamic educational environment that benefits both teachers and students.

2.2.7 Synthesis of the literature review

As I synthesised the scholarly ideas that I retrieved from the literature, I was able to identify various themes and subthemes in relation to my exploration of stories of personal and professional relationship experiences and the meanings created through the influence they had to transform informal teachers and their stance to become teacher leaders. My understanding of the relationship with self is that, to lead others, teachers must first be able to lead themselves and take ownership of the choices and decisions they make in their everyday teaching lives. Our feelings, thinking, and beliefs are shaped by the influences that personal and professional relationships have on us and how we navigate the tensions we face in these relationships. If we understand our own thinking and beliefs, we can position ourselves to improve and develop as teachers. Therefore, believing in oneself is important along the journey of becoming.

In this chapter, I thus far reviewed scholarly discussions on various themes I had identified that were linked to my study. These themes were used to assist me in my search for prior knowledge. I extracted information from various articles written and published by knowledgeable authors. Based on my review of the literature, I proceeded with this study from

a firm starting point to propel my quest to understand the storied experiences of personal and professional relationships that underpinned the making of teacher leaders. I gained in-depth insight from authors such as Callie Grant (2006), who addressed the nature of and characteristics of teacher leaders; Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who explored teachers' stories and narratives; and Hunzicker (2017), who clarified the concept of the stance of teacher leaders in relation to the relationships that shape their making.

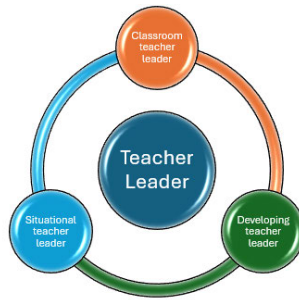
2.3 Section B: Conceptual Framing of the Study

Teacher's beliefs and the making of self as informal teacher leaders

This section elucidates the conceptual framework in which the study was embedded. To construct this framing, I drew information from various scholarly debates and concepts to inform my methodology choice and describe how the concept of 'experiences of relationships' informed this study. I mainly focused on understanding the process of 'making a teacher leader' so that I could zoom into the personal and professional relationship experiences of teacher leaders to understand how the meanings they attached to their lives shaped their stance (i.e., what they believed in) and their self-perception as informal teacher leaders.

Educational theories offer scholarly ideas that guide the researcher's thinking as they elucidate certain concepts and explain what data needs to be generated about the studied phenomenon to make sense of the 'evidence' embedded in the data. While other models offer a structural representation of the making of a teacher leader phenomenon (Imenda, 2014), this study utilised a visual model that was created to conceptualise how teachers progress from being ordinary teachers to becoming (or being made) teacher leaders. By casting my gaze as a researcher on the personal and professional relationships of the participant teachers and related concepts, I could delve into the meanings/beliefs these teachers constructed from the experiences that had shaped the stance they took, and still take, in their everyday lives.

The visual model below (Figure 2.6) illustrates how teachers progress from classroom teachers to teacher leaders. Four key stages in this model are explained below:



- Classroom Teacher Leader – at this initial stage, teachers primarily focus on classroom instruction and student learning. They may not actively seek leadership roles but contribute significantly to their students' education.
- Developing Teacher Leader – as teachers gain experience, they start to exhibit leadership qualities. They may mentor colleagues, participate in school improvement initiatives, or take on informal leadership tasks.
- Situational Teacher Leader – at this stage, teachers embrace leadership opportunities as needed. They step up during specific situations such as leading a professional development session or collaborating with students.
- Teacher Leader – finally, some teachers fully embrace their leadership roles. They actively seek opportunities to influence school – wide decisions, advocate for educational change and contribute to the profession beyond their classroom.

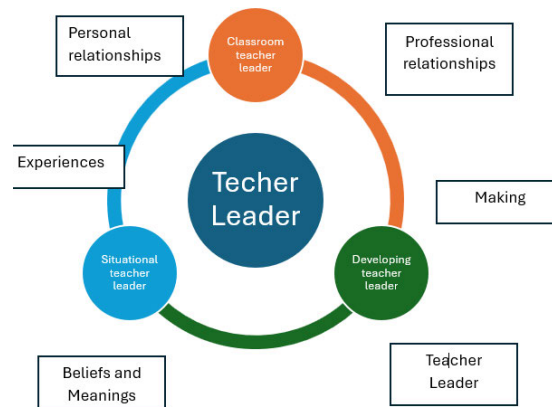


Figure 2.6: Visual models that conceptualise the teacher leader phenomenon

I used the above models of teacher leader development to guide my thinking and to theorise about teachers' stories of relationship experiences and the meanings they attach to them to inform their self-perception and positionality. As I engaged in this research learning process, I used these conceptual tools to assist me in explaining teachers' self-perceptions and positions. This position(ing) emerged as a space for becoming unique individuals. The diagrams were used to understand their disposition (feelings and behaviours) and the dynamic relationships that were instrumental in their ability to develop their teacher leadership skills and practices.

The model illustrates that, although a teacher unintentionally pursues leadership roles by putting students first and engaging in collaborative and professional development while accepting school-level leadership opportunities, their progress/development is not linear. Through gradual and recursive shifts that are sometimes quite challenging, as well as personal

circumstances and limited supportive school structures, many find it difficult to view themselves as leaders. However, by viewing the participating teachers' experiences through the lens of storied relationships, this study was able to share the stories of the participants' non-linear pathways toward becoming different.

The visual models presented here were instrumental in generating the teachers' unique lived educational stories of past and present experiences. They revealed them as potent spaces where they could plan for the future as fully developed teacher leaders. Understanding their developing self – i.e., their perceptions and shifting stances as classroom teacher leaders and as situational teacher leaders and how they came to be both classroom teachers and teacher leaders – changed my thinking about them as mere 'deliverers' of knowledge and subject content and to view them as people who had made themselves leaders in the classroom. This thinking disrupted the conservative idea that teachers should maintain the status quo in the classroom. This study respectfully exposed what each of the teachers had experienced and continued to do to recreate/revise the meanings of self that they attached to being educational leaders. The model I had devised enabled me to think differently about the concept of teacher leadership as the definition presented by (Angelle and DeHart, 2011).

Below is a visual representation of my conceptual framing for this study. This framing outlines the relationships among the concepts I had identified with the assistance of the literature review. I displayed this model at my work station so that I could refer to it constantly. It clearly highlights the research topic and questions surrounded by various concepts about teacher leadership that framed the study. The concepts are positioned around the topic to show the gradual and recursive process of making and the connections between the relationships that influenced this making.

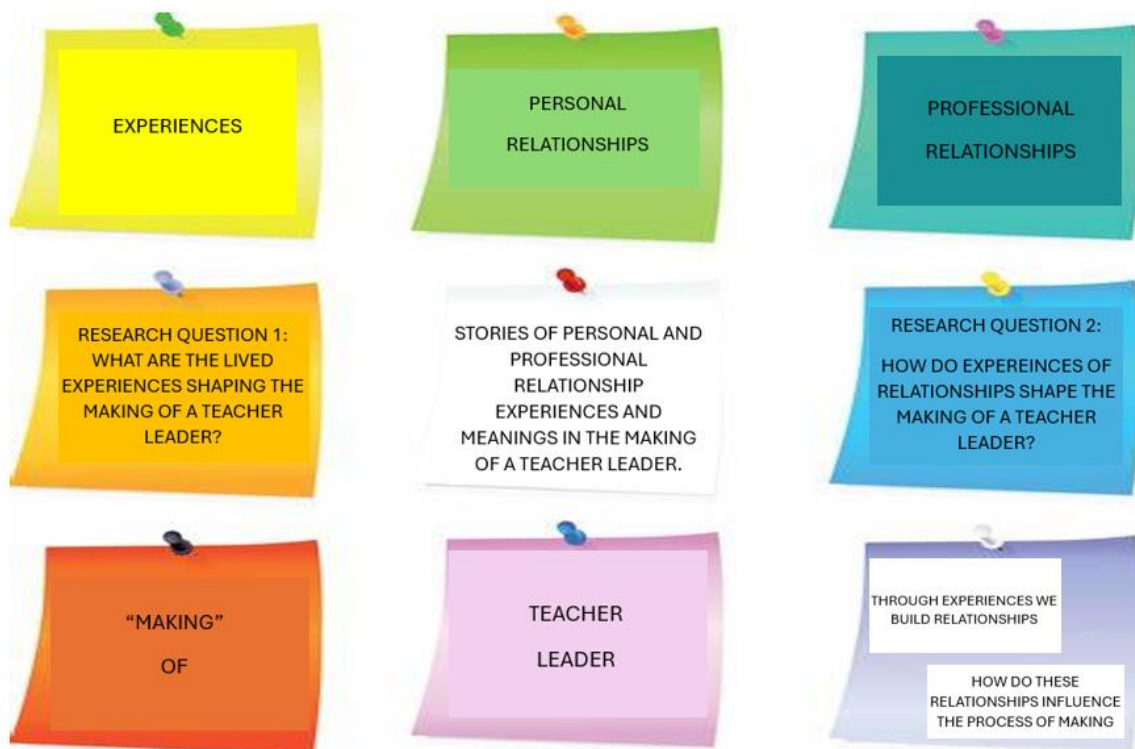


Figure 2.7: Personalised conceptual framing of this study

A discussion of the key concepts and how they relate to the research questions:

Through **experiences** we build relationships. We forge **personal relationships** and **professional relationships** that influence our stance, our way of thinking, as well as the meanings we make, and the positions we take as **teachers who become teacher leaders**. As we engage with the people personally and professionally, we experience a shift in our thinking and the meanings we create. This shift allows for a process of making to occur, in this way the process of our making into teacher leaders occurs. The research questions helped me to zoom into this process of making. To engage with research question 1, I unpacked the lived experiences shaping the making of teacher leaders. I aimed to investigate which shared experiences shaped the making of my research participants into teacher leaders. While investigating, I paid close attention to the personal and professional relationships that were shared. For research question 2, I aimed to inquire how these relationships shaped the making of teacher leaders. The key concepts served as a reminder to what I was searching for in these shared stories. The key concepts guided me into approaching my research questions with curiosity whilst keeping me grounded in the details I was looking for in the shared stories.

2.4 Conclusion

To conclude this section, I refer to Simpson's (2002) argument that conceptual frameworks serve several important purposes in research and academic inquiry. These purposes include: organising knowledge, guiding research design, clarifying concepts and constructs, focusing the study, providing a theoretical rationale, and generating new knowledge that may inform policy and practice. Following these guidelines, as I constructed and adapted the conceptual framing was helpful in my understanding and knowledge in relation to my own concepts and explained how they worked together to shape the meanings and beliefs I adopted as I constructed my own making. I discuss the methodological approach that I followed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In section A of the previous chapter, I presented the literature review which formed the foundation for my study titled *Stories of Personal and Professional Relationship Experiences and Meanings Shaping the Making of Teacher Leaders*. To understand the ‘teacher leader’ concept, I drew on the findings of authors such as Jefferson (2021) and a local student (Grant, 2006) who, amongst other authors, argue the point that teacher leaders adopt informal leadership roles in their everyday teaching lives even if they are not positional leaders who hold a title. I also explored literature that spoke to the themes of ‘experiences’ and ‘making’ as I could locate authors who expressed a growing interest in listening to the stories of teachers. Moreover, literature about both personal and professional relationships was reviewed as I consulted authors such as Warren (2021) and Chan (2016), who explain that the power of such relationships in teachers’ lives can influence the making of teacher leaders. In section B of the previous chapter, I presented the conceptual framing for this study using a visual model. The visual model highlights three conceptual spaces associated with teacher leadership: classroom teacher leadership, situational teacher leadership, and developing teacher leadership. By exploring their past and present experiences, I could identify how my participants fit into each stage and what possibilities there were for their further development as teacher leaders.

In this chapter, I argue why I utilised a qualitative research design and narrative inquiry as my methodological approach. Utilising a constructivist paradigm, I also explain which arts-based methods were used to generate the data and how these methods generated unique stories so that I could understand the teachers’ experiences of becoming within and beyond the classroom. This chapter also explains how I selected the teacher participants, and offer a brief biographical description of each. In the data analysis section of this chapter, I discuss how the conceptual tools were used to explore the teachers’ personal and professional relationships and how these assisted in making them as teacher leaders. To elicit these data, I listened to and analysed their storied experiences.

3.2 The structure of Chapter Three

Section A	Section B	Section C
• Research Paradigm • Research Process – Qualitative Research • Research Methodology – Narrative Inquiry • Research Context • Research Participants • Description of Participants	• Data Production Methods • Data Production and Collection	• Narrative Analysis and analysis of narratives • Ethical Issues, Trustworthiness, Believability and Reliability • Limitations

Table 3.1: Visual presentation of the structure of Chapter Three

In **section A**, I discuss pertinent aspects in the research methodology and design that I utilised in this study. I also provide a brief background description of the selected participants.

In **section B**, I discuss the research plan and data generation methods. I also highlight the data generation tools that I utilised.

In **section C**, I discuss issues related to ethics, believability and reliability and I acknowledge the limitations of the study.

Section A

3.3 Research Methodology and Design

3.3.1 The qualitative research design and research paradigm

This research study used a qualitative research methodology that focused on the narrative inquiry approach using arts-based data generation methods. Qualitative research involves the carefully considered use of empirical materials such as narratives of personal experiences, life stories, and interactions that describe the routines, moments, and meanings in an individual's life (Clandinin, 2016). The use of qualitative research assisted me as I needed to interact with stories, memories, experiences, and significant moments in my participants' lives to accumulate rich data to address the research questions. The study was based on a constructivist research paradigm, and my credible source of knowledge was the participants' experiential

knowledge (Shumba, 2012). Researchers who utilise this paradigm emphasise their participants' own constructions, descriptions, and narrations of their unique lived experiences and they believe that knowledge is constructed between researcher and participant (Tashakkori et al., 2021). I selected this paradigm to understand the similarities and differences between the experiences and relationships of my participants and myself as the researcher. I engaged in this process in a manner that accepted and respected the unique stories that the participants shared.

3.3.2 Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry was adopted to explore the stories of four teachers who highlighted their storied experiences of their personal and professional relationships, which added to their making as teacher leaders. According to Baden and van Niekerk (2007), narrative inquiry is a way of thinking about, studying, and recording the experiences of an individual or a small group. The data are usually generated using interviews and are then arranged as a chronological narrative. Baden and van Niekerk (2007) explain that it is a relational and sensitive form of inquiry that considers the social, cultural, and institutional contexts of the participants' experiences. Hickson (2016) suggests that narrative inquiry is also a theoretical and empirical approach to analyse narratives of human interaction while drawing on various disciplines such as psychology and linguistics. Hickson (2016) explains that narrative research explores the stories told by people in their own words, arguing that these stories create a framework for data gathering, interpretation, and analysis. People make sense of their own understanding of their lived lives and wellbeing in their social context (Baden & van Niekerk, 2007). Narrative research forms part of the social constructivism approach as the lived stories of people provide an understanding of their experiences, and narrative research is a form of inquiry that focuses on stories that represent people's world (Baden & van Niekerk, 2007).

In this study, I needed to access such stories to understand the “what”, “how” and “where” experiences of my participants. According to Kara (1999), stories are a powerful tool for research as they offer a holistic view of participants' lived experiences. Stories allow researchers to understand people's culture, locales, and their natural and social worlds. Participants can deliver powerful messages when they share their stories. By listening attentively to the stories of my participants and by analysing the data that emerged, I could understand their world and their decisions. The stories of my participants helped me to achieve my goal of understanding what and how their experiences of relationships had shaped their making as teachers. Their shared experiences allowed my participants to evoke memories of

past experiences that had impacted their making of teacher leaders. By recalling these memories, my participants could identify how significant relationships along their unique life journeys had impacted their ability to lead as teachers.

Some important features such as temporality, sociality, and place assist the narrative inquirer in accessing the storied experiences of research participants (Clandinin, 2010). Temporality is a feature that acknowledges that people have a past, present, and future. This awareness allowed me to understand the time frames of the past and present experiences of relationships that had shaped my participants as teacher leaders. Sociality identifies the social interactions and relationships that people forge throughout their lives, and understanding this concept helped me to better explore the significant role of relationships between me as the researcher and my participants to fully understand the depth of the stories they shared with me. Place identifies the exact location that these moments took place. This guided me in creating a warm and welcoming, safe space for my participants to share stories. Therefore, these three features played a pivotal role in my efforts to access the stories of my research participants.

3.3.3 Research context

This study was conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The four teachers selected to participate in this study were employed at Quintile 1 to 5 schools that are located in the Chatsworth area. The participants were both male and female and had between 5 to 37 years' teaching experience. The participants taught in the Foundation Phase and the Senior and Intermediate phases in their respective schools. The diverse backgrounds of the participants provided this study with rich data. For instance, they were of different ages and both genders had a range of years of experiences, and taught in different phases. I was, therefore, able to retrieve varied stories that elicited a rich diversity of experiences.

3.3.4 Selection of participants

Struwig and Stead (2016) state that qualitative research primarily focuses on eliciting rich data. Participant samples are, therefore, selected purposefully rather than randomly. In purposeful sampling, the aim is to identify a sample that will possess the required information and characteristics the researcher is looking for. Purposeful sampling is advantageous because it is cost-effective and usually not time-consuming, as it allows for detailed data gathering in a relatively short period of time (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In this method, researchers deliberately select individuals or groups based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to

the research question. The goal is to gather in-depth insights and a richer understanding of the phenomena being studied. This study's participants were purposefully selected from two primary schools in Durban, South Africa. The following criteria applied in the selection of the teacher leaders:

- Male and female teacher participants were selected.
- They had to be Post Level 1 teachers who displayed leadership qualities through their decisions and initiatives as leaders.
- Teachers from different phases (Junior, Senior and Intermediate phases) were selected as they had different experiences as classroom practitioners.
- Participants were selected based on the characteristics of teacher leaders as provided in the literature review section. According to Brownlee (2018), I searched for p=teacher participants who embody these characteristics: create a safe, welcoming learning environment while fostering encouragement, kindness, and respect. Guide collective responsibility and are open-minded. Critical thinkers and problem solvers who encourage self-reflectivity. Demonstrate resilience, determination, and a willingness to take risks. Offer constructive feedback for professional development and are accountable and action-orientated. Motivated and enthusiastic to make a difference and are passionate about education.
- The targeted participants had to be willing to participate in this study.
- They had to be eager to share their stories of their making of the teacher leaders they had become.

Adhering to the above criteria, four teacher leaders were selected to partake in this study. One male and three female teachers eventually participated in the study. The fact that both a male and females participated in the study means that I was able to elicit data from both genders for comparative purposed where required.

3.3.5 Biographical description if the research participants

Table 3.2: Biographical data of the participants

Pseudonym of Participant	Gender	Age	Years of experience	Phase	Grades	Quintile of School

Mrs Sharp	F	55	37	Senior	4 to 7	5
Miss Spark	F	25	4	Junior	1 to 3	5
Mr G	M	26	5	Intermediate	4 to 7	1
Miss Samuel	F	27	7	Junior	1 to 3	5

3.3.5.1 Profile of Mrs Sharp



Mrs Sharp was a 55-year-old female teacher in a quintile 5 school based in the Umhlatuzana community. She had been teaching for 37 years. Her current speciality was Mathematics which she taught in the senior phase (grade 7). Over the years, Mrs Sharp had taught in four different schools. Her subjects included English, Natural Sciences, and Afrikaans and she had taught learners in grades 4 to 7.

3.3.5.2 Profile of Miss Spark



Miss Spark was a 25-year-old female teacher in a quintile 5 school based in the Umhlatuzana community. She had been teaching for four years and she was currently teaching grade 3 learners. She was qualified to teach from grade R to grade 3 and she was qualified to teach English, Afrikaans, Mathematics, and Life Skills. Over her four years of teaching, she had taught in two different schools.

3.3.5.3 Profile of Mr G



Mr G was a 26-year-old male teacher in a quintile 3 school based in the Shallcross community. He had been teaching for five years and was currently teaching grades 4 to 7. His subjects included English, Mathematics, and General Sciences. Over his five years of teaching, he had taught in four different schools.

3.3.5.4 Profile of Miss Samuel



Miss Samuel was a 27-year-old female teacher. She taught grade 3 learners in a quintile 5 school in Umhlathuzana. Miss Samuel enjoyed getting involved in a wide range of school activities and volunteered to do a variety of tasks apart from her everyday teaching responsibilities. She had been teaching for seven years in the Foundation Phase.

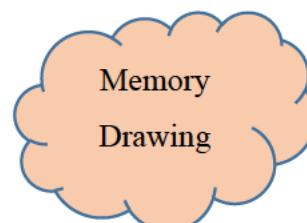
3.3.6 Synthesis of Section A

In Section A, I discussed the research methodology, the research plan, and provided a profile of each of my participants. I presented the research paradigm and the use of narrative inquiry in this research study. In Section B, I shall present the research plan and the data generation methods that I employed.

Section B

3.4 The Research Plan

3.4.1 Data generation methods



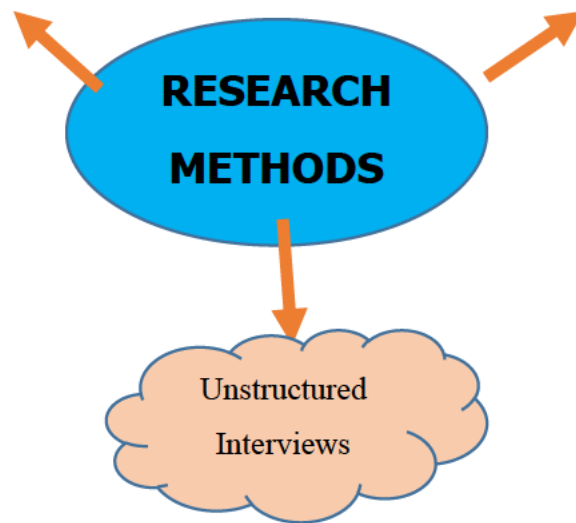


Figure 3.2: Visual presentation of the research methods that were employed

This study adopted a narrative inquiry approach and used arts-based methods to generate data. Jones and Leavy (2014, p.45) define arts-based methods as “creative arts usage to bring a study to life”. This study aimed to give experiences and stories the importance they deserve by allowing the participants to engage with the following methods.

3.4.1.1 Artefact enquiry

According to Barell (2013), artefact inquiry is a fascinating way of using objects to express feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Artefact inquiry is a method of qualitative inquiry in which researchers use artefacts to evoke stories of self as teacher. This method assisted me as a researcher to negotiate meanings related to the interview data and to the artefacts that each participant had selected. The use of artefacts as primary sources brought material culture to the research (Nottingham, 2020). In practice-based research, the role of an artefact is important and frameworks are necessary for the success of practitioner research in the creative arts (Nista, 2009). I used artefact inquiry by asking my participants to create a memory self-box. The participants were required to choose objects that had special meaning for them over the years, particularly in terms of their respective teaching journeys. They then had to place these objects in a special box, which is referred to as a memory self-box because these objects elicit special memories of the self. In this study, these memories had to relate to the participants’ teaching experiences. In an interview with the researcher, the teacher participants were required to present and speak about each object and the impact they had on their making as teacher leader.

The teacher participants, fully participated in this data generation method and enjoyed sharing their special memories through selected objects.

Below is an image of such a self-box that I created as part of an activity that was conducted for a Teacher Development Studies artefact inquiry project. I had to fill my memory self-box with items that held special importance for me.



Figure 3.4: A memory self-box I created for a project

Source: Vomandhree Samantha Pillay, B.Ed. Hons., Teacher Identity and Change Portfolio, 2022

3.4.1.2 Memory drawings

According to Fernandes (2013), memory drawing is a tool that can be used to invoke past memories through drawings created by oneself. Drawing is a powerful way to evoke one's memory. Recent studies have shown that drawing is superior to activities such as reading or writing because it forces the person to process information in multiple ways: visually, kinaesthetically, and semantically (Allen, 2021). Memory research suggests that cues with high visual imagery can stimulate greater memory specificity when engaging in autobiographical memory retrieval and it also improves semantic memory (Bainbridge, 2019). I used memory drawings in my study by allowing my participants to draw a picture of a time in their teaching lives when they felt happy being a teacher in the profession. They also had to reflect on an enjoyable daily activity. The participants were required to draw their picture prior to the

interview. During the interview, the teacher participants presented their drawing and described their happy memory while referring to the picture.

Below is an image of a memory drawing that I did when I had to recall a moment in my career when I felt extremely happy. I had to explain how this moment had impacted me and motivated me to continue on my journey as a teacher, and how I knew that this was the career for me.

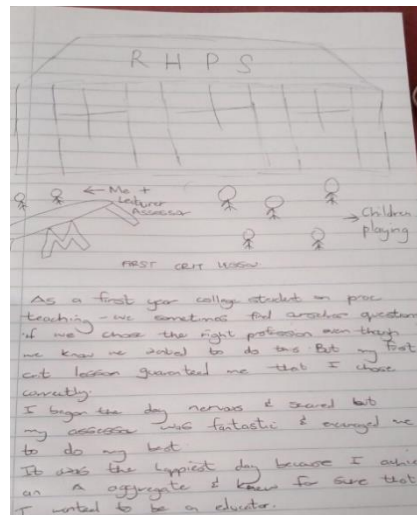


Figure 3.5: A memory drawing I created

Source: Vomandhree Samantha Pillay Med. TDS Masters Support Meeting Notes 2023

3.4.1.3 Unstructured interviews

According to George (2022), an unstructured interview is a method to collect data by asking participants questions on a topic. It is also called non-directive interviewing and does not have a set pattern or a prepared list of questions. In qualitative research, unstructured interviews can be very helpful in the social sciences or humanities as they are disciplines that focus on personal experiences. An unstructured interview can be a useful tool in exploratory research as it can be informal and flexible and can yield captivating responses from participants.

I used unstructured interviews that I conducted telephonically or during face-to-face contact sessions. As these conversations were unstructured, I did not require a plan of questions but I did need some pointers to aid my discussion. These discussions were open-ended and allowed the participants the freedom they needed to use their voice and share their stories and experiences of their personal and professional lives. As a listener, I probed the participants to

describe experiences that I liked to know more about in relation to the phenomenon under study. The interviewee was prompted to discuss some of the critical experiences they had with others and how these had influenced them in their daily choices and decisions.

3.4.2 Data generation plan

The following table presents an outline of the process and methods that guided the data collection process.

Table 3.3: Data generation process

Research Questions	Research Approach	Research Methods	Data Sources	Quantity	Relevance to self/others
1. What are the lived experiences shaping the making of a teacher leader?	Narrative Inquiry	Artefact Inquiry Create a memory self box (Nottingham, 2020) Memory Drawing (Allen, 2021)	Teacher Stories	1 memory self box per participant 1 memory drawing per participant	Professional Personal
2. How do experiences of relationships (both positive and negative) shape the making of a teacher leader?	Narrative Inquiry	Unstructured Interviews (George, 2022)	Teacher Stories	2 collage inquiries per participant 1 interview per participant	Personal and Professional Personal

3.4.3 Synthesis of Section B

In this section, I discussed my research plan, the data production methods I utilised, and the research instruments I used to generate the data. I shared some personal examples of each research instrument to illustrate how the participants could create their versions of memory drawings and artefact inquiry (the self-box method). I also explained that I interviewed my participants individually and not as a group because I did not want one participant's data to be influenced by the others. I acknowledge that I had a research agenda and that it could have influenced the type of data I wanted versus the type of data I obtained. However, I refrained from influencing the data I obtained and probed the participants for authentic answers without coercion or undue influence.

In the next section I discuss how I analysed and interpreted the data.

Section C

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Polkinghorne (1994) asserts that in order to analyse data in a narrative study, the narrative investigator needs to conduct various activities and then dissect and evaluate fragments of field text of each tale to form a single, expansive and coherent tale. To maintain structure and provide significance, these mythical tales are categorised into plots and themes. Polkinghorne (1994) claims that the last tale must be appropriate for the circumstances and convey order and significance. When the results are interpreted, the explanatory and interpretative layer, also known as narrative analysis, takes place. Heeding this advice, I focused on the stories of the teacher leaders who were taking part in this study and combined their stories into a meaningful narrative.

The inductive approach of analysis for narratives involved going from individual participants' revealed field text fragments to a collective field text fragment that told the entire story. Clandinin (2016) asserts that there are no rules that control the use of resources that are considered appropriate or the recommended approach to research a narrative inquiry. To establish plausibility, I thus used a variety of data devices to conduct my narrative analysis. Two layers of analysis—narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives—were used to evaluate and interpret the emerging data. Analysis of narratives “moves from stories to common elements”, whereas narrative analysis “moves from elements to stories”, according to Polkinghorne (1995, p. 12).

3.5.1 Narrative analysis: Reconstructing the teachers' stories to elicit data

Narrative constructions enabled me to deeply understand how the teacher participants made meaning of their lived experiences and the personal and professional relationships that had influenced their stance and position in situations of tension. The construction of their stories occurred through narrating stories of self, while co-construction occurred when I received their stories and then engaged with them through various processes. As a narrative inquirer, I had to become an active listener before reconstructing the narratives. The discussion below highlights the process that I followed to reconstruct the stories into text.

The first level of narrative analysis consisted of working with the raw data that had been generated using the participants' memory drawings, memory boxes, and the unstructured interviews. According to Polkinghorne (1995), the narrative analysis process allows narrative inquirers to collect descriptions of events and configure them by means of a plot into a story. In this process, the data needs to be integrated and interpreted by 'emplotting' the narrative. While working with the first participant's data, I found that creating my own visuals such as concept maps and flow diagrams guided my thinking. I also made use of pantoum poems which offered a repetitive structure that assisted me in identifying significant, recurring, common themes. I first started by intensively emerging myself in the data of each participant. I audio recorded each virtual and face-to-face meeting and listened to these recordings repeatedly. While transcribing the conversations, I paid close attention to the way in which my participants responded. Polkinghorne (1995) highlights that paying attention to the inner feelings, struggles, and emotional state of participants elicits important data.

After immersing myself in the raw data, I looked for important plots that needed to be incorporated into the pantoum poems that were representative of the story of each participant. I had to choose phrases that best captured critical moments as highlighted in each plot in my participants' lives. To select phrases that best described a theme in the pantoum poem, I had to be intensely familiar with the data that I had generated. Once the critical events had been plotted in the form of a pantoum poem, I was able to visually make meaning of the stories that would be reconstructed for each participant.

To answer research question 2, I employed the creative assistance of a pantoum poem. Pantoum poems have a unique repetitive structure (Morgan, 2016) which emphasises certain themes or ideas. This repetitive structure allows for the exploration of these themes and ideas to understand their importance in terms of the phenomenon under study. I inserted an image of a pantoum poem I had composed in the text to understand my own journey as a Master's research student. The themes that emerged from the data of the current study are the following: new learning, roles, transition, understanding, researcher, teacher, relationships. As I composed the pantoum poem, I became aware of the importance of understanding the different roles that I played as a teacher and the researcher. I was guided to accept that new learnings occurred when I was open to new ideas and methods. I understood that I could not view this research journey

through my teacher lens but rather through my researcher lens as I needed to be critical and objective when I searched for meanings and beliefs along the way.

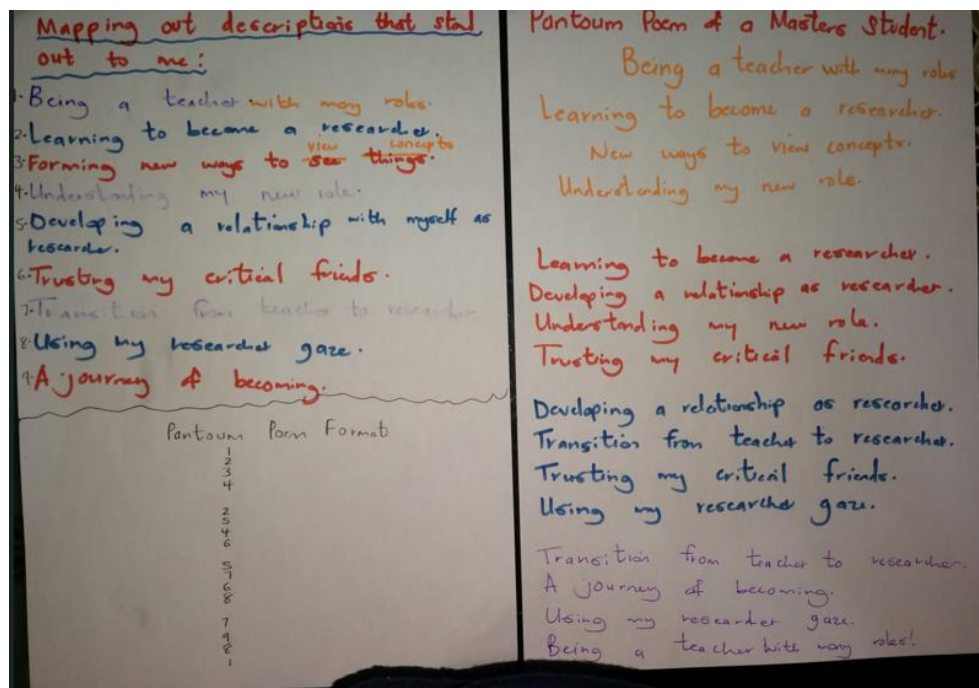


Figure 3.7: My personal pantoum poem to understand my Master's journey

Using pantoum poems in a research study can align with various methodological frameworks, particularly in qualitative research, by offering a unique way to express complex ideas, emotions, and experiences. Pantoums allowed me the researcher to capture the nuances of participants' voices and experiences. This aligned well with qualitative methodologies that prioritize subjective understanding and lived experiences. Incorporating pantoums served as a creative method of data representation. Instead of traditional narrative forms, poetry helped to convey themes, emotions, and insights in a condensed, impactful way, enhancing the richness of my findings. Using poetry facilitated deeper engagement with my participants, inviting them to express their thoughts and feelings creatively. This participatory approach aligned with the research methods that valued co-creation of knowledge. By integrating pantoum poems into this research study, it enhanced the emotional depth, creativity, and reflective nature of the memory boxes and memory drawings completed by my participants. This approach not only enriched the data but also aligned with qualitative approach that sought to understand and convey complex human experiences.

According to Polkinghorne (1995), stories are a reconstruction of events that produce a specific outcome. Polkinghorne (1995) highlights events that might have seemed insignificant at a

particular time may have later significance. After creating the pantoum poem for each participant, I went back to the data to see if there was anything I had left out. I understood that narrative analysis would be about “how the stories are produced” (James, 2017, p. 3104), and that the poems I created would be critical tools to help me access each participant’s story versus the story I might have wanted to tell. Polkinghorne (1995) highlights that when generating stories, the contextual features that give meaning to events need to be clear so that their contributions to the plot are understood. Having so much data to work with for each participant, the poems and concept maps helped me visualise their stories and ensure that key events were systematically aligned (Polkinghorne, 1995). Events needed to be gathered and arranged into a logical whole; I could not just “put them together”. According to Polkinghorne (2007), narrative inquiry is the study of first-hand accounts of real-world events. It is an introspective research approach with the goal of comprehending and giving meaning to lived experiences that are made clear through narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I recognised that, even though my goal was to provide answers to the research questions, it was my responsibility as a narrative inquirer to ensure that the stories were complex. As a result, I wanted the tales to support and comfort me while I continued to feel that my position as a narrative inquirer ought to be supportive, caring, and consoling.

Polkinghorne (1995) asserts that the concluding narrative must reconcile the data with the meaning and order that emerge from the data even when they are not immediately obvious. I therefore created a pantoum poem using the data from one participant at a time as the initial level of analysis before piecing together their stories. Later came the second level of analysis, which is covered in the section that follows. Here, I go over the deconstruction of the teachers' stories. I used Polkinghorne's (1995) guidelines when I adopted this technique, as this scholar argues that the goal of narrative analysis is to develop stories.

3.5.2 Analysis of narratives: Deconstructing the teachers’ stories

First-level narrative analysis proceeds from elements to stories, while second-level analysis of narratives proceeds from stories to common elements (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 12). Narrative analysis is a process of creation that results in new stories. To answer the research questions, I had to carefully scrutinise each narrative. After the configuration phase, the tale had to make sense of every incident in the plot, according to Polkinghorne (1995). After all the data had been gathered and organised into themes or plots, the configuring process occurred. The data production methods I employed helped me to obtain plausible data, which I started by creating

the pantoum poems and concept maps. This helped me to create plots and themes from the raw data in order to re-story the lives of my participants. This narrative analysis process was conducted in response to research question 1.

To analyse the narratives as the second level of analysis, I used the concept mapping tool and poetry to help me deconstruct the stories in response to research question 2. I immersed myself in the data and used paper and colour pens to draft the themes that emerged. I broke down each research question and zoomed into each narrative to best respond to the research question. Harris (2012) emphasises that data can be useless without the skills to understand and analyse them. I had to configure data elements into stories that gave meaning to the data and contributed to the purpose and goal of the study. Thus, I used concept mapping to interpret and analyse my four participants' storied narratives individually. The four participants' stories are presented in Chapter Four, Chapter Five, Chapter Six, and Chapter Seven respectively. I first analysed each story to look for themes to best describe particular events that responded to my research questions. After reading the narratives, I wrote down key words onto my concept map and I then interpreted the data. It is crucial that data are interpreted and represented carefully (Cresswell, 1998). According to Gibson (2006), narrative thematic analysis is an approach that involves the coding of data, which refers to grouping together data under a specific category for analysis. I thus developed themes by grouping certain experiences, opinions, and ideas together. In this process, I was cognisant of the fact that people respond differently to similar events (Polkinghorne, 1995).

To deepen the analysis of narratives and theorize the findings based on the conceptual model and relevant literature, I had to first look at how narratives are organized by identifying the beginning, middle, and end, as well as key turning points or climaxes in my teacher participant stories. I then extracted central themes which included identity, conflict, resilience, and transformation. I also analysed whose voices are being amplified in the narratives and how perspective shaped their storytelling. Once the narratives were analysed, I related them back to the conceptual model.

3.6 Trustworthiness, Reliability and Believability

I conducted a qualitative research study and used a variety of data generating tools to gain insightful understanding of the concepts and themes that I placed under the microscope to understand the teacher leader phenomenon. This study zoomed into the personal and professional relationships in each individual participant's storied lives which required unique

data from each of them. I therefore could not generalise the stories that my teacher participants shared, as each story was different. I was able to create links among the experiences and insights they shared, but their stories had to be told and retold individually.

Polkinghorne (1995) states that a narrative study is understandable when meaningful stories are presented and composed from elements collected in the data generation process. Moreover, when judging the credibility of a story, it is fundamental to ensure that the data are accurate (Polkinghorne, 1995). Therefore, the storied narratives I constructed from the transcribed data were sent back to the teacher participants to ensure that the data was not misinterpreted. This process ensured that the narratives were valid and believable. The use of triangulation also ensured that the shared stories had indeed occurred. The variety of the inquiry methods I used also ensured the dependability of the data.

The diversity in data collection methods allowed me to generate richer data than what I would have collected if just one method had been used. The use of arts-based methods allowed emotions and memories to emerge as the participants shared their lived experiences. This strengthened the trustworthiness of the study. Trustworthiness was also achieved by keeping the participants' voices clear throughout the narrative analysis and analysis of narratives. The participants' direct words are quoted to ensure the authenticity of their shared stories. The believability of a narrative study is strengthened when arts-based methods are used (Blumenfeld, 1995) and therefore I used such techniques to generate data from which I was able to reconstruct stories from those shared by the teacher participants.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

3.7.1 Obtaining permission and avoiding harm

All the required ethical procedures were rigidly adhered to. Before recruiting the four teachers, I received permission from two gatekeepers to conduct the study. Before conducting the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant body at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and permission to conduct research in the two government schools was obtained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education. The informed consent letters were signed willingly by the participants. Because narrative inquiry can be emotional and sensitive, I offered the participants the contact information of a practicing psychologist in case they required one. Even though this study did not cause any emotional harm to the participants, I took measures to safeguard the identities of both the participants and their schools by using

pseudonyms. In the photovoice images, I blurred the names of people and places to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. I also utilized neutral language to prevent any emotional harm from affecting the participants.

3.7.2 Adhering to relational ethics as a narrative researcher

Clandinin (2016) emphasises the importance of safeguarding participants' emotions and feelings in narrative inquiry, particularly because remembering and revisiting experiences can evoke negative emotions or even trauma. I informed my participants that they had the option to withdraw from the study at any point. Additionally, I was attentive to their needs and understood when they were unavailable for meetings or discussions. None of the participants chose to withdraw, and all four willingly agreed to take part in the research study. It was important for me to create relational spaces for my participants and I engaged with them in a respectful and supportive manner at all times.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

Clandinin (2016) argues that it is essential for narratives to have authenticity as a standard for narrative quality. I was aware that a participant's story could be misconstrued, potentially leading to negative interpretations. To address this concern, I employed diverse methods to gather substantial and genuine data. The narratives that I present are both comprehensive and genuine, and I provided each participant with their revised narratives for member checking to prevent any misunderstandings. The participants approved of these revised narratives and endorsed the structure I used to present and analyse their significant experiences. When engaging in a narrative inquiry, establishing a connection with each participant, gaining their trust, and achieving openness posed initial challenges. Assuring each participant repeatedly about the confidentiality of their identity was crucial. Over time, I developed a relationship of trust with all the participants. In narrative inquiry, participants might experience frustration when they revisit specific memories that had a negative impact on their lives. Therefore, I was mindful of their emotions and exercised patience throughout the narrative inquiry process. I allowed the participants the space to share their stories without holding back their emotions and feelings, and I did not interject when they were drifting from the research question. I knew that emotional narratives would allow me to capture deep and rich data for my study.

At the onset of the data collection process, I expected to face some challenges, such as arranging appropriate times and venues to meet or interview the participants. Thankfully the

teachers schedules were flexible and it was convenient to agree on suitable times and places for all the meetings. The participants were eager to share their stories and made the most of our meetings to also forge positive relationships with me as the researcher.

3.9 Chapter Synthesis

This chapter addressed the three sections. Section A offered a discussion of the aspects in the research methodology and research design. This section also provided a brief background description of the selected participants. Section B provided a discussion on the research plan and data production methods. I also highlighted the data generation tools adopted in this study. In Section C, I discussed the issues related to ethics, believability, reliability, and limitations of the study. I also provided insight on how I conducted the first and second level analysis by drawing on narrative analysis and analysis of narratives for each teacher participant which is presented in Chapters four, five, six and seven. In response to research question 1, I reconstructed their stories, I then deconstructed the data to respond to research question 2. Each teacher participants stories and analysis of narratives is found in their own respective chapters. These stories assisted me in zooming into the teachers' storied experiences of relationships. I conclude this chapter by synthesising the three sections presented.

I present the storied narrative of Miss Spark in the next chapter. Her narrative is analysed and the findings are discussed in depth.

CHAPTER FOUR

MISS SPARK'S STORY – HER QUEST FOR AFFIRMATION

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the research design, methodology and described the research strategies I employed to generate and collect data. The foci of this chapter are to represent this participant's storied narrative and to analyse this narrative from a scholarly perspective. To understand her experiences and make sense of the personal and professional relationships that had influenced her choices and beliefs and the meanings she attached to her experiences that had been instrumental in her making as a teacher leader. According to Ignelzi (2000, p. 236), this *making* is the process of being made into or being developed. It can also describe a person or thing that is going to become known or recognized as something else; in this case a teacher who transformed into a teacher leader.

Miss Spark's complex lived experiences were illuminated to me as the narrative inquirer through a range of data collection and generational tools. I use the pseudonym Miss Spark to refer to her in this re-storying process that is presented in this chapter in various sections. Section A offers a reconstructed storied narrative of Miss Spark's experiences in response to research question 1: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* Section B provides my second level analysis of Miss Spark's storied narrative in response to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?* Section C provides my scholarly interpretation of the narrated experiences as a critical instrument for understanding the process of the making of a teacher leader through particular relations, and Section D concludes this chapter with my reflections on the changed beliefs that underpinned Miss Spark's transformation.

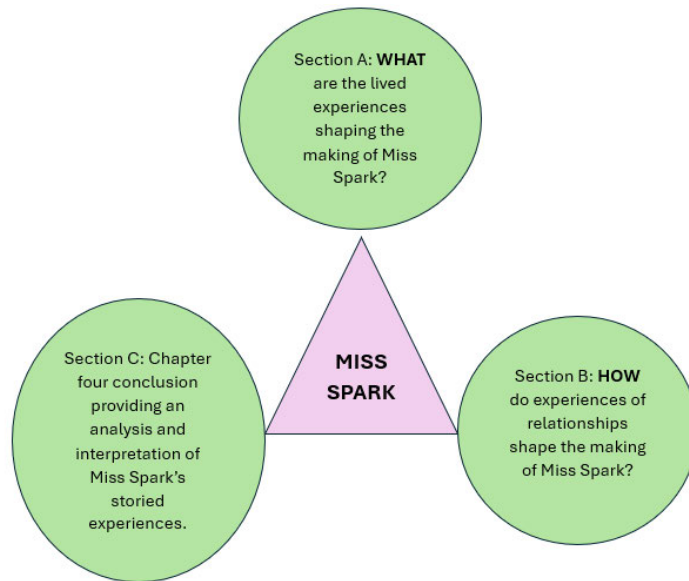


Figure 4.1: Diagrammatic summary of my analysis of Miss Spark's narrative

4.2 Section A: Miss Spark's Experiences of Relationships

Miss Spark's emplotted story was reconstructed after working with the raw data that had been generated by evoking Miss Spark's memories of her personal and professional relationships. Data were collected by means of a self-box and memory drawing as well as an unstructured interview that was conducted with this participant. My aim was to capture the complex experiences of pertinent relationships in Miss Spark's life and to look at what choices and actions had been taken in order to explain what happened along her teaching journey of becoming a teacher leader. The following diagram identifies critical plots and subplots in Miss Spark's narrative that responded to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?* Miss Spark's and the other participants' direct words are written in italics when I present their stories verbatim.

Growing up girl in a “township”	Finding comfort in my primary school teacher	The hope of finding a voice	Obedience out of fear – I worked harder and juggled different tasks and managed time effectively.	New beginnings – part of the whole school community ad not just in the classroom	Building myself as a teacher
1.Taking on a domestic role from a young age	Secondary school – almost free	1.Finding my career path through my primary school teacher	1.Striving for excellence under the supervision of leaders – more confident to take risks	1.A new job – challenged to be my best self in a healthy and positive way	Developing myself with learners
		2.Becoming a real teacher			We teach our learners and in turn they teach us
		3. Little sentiments – feeling cherished and valued			Building myself as a teacher through others

Table 4.2: Plots and critical experiences that impacted Miss Spark’s making

4.2.1 Miss Spark’s Story

Miss Spark’s background

I am a 25-year-old female teacher from Chatsworth. I live with my parents and two siblings and I am a church-going girl. I have a very close relationship with God and believe that my success is owed to Him. I have been in the teaching profession for 4 years and in those 4 years I have been an educator assistant, relief teacher and recently a fully employed teacher at my current school for two years where I hold a grade 3 teaching position. I am a qualified holder of a Bachelor of Education Degree in Foundation Phase teaching.

Growing up as girl in an Indian community

I am a small-town girl from Chatsworth – an historically categorised Indian township.¹ I was born in 1998 and grew up with my parents, older brother and younger sister. Growing up I have always been exposed to working hard from a very young age. My siblings and I come from a low-income home where both our parents had to work very hard to put food on the table. My dad had been a teller at Standard bank until he was medically boarded off due to health reasons and my Mum was in the marquee hire and catering business. My parents were not always present due to their long working hours. My brother soon grew up, got married and left home to start his own life. Which left me and my younger sister home alone on school days, most weekends and holidays.

Taking on a domestic role from a young age

Being the middle child and more especially being a girl child, I had to take on the responsibility of a caregiver to my younger sister which included seeing to her meals and helping with her homework. Although I did not mind taking care of my sister, there were often times I wished I could just be a young girl child myself. I feel that I missed out on most of my childhood because I had to be a grown-up when my parents weren't around. I missed my parents and I missed being taken care of by them. I still needed them around. As I grew older, I would yearn to confide in them about my feelings but I did not want to stress them out unnecessarily. I learned to bottle up my feelings.

Finding comfort in the presence of a primary school teacher

Going to school was an escape for me. School was a place where I would get to be a child and a learner again. I got to see my friends and play freely without thinking about my “busy schedule” at home. Aside from my friends, I got to see and spend time with my favourite teacher. She had been my teacher since grade 1 and even when I entered the senior phase, I would still go visit her during lunch breaks and free periods. I found comfort in my teacher because she cared about me like a mother would. She would ask me how I was doing, and she would ask me if I needed help with my homework or if I just wanted to talk about anything. I share this picture of me receiving my first award from her. This was a huge achievement for me and to receive this award from my favourite teacher and this was the best moment of my life. I was so happy!

¹ In South Africa, the term township refers to the underdeveloped, racially segregated urban areas which were reserved for non-whites in the apartheid era (Hansen, 2012).

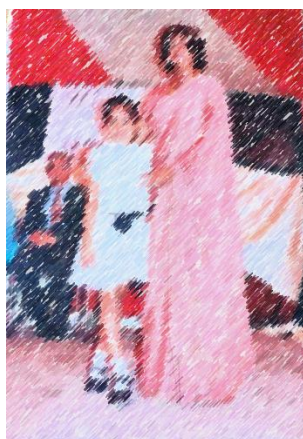


Figure 4.3: A picture from Miss Spark's memory self-box when she received an award

Secondary school – almost free

My high school days went by relatively fast. I guess I was eagerly awaiting the day I could complete school and gain some independence. I wanted to finish school and start studying or working so that my parents could finally see that I also had a life of my own. I thought that by being employed, I would also have long and busy hours so I would not need to spend all my hours being a caregiver at home.

Hoping to find her voice

I was always afraid of speaking up. I would make excuses to get out of situations that required me to speak or defend myself. Thinking back of how I would want to confide in my parents about my feelings but never could. I thought that Law would be the career for me; it would be my opportunity to finally find a voice and to be heard. I always admired lawyers and their courage to stand in front of many people to defend a case. However, when filling in the CAO form, I was not aware of the abbreviations and by mistake my form was sent to Zululand where I was accepted to study law. The distance and travelling inconveniences meant that I could not accept this offer. I was left in a fix of trying to figure out what my next step would be.

Finding her career path with the help of a primary school teacher

My grade 1 teacher called me to assist her at school. She knew I had recently completed my schooling. She had to attend a full-day meeting. While there, I had the most amazing day with the children in her class. I also recalled my days in that same class. I remember me as a child feeling free and carefree in her care. I started to feel that sense of comfort once again. I thought to myself if I was able to feel safe and cared for by my teacher, maybe I would find joy in making other children feel the same way. My teacher then referred me to Embury Institute for teacher

education where I could pursue a career in teaching. I did not hesitate to send in my application. I received my acceptance letter within a week. Everything just worked out and it felt as if everything had happened for a reason.



Figure 4.4: A picture from Miss Spark's memory self-box of her receiving a bursary

Becoming a 'real' teacher

I completed my degree in November 2020 after securing a bursary for my second and third year of study through the Chatsworth Rotary Club. I immediately began applying for jobs and was so eager to begin my teaching journey as a fully qualified teacher straight out of college. One of the schools that I phoned, advised me to join the educator assistance (EA) programme that the Department of Basic Education had recently opened up to unemployed youth. I applied and got the job at a quintile 3 primary school in Chatsworth. The principal offered me a teaching position rather than an EA position since I was fully qualified. I was so grateful and extremely happy that I finally got my first job.



Figure 4.5: A picture from Miss Spark's memory self-box of a photo of her first class

Feeling cherished and valued

I would always tell my students to learn hard and pray hard for their tests and always put God first in all that they do. I remember a student who was very anxious and had a heart condition. By the end of the year, she broke out of her shell and became so eager and confident to get things done. It was a complete 360° turn-over in her and I felt so proud of her. The same learner also gifted me something when she visited Cape Town. When this student gave me this gift – a key ring – she told me, “Ma’am, I know you don’t have your own car as yet, but when you get your own car one day, please put this on your car key and remember me”. This just touched my heart and even brought tears to my eyes. As a teacher, I have received many gifts from the learners I had taught and this made me feel so cherished and valued.



Figure 4.6: A mug and key ring from Miss Spark’s memory self-box

Fearful obedience, juggling different tasks, and managing time effectively

I had been placed under a very demanding principal. He had high expectations and if we as teachers did not obey his instructions, we would be humiliated at staff meetings. This instilled a fear in me because I was so afraid of getting something wrong and I would pressure myself to perfect any task given to me. I missed a deadline once because a task had been assigned to me during exam period and I was inundated with marking. I was called in for not completing the task on time and I was reprimanded in front of other teachers. I felt embarrassed and I felt as if I was being treated unreasonably due to the constraints surrounding that situation. After that, I worked even harder and learnt to juggle different tasks and manage time more effectively just to avoid a repeat of that incident.

Striving for excellence and becoming more confident to take risks

Through understanding my mistakes and errors I have learnt a lot by correcting myself and this has taught me to accept that mistakes happen but also to rise above them and get it right the second time. Accepting that every day we learn new things and having an open heart and

mind to always be willing to learn has motivated and shaped me into a teacher. Today I find myself more confident than I was before and ready to take chances, risks to learn and grow to develop into a better teacher. Both my negative and positive experiences have helped me become a better teacher so I can be better for my learners and give them the best education they deserve.

A new beginning: Forging bonds inside and beyond the classroom

In 2022, I started to face some professional challenges. I began feeling suffocated and stuck in the school I was teaching at. I felt as if I was going to school every day and doing the same things. There were no challenges and nothing new to look forward to. I was not exposed to much and I was stagnated by doing the same tasks daily with no opportunities for growth. I wanted to learn more and be a part of more in the whole school community and not just in the classroom. I am not blaming any specific person from that school for how I felt. I just believe that the management team and the teachers were set in their ways and I needed change, but that change was not going to be given to me by the school. I then decided to start sending out my CV to other schools. In December 2022, I was called in for an interview at a semi-private school. Later that week I received a call from the school saying I got the job. For me, this was just a sign of God's plan and God's direction over my life.

A new teaching environment: Being challenged to be her best self in a healthy and positive way

Taking a leap of faith and starting a new job at a new school with a new environment and new people was a difficulty decision. It was overwhelming to adjust to the new world I was stepping into. I remember my first day at the school with feelings of fear and anxiety. But then I met my new principal and the phase coordinator. I immediately felt a sense of comfort being welcomed with so much love. This made it so much easier for me to take in everything and helped me build confidence. I am truly blessed as I have an incredible phase coordinator who stands by me and guides me through every obstacle I face on my journey. This made teaching feel less like a job and more of something I loved to do and looked forward to waking up every day to go to work knowing that I am being challenged to be my best self in a healthy and positive way.

Learners' and self-development

I met my learners and started bonding with them to a point I found myself so attached to them and not even wanting to stay away from school when I was sick. Throughout the first 9 months at the school, I developed a bond with my learners. I felt like I could actually make a difference in their lives seeing them progress and improve each term. The 10th month at the school was my birthday. One of my most memorable moments in my teaching career is my birthday celebrated in my first year at a new school. I was so impressed by my learners as they showered me with so much love. The amount of love that little children have to offer is endless. Teaching is not just a job; it is a gift from God and he chooses us to make a difference. When we teach, we are not just passing on knowledge; we also build relationships that last a lifetime.

Teaching learners who teach us

We teach our learners and in turn they teach us patience, support, care and love. I love knowing that I have little people waiting for me and looking forward to seeing me every day. As much as we make a difference in their lives, they also make a difference in our lives. I am blessed to be a teacher and I am blessed to have wonderful people in my teaching career that love, support and uplift me daily.



Figure 4.7: Miss Spark's memory drawing of her happiest teaching memory

Developing by attaining confidence and boldness

When I first started teaching, I was filled with so much energy as it was my first year though I still lacked confidence and boldness. Spending time with my colleagues and watching other educators has [sic] made me become louder and bolder. My assembly talks, events, and parent

meetings has [sic] brought out my confidence. I found myself becoming more confident, friendly, and outspoken. Standing in front of children and teaching using new teaching styles that I have learnt from other educators have made me a better teacher. Relationships with others in my teaching experience have helped me to find answers when I found difficulty helping a child or responding to a parent. Today I can boldly have a parent meeting or speak in assembly and in public. I teach with confidence and I am always willing to take advice from others.

Emulating educational leaders

Being under my current HOD and having a relationship with her while observing the leadership qualities and methods of doing things has [sic] made me do different things with my learners in the classroom. I learned to take on any challenge and to work around the clock to get things done.

4.2.2 Synthesis of Section A

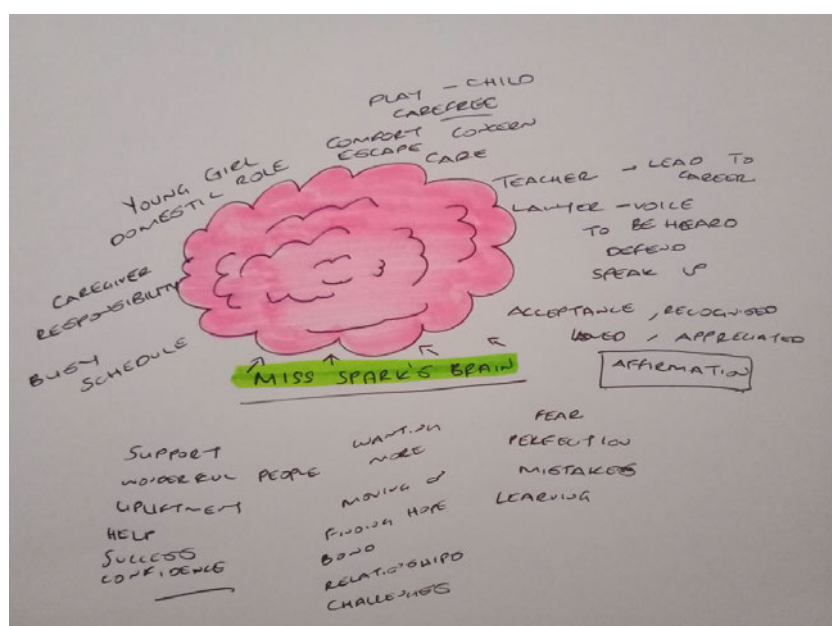


Figure 4.8: My synthesis drawing of Miss Spark's story

In my efforts to synthesise Miss Spark's story, I created the above drawing to capture my learnings and to understand the sense I made of her experiences. My drawing visualises Miss Spark's lived life as an overloaded brain oozing with her 'busy schedule' as a young girl and later as a teacher. It also reflects the many roles and responsibilities she had to undertake. Her story of her 'self' was filled with emotion as she had to bottle up her feelings as a girl child.

Miss Spark's narrative taught me that the responsibilities she had to carry as a girl had seeped into the woman teacher she had become and affected her experiences and her many personal and professional relationships. Being able to juggle being a learner and a 'mother' to her sister later provided Miss Spark with the ability to negotiate many relationships and to engage in different tasks and activities at the same time. She thus 'made' herself into someone who positioned herself as a teacher leader.

When emplotting and reconstructing Miss Spark's story as a narrative enquirer, I adopted the visual model that conceptualises the four stages of teacher leader development. This model assisted me in identifying the personal and professional relationships that had influenced her beliefs, thinking, and her role as a teacher. This process also illuminated her stance (what she stood for and believed in) and how that stance changed and developed over time due to her experiences and relationships.

4.3 Section B: Interpretation and analysis of Miss Spark's story

The purpose of this section is to provide a second-level analysis of Miss Spark's storied narrative. This second level analysis responds to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?* Research question 1 helped me to identify **which** relationships had shaped the making of Miss Spark as a teacher leader while responding to research question 2 extended the findings as I analysed **how** these relationships had influenced her stance, i.e., her thinking, being, and beliefs on her journey of making and of progressing from teacher to becoming a teacher leader. Hunzicker (2017) states that understanding how teachers progress from teacher to teacher leader is still unclear, therefore a visual model was created to conceptualise Miss Spark's progression and to assist me in understanding the factors and conditions (family life, personal circumstances, school environment, etc.) that had influenced her progress and varying self-perceptions as a teacher and leader.

A pantoum poem (see discussion of this poetic style in section 3.5.1) was used as a tool to assist me in unpacking Miss Spark's experiences associated with relationships. Composing this poem took my mind on a line of thought that helped me to select the most gripping themes that were evident in Miss Spark's narrative of her experiences. As I composed the pantoum poem, I read again and again through Miss Spark's reconstructed story and highlighted the evident key themes. As I looked at these key themes in the repetitive structure of the pantoum poem, it

helped me to view and understand the themes in the different contexts of her life. This poem is presented below:

Young girl taking on a domestic role
Being a caregiver to my younger sister
Missed my parents, yearned to confide in them
Bottled up feelings

Being a caregiver to my younger sister
Through law I would finally find a voice
Bottled up feelings
Favourite teacher cared like a mother

Through law I would finally find a voice
Inspired me to be a teacher
Favourite teacher cared like a mother
Feeling cherished and valued by my learners

Inspired me to be a teacher
Building relationships along the way
Feeling cherished and valued by my learners
Young girl taking on a domestic role

Figure 4.9: Pantoum poem dedicated to Miss Spark: Domesticated girl becomes teacher

It clearly emerges from the poem that a primary school teacher was pivotal in her becoming as a teacher, rather than her parents. This teacher encouraged and empathised with her and was primarily instrumental in her decision to study to become a teacher and to support other learners as she had been supported by this teacher. It is noteworthy that the role of mother is ascribed to her teacher and not to her biological mother, who seemed to be a presence rather than a force in her life and her development as a teacher leader. In terms of relationships, she also seemed to forge stronger bonds with her teacher and later her learners than with her parents and siblings, and this focus on the people in her educational environment was thus one of the factors that gave impetus to her making as a teacher leader. The insights that were highlighted in the poem are discussed in more depth in the subsequent sections.

4.4 Section C: Miss Spark's Personal and Professional relationships

To understand the relationships that underpinned Miss Spark's becoming a teacher leader, I explored the significant personal and professional relationships she had to negotiate and the meanings she attached to these relationships. One of the most meaningful of these relationships was the one she had forged with a primary school teacher.

I also explored the interconnectedness of her personal and professional relationships in the home and school environment that were foregrounded in the beliefs Miss Spark expounded, and I considered how Miss Spark had shifted her beliefs to position herself in the three spaces of teacher leadership (i.e., classroom, situational, and developing leadership). Her making as a teacher leader was also supported by the characteristics she so obviously possessed as were outlined in the literature review section and that were evident in her narrative. To support my analyses, evidence from her stories is attached and support from the literature is integrated with the discourse.

4.4.1 Miss Spark's relationship with her parents, siblings, and school leaders

4.4.1.1 Lack of parental support

Miss Spark did not receive the parental care and comfort she needed and craved as a young girl child. She was forced to take on household responsibilities and become a caregiver for her younger sister even though she was still a child herself. However, she formed a motherly bond with a primary school teacher; hence, school became a safe space for her where she could play, learn, and be a regular child. She was free and could escape from the adult roles and responsibilities that she had to take on at home as a young girl child. Miss Spark did not let the tension of the relationships she faced at home affect her school life. At school she was able to choose to be happy and free. Her resilience helped her to transform herself into a child who could learn, grow, and experience childhood at school. Miss Spark even received an award (Figure 4.3) which affirmed her perseverance as a young girl. She demonstrated the ability to overcome the limitations imposed upon her by her home environment and to embrace limitless opportunities at school.

My parents were not always present due to their long working hours. Which left me and my younger sister home alone on school days, most weekends and holidays. I feel that I missed out on most of my childhood because I had to be a grown-up when

my parents weren't around. Being a girl and middle child, I had to take on much of the responsibilities as a young girl in order to make things easier at home. Going to school was an escape for me. School was a place where I would get to be a child and a school learner again. I got to see my friends and play freely without thinking about my 'busy schedule' at home. Aside from my friends, I got to see and spend time with my favourite teacher.

Parents are critical role players in shaping the coping abilities and instilling a sense of acceptance in their children (Stambaugh et al, 2011). A parent's main responsibility is to be a caregiver to their child, which is important for its holistic development and growth (Wang, 2022). According to van Wel (1994), parents have a strong influence on the lives of their children and positive parental involvement is passed on to the child which is behaviour that they then emulate in adulthood. Bukor (2011) discusses life experiences that involve aspects such as childhood, family, friends and schooling. According to Davis (2021), finding loving support outside the family can be a powerful and rewarding experience that can drastically improve a young person's quality of life.

4.4.1.2 A parent-child relationship that lacked communication

Miss Spark could not communicate with her parents as they had to work hard and were not always around. She was afraid of upsetting them so she did not confide in them. Her voice was silenced due to this fear. Miss Spark wanted to become a lawyer so that she could have a voice as she could not find the courage to speak for herself when she was a young girl child who was compelled to take on a domestic role in an Indian household. Miss Spark could not become a lawyer but that did not stop her; she found a new passion when she spent time in her inspirational primary school teacher's classroom. Even though she could not communicate at home, she was able to communicate in school with her teacher. She did not let her lack of communication skills as a child affect her future. She chose to become a teacher and to find her voice so that she could help children. She could change the lives of young children through the teaching profession by teaching, advising, supporting, and guiding her learners and even herself as a teacher, and she was open to learning from more experienced educators.

As I grew older, I would yearn to confide in them about my feelings but seeing them come home late and tired from work and not wanting to stress them out unnecessarily, I would bottle up my feelings. I always admired lawyers and their courage to stand in front of many people to defend a case. I was always afraid of

speaking up. I would make excuses to get out of situations that required me to speak or defend myself. I thought that Law would be the career for me; it would be my opportunity to finally learn to speak, defend, and find a voice to be heard.

When I visited my primary school teacher as an adult, I recalled my days in that same class. I remember me as a child feeling free and carefree in her care. I started to feel that sense of comfort once again. I thought to myself if I was able to feel safe and cared for by my teacher, maybe I would find joy in making other children feel the same way.

McCafferty (2017), who makes reference to Article 12 of UNICEF (United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child), argues that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them. Children's views should be considered and they should be supported when they wish to express themselves (Murray, 2019). McCafferty (2017) also avers that children's opinions and feelings should not be dismissed and that they should be made to feel comfortable and safe by feeling free to express themselves. Clarke (2002) explains that the experiences individuals face in their personal lives and in their relationships with others can directly impact their professional lives and their ability to lead and be the teachers they want to be.

4.4.1.3 A child without reciprocal love and acknowledgement

As a young girl child, Miss Spark longed for her parents to demonstrate their love. She wanted to be acknowledged as a *child*. Early in her teaching career, Miss Spark chose to help children and she took special interest in children that came from troubled home backgrounds. Miss Spark went the extra mile to assist these children after hours with their school work and she offered love, care and acceptance. Even though Miss Spark's parents had not demonstrated their love as she had wanted them to when she was a child, she did not let this affect her as a teacher. She was able to shower her students with love and help them in difficult situations. In return, Miss Spark found that she was receiving love and acknowledgement from her students. They made her feel cherished for who she was. She may have missed out on this as a child, but in her adult teaching years she became acknowledged for being a kind, caring teacher to her students. It was evident that Miss Spark enjoyed this feeling by recalling how happy she was when receiving gifts from her students.

"I had to be a grown-up when my parents weren't around. I missed my parents and I missed being taken care of by them. I still needed them around... This just touched

my heart and even brought tears to my eyes. As a teacher, I have received many gifts from the learners I taught and this made me feel so cherished and valued. I was so impressed by my learners as they showered me with so much love.”

The above excerpt highlights the emotions Miss Spark felt as she reflected on the joys of teaching. One significant moment she shared was when she received love and acceptance from her learners. This type of love is something she did not experience when she grew up; however, in her career as a teacher, she loved her learners and was accepted and loved by them in return. Her learners, as young as they were, were able to change her emotional outlook of not being loved and comforted as a young girl child, and as a teacher she experienced this love she craved through the relationships she formed with her learners.

According to Cornu (2013), the most significant relationships in the lives of teachers are those they forge with their students, their fellow teachers, leader colleagues, their family and friends, and themselves. Each of these relationships is important in their own way and each relationship provides something unique to the teacher. Moreover, it can enhance or destroy their passion for teaching.

4.4.1.4 Burdened by subservient roles

Miss Spark had to be a caregiver for her younger sister when her parents were not around. Her responsibilities included tidying the house, preparing meals, helping with homework, doing her own homework, getting school uniforms and lunches ready, etc. She felt stripped of her childhood and saw no way of escape. Moreover, when she worked under the supervision of an insensitive principal with very high demands, she was demeaned and humiliated. She had to work hard and fast to meet deadlines and juggle many tasks as a first-year teacher. She lived in fear of being reprimanded for not executing her tasks effectively. Miss Spark was able to carry out many household responsibilities as a young girl child and, similarly, she was able to execute many duties and tasks as a novice teacher. As a child, she was afraid of speaking up and as a new teacher she was afraid of being reprimanded, so her voice was also silenced. However, she was still able to take charge and fulfil her roles. Being able to balance everything as a child unconsciously prepared Miss Spark for the many roles and responsibilities she would need to balance and juggle as a teacher.

This instilled a fear in me because I was so afraid of getting something wrong and I would pressure myself to perfect any task given to me. I worked

even harder and learnt to juggle different tasks and manage time more effectively. Through understanding my mistakes and errors I have learnt a lot by correcting myself and this has taught me to accept that mistakes happen but also to rise above them and get it right the second time. Accepting that every day we learn new things and having an open heart and mind to always be willing to learn has motivated and shaped me into a teacher.

Supervisors play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness and skills of early career teachers (Elliott, 2010). Isaacs (2010) agree, stating that leaders and supervisors contribute significantly to the professional growth of early career teachers by fostering a supportive environment, offering targeted feedback, and promoting continuous improvement in instructional effectiveness and in time management skills. Only resilient and committed novice teachers will remain standing under the scrutiny and mastery of insensitive and nasty school leaders who often forget that they were novices themselves.

4.4.2 Making healthy choices and a positive career change

Eventually, Miss Spark knew she needed to move to a new school as the rigid routine and lack of professionalism at her first school had become suffocating. In psychology, ‘suffocation’ refers to the emotional or psychological sensation of feeling trapped, overwhelmed, or deprived of vital resources, and these emotions cause distress, anxiety, or a sense of helplessness (Finkle, 2014). Miss Spark felt trapped in her job and this made her feel anxious while she was constantly working in fear of being reprimanded and humiliated. Because of these negative feelings and unhealthy relationships, she knew she needed change and she knew she needed to move on in order to improve her life and career. She made the choice to apply to other schools for her own growth. She did not give up. Even though Miss Spark referred to her experiences of fear and stagnation, she also highlighted the value of learning from her mistakes and using her mistakes as a stepping stone towards making positive changes so that she could improve herself and her classroom practice. Miss Spark did not let negative experiences make her a bitter person or allowed them stop her from being a teacher. She changed her way of thinking and being by wanting to learn from her earlier mistakes. By having an open mind and heart and accepting that she should be a life-long learner, she accepted that there would always be room for improvement and growth in her life as part of her making as a teacher leader. Being supported by her experiences and

the positive relationships she had forged, she was able to change her way of thinking about the challenges she faced. She viewed challenges as a chance for her to learn and develop in her career. A visible shift in her stance and thinking demonstrated her growing maturity:

In 2022, I started to face some professional challenges. I began feeling suffocated and stuck in the school I was teaching at. I then made the decision to start sending out my CV to other schools. In December 2022 I was called in for an interview at a semi-private school. Later that week I received a call from the school saying I got the job. Taking a leap of faith and starting a new job at a new school with a new environment and new people was a difficulty decision. It was overwhelming to adjust to the new world I was stepping into. I remember my first day at the school with feelings of fear and anxiety. But then I met my new principal and the phase coordinator. I immediately felt a sense of comfort being welcomed with so much love. This made it so much easier for me to take in everything and it helped me build confidence.

Negotiating different forces to become a teacher can be a multi-faceted journey (Shani, 2019). Entering a new world where there will be new people, starting a job at a new school, and entering a new working and social environment can be daunting. Also, to work under the supervision of new leaders such as principals and departmental heads can be overwhelming. By navigating these forces with determination, dedication and focus, teachers like Miss Spark can embark on a fulfilling and impactful career (Trent, 2014).

4.4.3 Mentoring relationships as spaces for positive experiences and growth

When Miss Spark moved to her new school, she was warmly welcomed by her new principal and phase coordinator. She spoke about positive experiences under new leaders. She was guided and supported by her seniors and she felt challenged in a positive way. Miss Spark entered a different environment and she was ready to take a leap of faith and start a new journey in the hope that it would be filled with greater opportunities to develop herself as a teacher. Miss Spark changed her stance at her new school due to supportive and strong relationships. At her old school she had faced autocratic leadership and had often been afraid of making mistakes and missing deadlines, but in her new school she was challenged in a healthy way. She was given tasks and duties that took her out of her comfort zone but she was able to unlock her potential through the guidance of her new phase coordinator. By

making the decision to move to a new environment, Miss Spark chose to improve her learning, thinking, and being as a teacher under different leaders and in a different environment.

Miss Spark described her relationships with her seniors and colleagues as positive and supportive as they helped her gain confidence and become brave. The young, scared girl who had lacked the courage to speak up had transformed into a confident young teacher. By developing herself through the positive relationships she was forging with others and herself, she became a good teacher who conducted her many duties and tasks with confidence.

I am truly blessed by having an incredible phase coordinator who stands by me and guides me through every obstacle I face on my journey. This made teaching feel less like a job and more of something I loved to do and looked forward to waking up every day to go to work knowing that I am being challenged to be my best self in a healthy and positive way. My relationships with friends and teacher colleagues has [sic] really had a positive impact on my journey. When I first started teaching, I was filled with so much energy as it was my first year though I still lacked confidence and boldness. Spending time with my colleagues and watching other educators has made me become louder and bolder. Being under my current HOD and having a relationship with her and observing the leadership qualities and methods of doing things has [sic] made me do different things with my learners and in the classroom. I learnt to take on anything and work around the clock to get things done to have a successful day or event. I find myself stronger than before and I also find myself way more confident.

Healthy teacher-mentor relationships serve as vital spaces for the exchange of diverse experiences and meanings that foster professional growth and development (Lock, 2006). By fostering healthy mentor-teacher relationships that are grounded in respect, trust, collaboration, and cultural sensitivity, educators can create caring and loving supportive spaces where diverse experiences and meanings are valued, celebrated, and leveraged for professional growth and development (Dekkers, 2010).

4.4.4 The personal-professional interconnectedness of Miss Spark's beliefs

Personal: The belief that was foregrounded in Miss Spark's home was that she needed to take on domestic roles and be a caretaker for her younger sister. She believed that it was her duty as the elder girl to take on these stereotyped roles at home. According to Olsson and Martiny (2018), some stereotypes related to girls and women are that they are expected to be polite, accommodating, nurturing, and domesticated. She did not receive attention and care from her parents and she did not get to play with her sister because she was taking care of her.

However, in the school environment Miss Spark was not shackled by the same chains as the ones that bound her at home. At school could be a child and forge relationships by playing with her friends and receiving care and support from her teacher. She was free to be a child and, regardless of her many household responsibilities, excelled academically and received awards. Her belief in herself and the meanings she attached to her life at home and her life at school changed as she walked out of her home and into the school environment where she experienced loving and supportive relationships with peers and teachers.

Professional: As a novice teacher in her first school, Miss Spark did not experience caring, supportive relationships. She had to work in an atmosphere of fear and was expected to get the job done because she was a qualified teacher. According to Davies (2007), novice teachers are not often given support and mentoring because senior management expects them to already be trained as qualified teachers. She believed that if she worked feverishly to get things done, she would avoid being reprimanded by her principal.

Miss Spark made the decision to change schools, and in her new school her relationship with members of the school management team (SMT) changed and her demeanour as a teacher changed. In the new school she formed supportive relationships with her principal and HOD as they did not only want her to meet deadlines, but they were supportive of her needs and feelings. They cared for her well-being as a person and did not only focus on the work she had to do in the classroom.

Personal-professional interconnections: A question that I posed as I perused the data was: *How did Miss Spark's beliefs in her personal life as a child impact her beliefs as an adult teacher?* As a child, Miss Spark believed that it was her duty to adopt various domestic roles because of it was expected of her as the eldest child in the home. She still held this belief when

she started her career, and she believed that she had to work hard and to please her demanding principal because that was what was expected of her as a newly qualified teacher. The belief that she had to meet everyone's expectations to prove herself and be acknowledged was transferred from her personal to her professional context.

Another question was: *How did supportive relationships change her beliefs?* In her new primary school Miss Spark found supportive relationships which were alien to her but helped her change the belief in herself, and she realised that what had happened at home did not need to be transferred to her professional life. In the second school where Miss Spark taught, she formed supportive relationships with her principal and HOD who cared for her as a person more than just a teacher. These relationships made her feel acknowledged as a person and she felt cared for by management which filtered through to her relationships with her learners.

4.5 Section D: Miss Spark's Changed Beliefs as a Teacher Leader

As a narrative inquirer, I adopted the visual model that I referred to previously to conceptualise the process of making oneself into a teacher leader. As a researcher, I asked myself various questions to help me understanding this process of change. For instance: *What makes Miss Spark different from other teachers? What kind of classroom teacher is she and how did she come to be so accomplished?* I critically reflected on particular experiences and was able to foreground a range of relationships and experiences that were challenging for Miss Spark. When I addressed the question: *What stands out in Miss Spark's storied experiences about her self-perception, and how did these shape her stance?* I wanted to explore the way she thought, behaved, made meaning of classroom situations and wanted to know what was happening around her. Her narrative revealed the inner tensions and conflicts she had negotiated and demonstrated how her emotions (both positive and negative ones) had influenced certain beliefs about herself. Her personal and professional relationships had also been instrumental in propelling her making in different environments where she lived and worked.

To answer research question 2, I revisited her storied relationships once more and searched for excerpts where Miss Spark shared her experiences of her engagement with her learners and where she revealed how her relationship with them had changed her way of thinking and made a positive difference to her and her learners' lives.

Miss Spark's relationship with her parents in her childhood influenced her to feel lonely and to believe that she was alone. These emotions were also evident in the first school where she taught. However, in her second school, there was a marked shift in her attitude as she believed she was a 'rock' for her learners, and this stance was reflective of the safe space she had created for her younger sibling when she was a child. She was compassionate and kind and cared for all her learners equally, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. It was evident that her negative relationship with her parents no longer mattered as she had changed her demeanour to positively influence her learners and peers with a relationship of love and care.

4.5.1 Miss Spark as a classroom teacher leader

I discovered that she was a kind and thoughtful leader who controlled her class by establishing rules, developing a routine, planning activities, and executing tasks together with her learners. She was not only a classroom practitioner but also a leader as she contributed significantly to her learners' education by involving them in collaborative decision making.

4.5.2 Miss Spark as a situational teacher leader

I discovered that she was able to wear the cloak of leader in specific situations such as going the extra mile to assist underprivileged learners coming from troubled backgrounds. Her stance was that she would not only focus on classroom and school activities, but that she would find a balance between classroom pedagogy and taking the initiative to help learners in need. Her demeanour thus changed from a teacher who only focused on teaching and learning to one who was able to bring meaningful change to the lives of struggling learners.

4.5.3 Miss Spark as a developing teacher leader

The answer to this question was that she worked collaboratively with her phase coordinator and accepted informal leadership roles. She planned and executed events that contributed to the school as a whole, which means that her focus expanded from the classroom to include the wider school environment. Her skills were also developing as she was learning how to balance various roles and tasks at the same time. This balancing act was reminiscent of her childhood roles of carer, nurturer, and learner and showed how her personal life had merged with her professional world.

4.5.4 Miss Spark as a teacher leader

A key question was: *How does Miss Spark fit the image of a teacher leader?* This question was addressed most aptly by the finding that the personal relationship Miss Spark shared with herself stood out most prominently. She had developed from a scared young girl and novice teacher to a confident one who believed in herself and her abilities. Gaining confidence through the relationships she had formed with her primary school teacher, her peers, and her new HOD and principal inspired her to make and propelled her progress from teacher to teacher leader. Even though Miss Spark did not fully accept that she was a teacher leader, her obvious positive qualities and the change in her stance pointed to her professional development into a teacher leader.

Finally, I compared Miss Spark's attributes to what the literature deems the characteristics of a teacher leader are. According to Brownlee (2018), teacher leaders are open-minded individuals who demonstrate resilience, determination, and willingness to take risks. They are motivated and enthusiastic to make a difference and are passionate about education (Brownlee, 2018). Miss Spark reflected these characteristics through her determination to become a better teacher. She was motivated to do her best and she took risks to learn and develop her teaching practice. She was passionate about teaching and aimed to make a difference in her students' lives.

4.6 Conclusion: Miss Spark's Achievement of Affirmation

The focus of this chapter was on identifying significant relationships in Miss Spark's life that influenced her thinking, being, and the meanings she made as a teacher and to discover how these relationships allowed her to position herself as a teacher leader. Further to identifying the relationships, I aimed to analyse these relationships to understand how and why they had influenced Miss Spark's way of thinking, feeling, and being. I interpreted why and how Miss Spark's beliefs had changed over the years by analysing the situations, environments, and significant people she had encountered personally and professionally. These analyses and interpretations allowed me to unpack the process and outcomes of Miss Spark's encounters, and I concluded that she had undoubtedly become a teacher leader. To arrive at this conclusion, I explored excerpts of her narrative and analysed them in response to two research questions: *What lived experiences shape the making of a teacher leader?* and: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?* By conceptualising teacher leadership and understanding the three stages of such leadership, I

could extract support from the literature to understand what it was that characterised Miss Spark as a teacher leader in each stage of the model.

My overall learnings of the interconnected personal and professional relationships in Miss Spark's life focused on the beliefs Miss Spark created for herself. As a child, she believed she had to be a domesticated girl who needed to care for a sibling. As a novice teacher, she believed that she needed to meet the expectations of being a qualified teacher, although her principal intimidated and demeaned her. However, in a different school environment and by experiencing supportive and caring relationships with her peers, senior teachers, and the principal, Miss Spark changed her belief of whom she thought she needed to be and gladly accepted the acknowledgment she deserved as someone who could move beyond conservative roles as a girl. She learned to believe in herself as a person and as a teacher and to navigate different situations inside and beyond the classroom comfortably. Miss Spark can be identified as a teacher leader because she shows characteristics of resilience, determination and a willingness to take risks as discussed by Brownlee (2018). Miss Spark also creates a safe and welcoming learning environment for her students with kindness and respect. She is enthusiastic to make a difference in the teaching profession.

In the next chapter, I present and analyse the storied narrative of my next participant, whom I refer to as Mr. G.

CHAPTER FIVE

MR G - A STORY OF PERSEVERANCE

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I constructed the first participant's story. I then reconstructed and deconstructed it to answer the two key research questions. My analysis and interpretation of Miss Spark's story provided a deep understanding of her experiences of personal and professional relationships that had shaped her making as a teacher leader. The previous chapter also highlighted Miss Spark's relationship with herself which improved and transformed from her childhood to her adulthood and changed the way she believed in herself and was able to make positive choices to improve her life and her teaching. In this chapter, I present the storied narrative of the second participant, Mr. G, and I analyse his story in depth. The main focus is to reconstruct the stories of his experiences of personal and professional relationships and to explain how these had impacted his making as teacher leader.

I reconstructed Mr. G's story using a range of data collection tools. I use the pseudonym Mr. G to refer to this participant. I present my findings as the narrative inquirer in conjunction with the data that I generated from Mr. G's narrative.

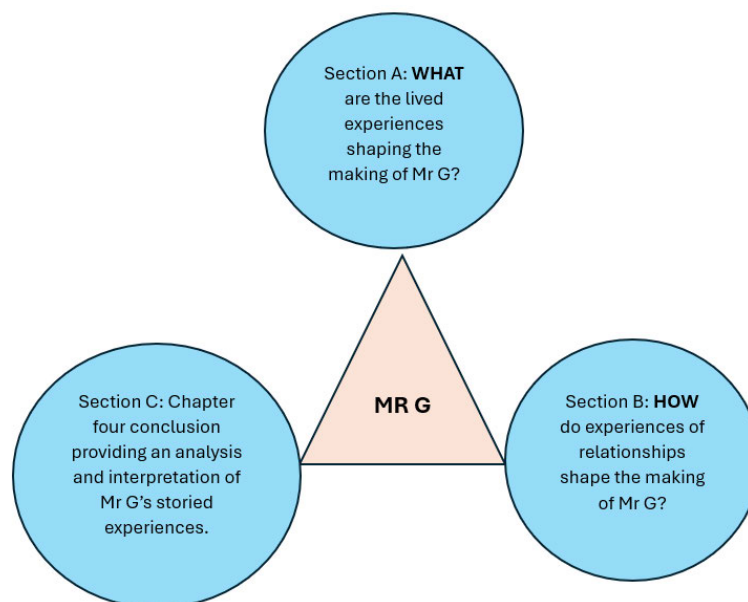


Figure 5.1: Diagrammatic summary of my analysis of Mr. G's narrative

5.2 Section A: Mr. G's Experiences of Relationships

I present the reconstructed storied narrative of Mr. G's experiences in response to research question 1: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* The story was reconstructed after working with the raw data that had been generated by means of Mr. G's self-box, memory drawing, and the unstructured interview that I had conducted with him. My aim was to understand Mr. G's complex experiences of various relationships over a period of time, with specific emphasis on his teaching career. The following diagram identifies and arranges the critical plots and subplots in Mr. G's narrative that responded to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

A tragedy that left me broken 1. Becoming the man of the house in an Indian home 2. Learning to live without my dad – lacking a father figure	Schooling – 1. Just an average learner 2. Finding motivation through an unexpected experience	A Godly intervention 1. The power of the bible 2. Creating a <u>plan for the future</u>	Dreams to come true even when they start as a piece of paper 1. Advise from my wise pastor <u>lead</u> me to my calling 2. <u>Finally</u> a teacher!	Employment 1. My first school 2. Starting over – finding my passion again	Comparing a plant to myself as a teacher 1. Transforming my beliefs and making a positive difference in the lives of students
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Table 5.2: Plots and critical experiences that impacted Mr G's making

5.2.1 Mr G's Story

How Mr G viewed himself

I am a young and vibrant male teacher who is employed in a quintile 1 school in Shallcross. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in the Education, Leadership and Management discipline. I live with my mum. I recently lost my dad due to ill health and I have since worked very hard (financially and academically) to make my parents proud. I persevere through challenges and obstacles and I go the extra mile to accomplish my goals and succeed in life.

A tragedy that left him broken

We were a family of 5 - my parents, older sister, older brother, and me. We took care of and could rely on one another. Eventually, my sister got married and left home. My brother did the same a few years later. Then there were 3 – Mum, Dad and me. A few years passed and dad became very ill. Due to the seriousness of his illness, the doctors could not do much to save him and he passed away. This tragic incident left only two – Mum and me.

Becoming ‘the man of the house’

I was the only male at home. I had to become the caretaker of our home. I was still young, so Mum had to bring in the finances through her small business from selling clothes, shoes and electrical items online. I had to learn the duties of a man very fast - locking up at night, fixing broken items at home (changing a light bulb and repairing the tap), learning to drive to get around and most importantly – making things easier for Mum who already had a hard time without her husband. I would often get upset with my siblings for not being there to support us. I knew they had their own families but it was frustrating to know that I was the youngest sibling and yet I had to take on the role of the man at home.

Learning to live without Dad

I eventually got familiar with the things that needed to be done at home. Mum and I worked together to get by each day on our own. What got to me next was the lack of a father figure. I was fairly young when I lost my dad. I still needed him. I would listen to my friends talk about the experiences they had with their dads and I would wonder why I was robbed of that. I remember one day when I had to take my mum grocery shopping, the car broke down. I needed someone to call. I would have called my dad but I couldn't. It then hit me, when I need my dad the most, he is not going to be here to help me.

Just an average learner

When I was in primary school, I was just an average learner. I would go to school, do my work and go home. Learning for tests and doing my assignments would be a basic task. No extra effort to aim for a high mark. I would do the minimum just to pass. I had no hope or reason to improve in life. I did not have a dad to make proud or someone to run to with my report card when I achieved good results – so why work hard? I just needed to pass. I eventually got to grade 7 and it was time for prefect selection. I had no hope of becoming a prefect but things

soon changed. When the teachers announced the names at assembly, they called my name. I was surprised and did not expect this.



Figure 5.3: An image of the prefect badges placed in Mr G's memory self-box

Finding motivation

After this experience of becoming a prefect, I started to feel a shift in my goals. From just wanting to pass, I wanted to aim higher and prove more to my teachers that I can do better. Moving on to high school, I had an amazing teacher who had a different approach to her teaching. She would use shared leadership in our lessons. We would work in groups and share ideas. The learners would be given a chance to prepare lessons and peer teach. We were given opportunities to lead the class and share our strengths whilst helping other learners build on their weaknesses. In grade 10, this teacher taught me Accounting. Unlike other teachers, she took an extra liking to me and always offered me her time and attention. She would even provide me with additional lessons when I struggled. At the end of that year, I received my first award for Accounting. I could not have done it without her. In grade 12, my teachers were so impressed at my complete turn-around that I was badged Deputy Head Prefect. This was the start of something amazing in my academic life. I found someone to make proud and run to with my achievements – my teacher.



Figure 5.4: Photograph in his self-box of the Accountancy trophy Mr G won

A Godly intervention

I had not always been close to God. When my dad passed away, I became very angry with God and I would question God about why he had broken my family and taken away our pillar of strength. Why did he take away the one person that I needed the most? Being a Christian my entire life, I did not know or understand the true purpose of Christianity. There then came a time in my life where I reached a crossroad and I did not know where I was headed in life and what purpose my life had. This was when I started growing closer to God by visiting church every Sunday and listening to inspirational sermons. I started feeling the presence of God in my life and understanding the Bible and what it meant.

The power of the Bible

There is one verse that really stands out for me in the Bible and this verse has been a big part of my everyday life for many years. The verse is Jeremiah 29.11- “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper to you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”. This is something that I really resonated with. I believe that this is a reminder of the promise and the plans God has for my life.

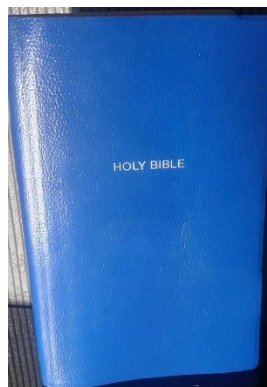


Figure 5.5: Photograph of the Holy Bible placed in Mr G's memory self-box

Creating a plan for the future

Throughout my schooling, I never had a plan of action or a goal for my future. Through the Holy Bible and the promises that God has made, I feel that I am now a person that does not give up easily no matter the circumstances I face. The Holy Bible is a very sentimental object to me and I feel that it clearly defines who I am, where I am headed and what I want to be in the future. It helps me stay grounded based on my emotions. I have become stronger. Religion is such an important tool that has shaped me as an individual; it taught me how to be a responsible citizen who can make a difference in the lives of others. I believe there is a lot to grasp from holy books no matter which faith a person belongs to.

Dreams can come true

After completing matric, I was unemployed for about 6 months. I got my first job and it was at a call centre. Even though I was happy to be working, I was not happy to be working at a call centre. At this call centre we were required to create a vision board and we had to keep this on our desks. We would have to put things that we would like to buy or achieve in the future. While at this job we also had to create a sheet called "My one hundred dreams sheet" where we had to put down 100 things that we would like to achieve. Now that I reflect, I have no vision, dreams or goals. But when I started doing the vision board and 100 dreams sheet, I started to really see that I wanted to move forward in life. I wanted to do something more fulfilling. This job improved my communication skills. Even though it was over the phone, it prepared me for communicating with people in real life.



Figure 5.6: Pictures of Mr G's dream sheet and vision board from his memory self-box

Advice from a wise pastor led him to his calling

Earlier I spoke about God and my experience of growing closer to my religion. At my church, I was blessed with an amazing pastor. He watched me grow up and he knew the struggle of losing my dad. He told me that I could teach the children in our Sunday school and that they would learn a lot from me. So, while working at the call centre, I decided to teach the Sunday school children. A few weeks went by and I realised how much my communication had improved through the call centre, that I enjoyed sharing stories and teaching the children at church. I confided in my pastor and told him I would love to work with children daily. He told me that he knew I had the potential to change lives and therefore he had introduced me to teaching children at church. He wanted me to realise it on my own – and I did. My pastor created a gateway for me to realise my passion.

Finally, a teacher!

I applied to study teaching at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. When they accepted my request to study towards my Bachelor of Education degree, I knew that I did not have the money. Eventually, I heard about bursaries. I did my research and came across the NSFAS bursary. I also saw an article in the newspaper about a bursary being offered. I applied and was lucky enough to receive a R20,000.00 bursary to study. After a few months, I got a call from NSFAS to tell me that I had been awarded the bursary. That motivated me to complete my studies. The reason I am where I am today is because I received this bursary. When I first started studying, it was just my aim to simply get a degree but God had been so good to me to the point where I did not just get a degree but I also graduated summa cum laude. It just shows that as an individual you can use your challenges and struggles that you face to your advantage and become more than you ever imagined.

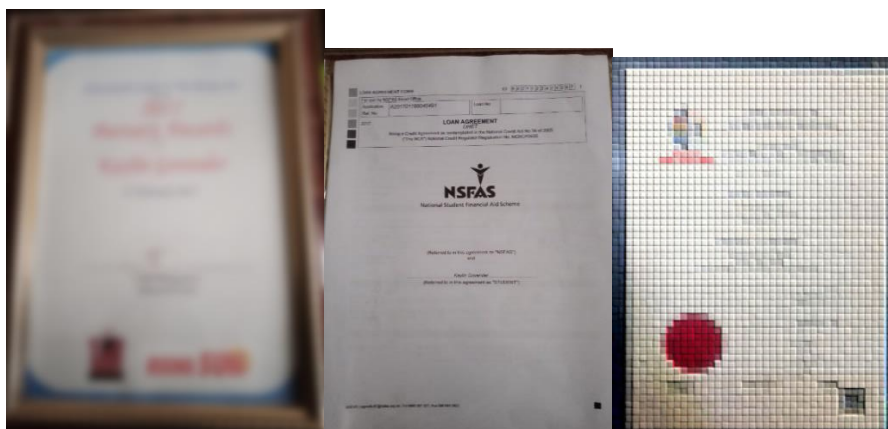


Figure 5.7: Pictures of Mr G's bursaries and B.Ed. degree from his memory self-box

Employment - His first school as a fully qualified teacher

I was so happy and motivated to begin my teaching journey. I entered my first school with immense hope and confidence. I was ready to share all that I could with my learners. The first school I taught at was a quintile 5 school. They were fully resourced which made my teaching so much easier. I had technology at my disposal and this made teaching in the 4IR even better. Everything seemed great. A few weeks went by and I started to realise there was a lack of support and guidance and as a new teacher at the school I was expected to “find my own way”. I became overwhelmed and this hindered my progress in and out of the classroom. I had to withhold all the ideas I had which could have proven to be beneficial. I was a victim of micromanagement. I started to lose my passion for teaching, I limited my teaching strategies and became less creative. I was mentally and emotionally drained due to the constant occurrences of being micromanaged. I even reached a point whereby I questioned if I was in the right career field. Furthermore, out of respect towards the hierarchical structure in the school, I was obligated to be silent and accept everything that I experienced, even though it was unfair and treacherous. I began clashing with my HOD and when I tried to explain myself to the principal, I was shunned because I was just an “inexperienced level 1 teacher” compared to the department paid HOD who had many years’ experience. I knew that I had to end my chapter at this school and so I resigned.

Starting over – finding his passion again

After leaving my first school, I got employed at a quintile 1 school. This school was under-resourced and the learners were extremely underprivileged and came from poor backgrounds. My colleagues were very welcoming and the management team was focused on teamwork and sharing ideas. Even though I had to struggle to find resources to make my lessons more interesting, I was happy here. I was given the freedom to share my ideas and give suggestions on big projects and events. My ideas were considered and resulted in successful outcomes. I remember thinking to myself, I was given the opportunity to work in a quintile 5 school but I was not happy because of the management system and the way things were done by the HOD and principal. But now I am working at a quintile 1 school and they have nothing, but I am happy and I am growing here. The people we work with matter. They can either make us or break us as teachers. These two schools are proof of that. In this school there were many underprivileged children, I look for sponsors and donors for lunch items, school shoes and books to help them. I make a difference.

Reflecting on himself as a teacher

I received some gifts from my learners and one of these gifts was a plant which is a succulent. This was an indoor plant. One day I was sitting and looking at this plant and I just started thinking about myself and self-reflecting. When I started self-reflecting, I saw myself as this plant. A succulent is a plant that does not need to be watered all the time, it is basically self-sufficient. I forgot to water this plant for a long time. I thought that this was the end for this plant and I was about to discard it. A few days went by and eventually I noticed that this plant was starting to regrow on its own and I saw small shoots coming up. And that is when I saw that this plant was a reflection of us as teachers because no matter the circumstances we face as teachers, we still persevere. Just like the plant with no water, it will become frail and exhausted and die. For a while it will become dormant but this does not mean that it's the end of the road for the plant, it is still going to continue and come up again, just like me. There was a time I was so demotivated and lost my passion for teaching and just wanted to give up but then I realised my purpose and what I went through to be where I am today and that's when I started flourishing again just like this succulent plant. I started building my passion, grace and drive for teaching again.



Figure 5.8: Photograph of the succulent in Mr G's memory self-box

I had a learner in my class who was supposedly dyslexic. His aim was just to scrape through to go on to the next grade. In the picture that I drew below, there is a boy who is holding two pieces of paper with an arrow depicted on it. One of the papers has an F on it which represents failure. The other paper has an A+ on it which represents a pass and the arrow depicts the growth from a fail mark to a pass mark. This was the best experience in my teaching career because I was just overwhelmed with joy and happiness for this child. Being able to see the change in him from when we first met to later in the year was something so incredible for me

as a new teacher. To know that I could make a difference in his life just by believing in him. Seeing a learner who was unable to do something to doing something that no one believed he could do. He built confidence in himself to become someone. As a teacher it is our duty and obligation to lead our learners on the right path.



Figure 5.9: Mr G's memory drawing of his happiest teaching experience

5.2.2 Synthesis of Section A

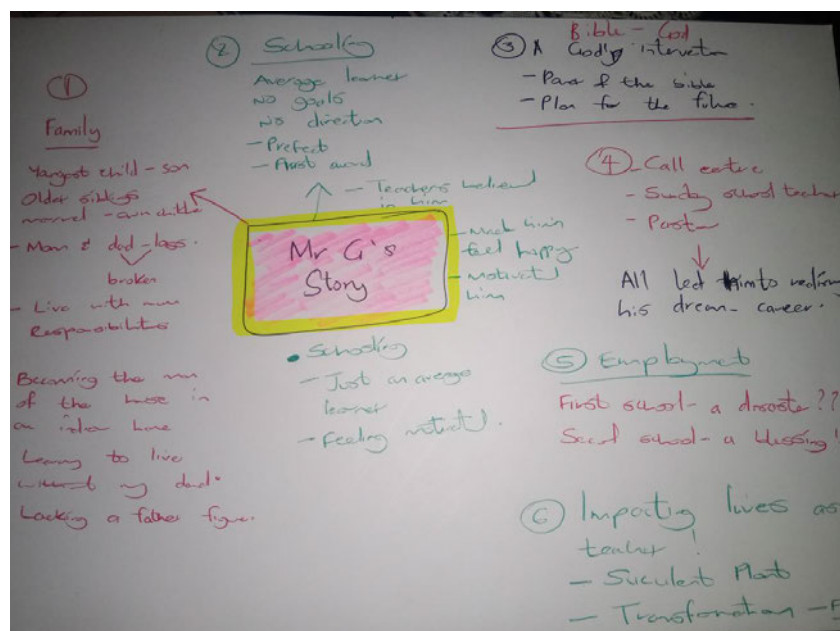


Figure 5.10: My synthesis drawing of Mr G's story

When I synthesised Section A of Mr G’s reconstructed story, I developed the above mapping to capture my findings from his storied experiences. I reflected on small snippets that I had extracted from his story that stood out as moments of change in his teaching journey.

As I perused Mr G’s storied narrative of relationship experiences, I was able to identify plots that highlighted significant relationships in his life; i.e., those he had forged with a supportive teacher, his pastor, and with God. Storied plots became spaces for me to consider critical moments in his life when Mr G was inspired and guided to hope for a better future. Developing a hopeful attitude helped him to look past the struggles of his personal life and to imagine a space where he could create opportunities for himself.

5.3 Section B: Interpretation and analysis of Mr G’s story

In this section, I analyse and interpret Mr. G’s storied narrative. In this second level analysis I respond to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?* I composed a pantoum poem to assist me in unpacking Mr. G’s experiences of relationship and to crystalise the meanings that emerged from the data. The poem helped me to pick out the most gripping phrases from Mr. G’s narrative. I heeded Furman’s (2006) advice to use the pantoum poem to explore complex ideas through a rhythmic pattern. By composing and reflecting on the pantoum poem, I was able to read through the reconstructed stories Mr. G had shared and to highlight the key themes that emerged. Looking at these key themes in the repetitive structure of the pantoum poem helped me to align these themes with the various contexts of Mr. G’s experiences.

We were a family of five
 I lost my dad
 Questioned God – why me?
 Average learner – no goals

 I lost my dad
 Amazing teacher gave me hope
 Average learner – no goals
 Pastor led me to my purpose

 Amazing teacher gave me hope
 Micromanaged by my HOD
 Pastor led me to my purpose
 Started afresh and felt valued

 Micromanaged by my HOD
 Made a difference changed lives
 Started afresh and felt valued
 We were a family of five

Figure 5.11: Pantoum poem dedicated to Mr G: A lost who became man with a plan

To answer research question 2, I first extracted data that revealed the significant personal and professional relationships Mr. G had forged, and I then used these relationships to understand the experiences he recalled and shared. I first worked with the stories of his personal relational experiences to illuminate his position as an informal teacher leader. I was able to explain the meanings he attached to self that he had formed in his everyday life. I analysed these meanings to understand his emotions and self-perception and I explain how these shaped certain behaviours and actions. This discussion is succeeded by a synthesis section that highlights the significant personal-professional relationships that he forged and that generated his making of himself a teacher leader.

I conclude this chapter by offering an interpretation of the interconnections between Mr. G's personal and professional lives and to explore the meanings of self that were negotiated inside and outside the classroom and that positioned this participant as a teacher leader.

5.4 Section C: Mr G's Personal and Professional Relationships

I first discuss the significant personal and professional relationships that Mr. G formed and illuminate the meanings he attached to these relationships. Evidence from his stories are attached and support from the literature is provided. I discuss the personal-professional interconnections foregrounded in the beliefs Mr. G harboured about his personal and professional relationships in his home and school environments. The section is concluded with a discussion of my learnings and I reflect on how Mr. G shifted his beliefs to position himself in the three stages that characterise a teacher leader (i.e., classroom, situational, and developing). Mr. G may be viewed as a teacher leader as I was able to attribute the characteristics of such leaders as outlined in the literature to his character and demeanour.

5.4.1 A distant relationship with older siblings

Mr. G lost his father at a young age but he could not rely on his older siblings for support because they had their own families. This placed him in a position where he had to step up as a young teenage boy and take on the roles of a man at home. Mr. G distanced himself from his siblings because he believed that he could not interfere in their family lives. Mr. G chose to stand by his mother and support her even if it meant fulfilling the role his father had played as the 'man of the house'. Mr. G thus took ownership of this role.

I was the only male at home. I had to become the caretaker of our home. I was still young, so Mum had to bring in the finances through her small business from

selling clothes, shoes and electrical items online. I had to learn the duties of a man very fast - locking up at night, fixing broken items at home (changing a light bulb and repairing the tap), learning to drive to get around and most importantly, making things easier for Mum. She already had a hard time without her husband. I would often get upset with my siblings for not being there to support us. I knew they had their own families but it was frustrating to know that I was the youngest sibling and yet I had to take on the role of the man at home. I eventually got familiar with the things that needed to be done at home. Mum and I worked together to get by each day on our own.

Unsupportive relationships with siblings can have various effects on individuals depending on the circumstances and dynamics of the situation (Blake, 2023). In his article titled *Young men in crisis*, Henwood (2002) argues that when teenage boys identify household tasks as their responsibility, they step up and take charge because they view it as a duty. Rains (1998) discusses the dire situation that many teenagers experience when they take responsibility at home when they see the need to do so. Mr. G took responsibility because he believed that this was his duty as he was the only male in his household. However, Mr. G compensated for the tensions he experienced at home by forming positive relationships with his school teacher and pastor.

5.4.2 Positive teacher-learner relationships inspire positive change

Mr. G was blessed with a teacher who saw potential in him and took a special interest in him. Opportunities loomed when he was made a prefect as this allowed him to believe in himself and to form a positive and supportive relationship with a kind teacher. Being a prefect helped to change his belief that he was merely an average learner with no hope for the future. He was able to see that there were people who could and would help him become someone that others could look up to.

When I was in primary school, I was just an average learner. I would go to school, do my work and go home. Learning for tests and doing my assignments would be a basic task. No extra effort to aim for a high mark. I would do the minimum just to pass. I had no hope or reason to improve in life. I did not have a dad to make proud or someone to run to with my report card when I achieved good results – so why work hard? When I became a prefect, I realised that this was the start of something amazing in my academic life. I found someone to make me proud and run to with my achievements – my teacher.

According to Albayrak (2009), children and adolescents think more often of the death of their parents than adults, and this affects them psychologically, academically, and socially. Celeli (2004) states that a parent's loss may seriously affect a young person's development and academic progress. Young children find it difficult to develop coping mechanisms to deal with bereavement and begin to act out in various ways, such as a dropping in academic performance. Sweeney and Armour (2021) agree, arguing that it is in such situations that some teachers instil a sense of hope in bereaved learners. This hope is a ray of light that is significantly associated with learners' academic and emotional improvement as it helps to curb their anxiety and depression and to restore their emotional resilience (Lopez, 2014).

5.4.3 Creating a dream sheet as a motivational space

Mr G found a job at a call centre before finding his path as a teacher. Many people look down on those who work at call centres and Mr. G was not happy as he felt unworthy due to the nature of the job. However, to his surprise, this job inspired him to create a dream sheet and vision board. He said:

Now that I reflect back, I had no vision, dreams or goals. But when I started doing the vision board and 100 dreams sheet, I started to really see that I wanted to move forward in life. I wanted to do something more fulfilling. This job improved my communication skills. Even though it was over the phone, it prepared me for communicating with people in real life.

Call centres have become a South African phenomenon in the past decade and it is a growing industry for high school graduates (Hlophe, 2017). Although these jobs are often low-paid, they employ many youths and offer growth opportunities. Creating an upbeat, positive work environment is essential in increasing employees' motivation so that they will achieve their goals (Chan, 2004).

5.4.5 A Man of faith

At first Mr. G was not passionate about religion, but as he started to attend church regularly and learned a key verse in the Bible, he realised that everything happened for a reason and that God had a purpose for his life. His pastor introduced him to the children at church and invited him to share his story with them and to teach them about values and morals as exemplified by his strength. After spending some time with these children, he realised that working with

children was his calling. He realised that if he were around children, he could share his story and help them overcome their challenges. He chose to change his circumstances and to become a teacher. He found his purpose through religion and shifted from being a man without dreams and goals to one who knew what he wanted to do and become in life.

At my church, I was blessed with an amazing pastor. He watched me grow up and he knew the struggle of losing my dad. He told me that I could teach the children in our Sunday school and that they would learn a lot from me. So, while working at the call centre, I decided to teach the Sunday school children. A few weeks went by and I realised how much my communication had improved through the call centre and that I enjoyed sharing stories and teaching the children at church. I confided in my pastor and told him I would love to work with children on a daily basis. He told me that he knew I had the potential to change lives and therefore he had introduced me to teaching the children at church. He wanted me to realise it on my own – and I did. My pastor created a gateway for me to realise my passion.

According to Springer (2016), growing up in a religious home can promote many positive skills in a child such as social harmony, moral values, social change, and setting positive goals. Smith (2014) argues that religious leaders have a strong influence on others as they tend to guide them on a path of positivity and change. Carter (2021) states that religious leaders are agents of social change and improvement, especially when they work with young adults and teenagers.

5.4.5 Toxic relationships with members of the SMT

When Mr. G began his teaching career at a quintile 5 school, he expected it to be a smooth and easy journey due to abundant resources and funds. However, due to the micromanagement style at the school and his inability to share ideas and be involved in wider school tasks, Mr. G felt demotivated and shunned and believed that his career was stagnating. He then decided to move to a new school, and he was appointed at a quintile 1 school that was under-resourced and short of staff. When he started his journey at this school, his outlook on teaching changed completely. He realised that a quintile 1 school had more to offer in terms of his learning and what he could offer this school and the learners. This awareness drastically changed his focus and educational dreams. He was now more interested in what he could offer the school rather than in what the school could offer him.

Everything seemed great [at the quantile 5 school]. A few weeks went by and I started to realise there was a lack of support and guidance, as a new teacher at the school I was expected to find my own way. I had to withhold all the ideas I had which could have proven to be beneficial. I was a victim of micromanagement. I started to lose my passion for teaching...This school [the quantile 1 school] was under-resourced and the learners were extremely underprivileged and came from poor backgrounds. My colleagues were very welcoming and the management team was focused on teamwork and sharing ideas. Even though I had to struggle to find resources to make my lessons more interesting, I was happy here. I was given the freedom to share my ideas and give suggestions on big projects and events. My ideas were considered and resulted in successful outcomes.

To distinguish between schools that need governmental support and those that can rely on parental and Governing Body funding, the government categorises all schools into various quantiles depending on their location in wealthy or poor communities (Van Dyk, 2019). Quintile 1 schools serve the poorest communities while quintile 5 schools serve affluent communities (Murray, 2016). Quintile 4 and 5 schools are considered affluent hence parents have to pay school fees that are quite substantial in certain cases, whereas quintile 1 schools are non-fee-paying schools and receive extensive subsidies from the government. Bradberry (2012) argues that one of the greatest demotivators in the workplace is an autocratic leadership style. Such managers cause an unhealthy work environment where some staff members are unable to work and grow in their career. Mr G experienced this to his detriment and frustration, particularly when an HOD would not acknowledge his voice and ideas.

5.4.6 Finding inspiration from a plant

Mr. G used the metaphor of a plant (specifically a succulent) to describe his development as a teacher. He noted that a succulent can grow and thrive without water, and he compared this to his ability to start again after a challenging spell in his career. He knew that, as a teacher, he would face many challenges and ‘dry spells’, but he also knew that he would be able to rise again just like the plant started to sprout and flourish. He rejoiced in his ability to regrow, and he changed his belief and found confidence in himself as a person and as a teacher. His passion for teaching was restored and he made the most of his time with his learners.

For a while it will become dormant but this does not mean that it's the end of the road for the plant; it is still going to continue and come up again, just like

me. There was a time I was so demotivated and lost my passion for teaching and just wanted to give up but then I realised my purpose and what I went through to be where I am today and that's when I started flourishing again just like this succulent plant. I started building my passion, grace and drive for teaching again.

A plant is non-human and the relationships that humans forge with plants and other inanimate objects, animals, nature, or even fictional characters or entities can have a powerful impact on them (Kahn, 2009). These relationships can vary widely in nature and impact and they play a significant role in various aspects of human life (Franklin, 2007). Humans often form relationships with nature and the environment, especially when they appreciate natural phenomena, and this connection can inspire and contribute to their personal well-being (Plumwood, 2012). Non-human relationships enrich human experiences, provide emotional support, inspire, enhance identity formation, and provide opportunities for personal growth. They reflect the diverse ways humans connect with their surroundings (both tangible and abstract) and contribute to individual well-being and societal dynamics (Lindgren, 2019). These arguments held true for Mr. G who found inspiration in the life force of a plant.

5.4.7 Making a difference in the lives of young people

Just like Mr. G's teacher took an interest in him and motivated him to do his best so that he eventually became a prefect and received an academic award, Mr. G also had a profound impact on one of his students whose life he managed to change. The dyslexic child did not believe in himself and did as little as possible just to scrape through. But, just like his teacher had done, Mr. G took an interest in this child and showed him that he believed in him. This child improved his marks from an F to an A. This made Mr. G very happy and he finally felt like he had fulfilled his purpose through this child. He was able to do for the child what his teacher had done for him many years before. Mr. G chose to position himself as someone who could help other children and he did not let his own life choices affect the way he conducted his teaching.

This was the best experience in my teaching career because I was just overwhelmed with joy and happiness for this child. Being able to see the change in him from when we first met to later in the year was something so incredible for me as a new teacher. To know that I could make a difference in his life just by believing in him. Seeing a learner who was unable to do something to doing something that no one believed he could do. He built

confidence in himself to become someone. As a teacher, it is our duty and obligation to lead our learners on the right path.

Mullan (2007) argues that teachers play a vital role in changing the course of young children's lives. Sometimes children have a particular belief about themselves, but a teacher can provide a completely different perspective that changes the child's demeanour and outlook (Mullan, 2007).

5.5 Section D: Mr G's Beliefs

5.5.1 The personal-professional interconnectedness of Mr G's beliefs

Personal: The belief that was foregrounded in Mr. G's consciousness when he lost his father when he was a teenager was that he needed to take on the role of the man of the house. According to O'Brien (2000), gender stereotypes are imbibed by young males as their fathers are seen as the key providers and breadwinners. Mr. G believed that, as he was the only male left in the household, he had to take care of his mother. However, he was unhappy as there was much pressure and he was not supported by his siblings at all. He transferred this belief to the school environment where he felt that he had no time to prioritise his professional life given his many domestic responsibilities. This belief affected his performance because he had no hope of becoming a successful adult. This belief shaped this sense of hopelessness which impacted his academic performance.

In his high school environment, Mr. G's belief changed when his Accountancy teacher took an interest in him and saw his potential. She supported him and encouraged him to do his best. As she did not give up on him, Mr. G embraced a sense of hope and he started to believe that there might be a future for him. Due to this supportive relationship, Mr. G started to believe that he was more than 'the man of the house'.

As a man of faith who regularly attended church, he later forged a supportive relationship with his pastor. By being allowed to teach Sunday school, his belief in himself changed as he felt he was worthy and had something to offer children to make a difference in their lives. If he had persisted in his sense of hopelessness, his responsibilities would not have allowed him to have hope for his future. However, at church, he developed a sense of hope and optimism and he found his voice.

Professional: Mr. G believed that he would have an easy journey in a quintile 5 school because such schools are economically advantaged (Murray, 2016). This belief soon changed when he was faced with an unsupportive mentor relationship. He then chose to move schools and he found employment in a quintile 1 school. According to Murray (2016), quintile 1 schools are economically disadvantaged. Mr. G believed that he would face challenges at this school, but he forged supportive relationships with his principal and colleagues at this school. The principal wanted to hear his ideas and allowed Mr. G to execute many tasks, especially to help underprivileged children. Mr. G's beliefs about leadership changed as he worked closely with his new principal and colleagues and he started to feel part of the team as he was not cast aside like at his old school.

Personal-Professional Interconnections: I asked myself how Mr. G's beliefs about his personal life as a child impacted his beliefs as an adult teacher. As a teenager, Mr. G believed that he had to be 'the man of the house' and he transferred this belief to his first school where he felt the need to be involved in sharing ideas. However, as he was deemed a novice teacher, his opinions were not sought and he felt marginalised and unfulfilled.

I also wondered how supportive relationships changed his beliefs. The data revealed that the supportive relationship with a teacher and pastor enabled him to believe in himself and to gain hope for the future. By forming a collaborative relationship with his principal at a disadvantaged school, he was able to believe in his teaching strategies and ideas as he was allowed to work with his principal to make a positive change. In brief, Mr. G was able to change his views and beliefs through supportive relationships.

5.5.2 Changed beliefs led to positive decisions

As a narrative inquirer, I adopted a visual model to conceptualise the processes that Mr. G had used to make himself into a teacher leader. I posed myself the following questions to prompt and enhance my understanding of the relationships in Mr. G's that were instrumental in this transformation: *What makes Mr. G different from other teachers?* and *What kind of classroom teacher is he and how did he come to be this way?* I critically reflected on particular experiences and was able to foreground a range of relationships and experiences that were challenging for Mr. G. When I asked myself: *What stands out in MR G's storied life about his self-perception and how it shaped his stance?*" (i.e., I wanted to explore what

he thought, how he behaved, and what meanings he made of classroom situations and what was happening around him), I revealed the inner tensions and conflicts he had negotiated and how his positive and negative emotions had influenced certain beliefs about himself. I was thus able to unearth information about the personal and professional relationships he had formed in the different spheres of his life that were part of his beliefs.

To answer question 2, I revisited his storied relationships once more and searched for excerpts where Mr. G shared experiences of his engagement with a learner and how this relationship had changed his way of thinking and had made a positive difference in both their lives.

Mr. G was comforted and inspired by his high school Accountancy teacher because she made him realise that he had academic potential. As a teacher, he became someone his students could trust and turn to. He was able to make a difference in the lives of learners who struggled academically. Mr. G relied on his judgement, and this allowed him to help a particular student reach his true potential and fall in love with maths. Mr. G was also able to make a difference in the lives of children as he chose to be a role model for them at church by sharing his story with them during Sunday school sessions. When he began his teaching career, Mr. G experienced an unhealthy relationship with management in his first school and this made him lose sight of his passion and purpose. Moving to a school that would uplift him as a teacher, his focus shifted from himself to what he could offer the school and his learners. He experienced personal and professional growth through the relationships he forged.

5.5.2.1 Mr. G as a classroom teacher leader

Mr. G chose to make his own judgements and decisions in his classroom. Drawing from his past experiences of unsupportive and uncaring relationships and the poor self-perception he had formed of himself and what he could be, he learnt to be a leader in his classroom by not allowing other teachers to fill him with doubt about the way he viewed and engaged with his students. He allowed his students to see themselves as worthy by giving them opportunities to develop. He also focused on learners that needed help academically and emotionally and he made a positive change in their lives by helping them.

5.5.2.2 Mr. G as a situational teacher leader

Mr. G was able to take the lead in difficult situations by taking charge and making decisions that would benefit his learners and school holistically. He took charge of his own life and found inspiration in human and non-human relationships. Using the metaphor of a resilient plant, he recognised his resilience and he was able to change his belief in himself. He recreated his passion for teaching and was motivated to do his best as a teacher.

5.5.2.3 Mr. G as a developing teacher leader

As he worked together with the principal of a school in a disadvantaged community, Mr. G chose to put the needs of his learners first. He took the initiative to develop into a teacher who could make a positive difference in learners' lives. He took on tasks to develop himself while initiating projects to assist underprivileged children.

5.5.2.4 Mr G as a teacher leader

According to Brownlee (2018), teacher leaders demonstrate resilience and are adaptable. I could thus identify Mr. G as a teacher leader as I found that his belief in himself was forged through supportive relationships that had enhanced his resilient nature. He was able to accept challenges and persevere regardless of adversity. He was adaptable in different schooling contexts, and he was able to change his beliefs and choose what worked for him as a teacher with a purpose.

5.6 Conclusion: Mr. G's Story of Success

The main focus of this chapter was to identify the significant relationships in Mr G's life that had influenced his thinking and being, as well as the meanings he made as a teacher, that allowed him to position himself as a teacher leader. His narrative was analysed in response to the two research questions: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* and *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?* As I identified pertinent relationships, I came to understand how they had influenced this participant's way of thinking, feeling, and being. As a researcher, I could unpack his changing stance over the years as situations, environments, and contexts changed, and I could identify the significant people who had influenced him personally and professionally. These interpretations allowed me to understand the manner of Mr G's making as a teacher leader.

My overall learnings of the personal and professional interconnectedness of Mr. G's relationships focused on Mr. G's beliefs that had changed over time. As a young man he believed that he needed to be the man of the house and take care of his mother from a young age. As a teacher, he experienced supportive, collaborative working relationships with his teacher, his pastor, and a principal, Mr. G was able to change his belief in who he was and his potential to be more and do more as a person. He understood that he did not need to overburden himself with traditional roles for recognition and learned to believe that he would be recognised through different and unique ways to change his life and the lives of children. He made himself into a confident person by developing new ideas about himself inside and outside the classroom. According to the characteristics shared by Brownlee (2018), Mr G identifies as a teacher leader because of his self-reflectivity, open mindness and collective responsibility as he works together with others to make a positive difference in his students lives. He is also a critical thinker and a problem solver for his own and his students problems. His passionate and enthusiastic character allows him to shine as a teacher leader.

In the next chapter, I present the analysis of my third participant's storied narrative.

CHAPTER SIX

MRS SHARP – A STORY OF GROWTH

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I analysed the story of Mr. G by reconstructing and deconstructing his stories to answer the two research questions. My analysis and interpretation of the data I obtained from Mr. G were presented as I zoomed into significant relationships in his making as a teacher leader. I evaluated Mr. G's life choices and the decisions he made in his career to improve his situation while transforming himself into a passionate and driven teacher leader.

In this chapter, I analyse and interpret Mrs. Sharp's story. I use the pseudonym Mrs Sharp to refer to this research participant. The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse Mrs. Sharp's reconstructed story of her experiences of the personal and professional relationships in her making as a teacher leader.

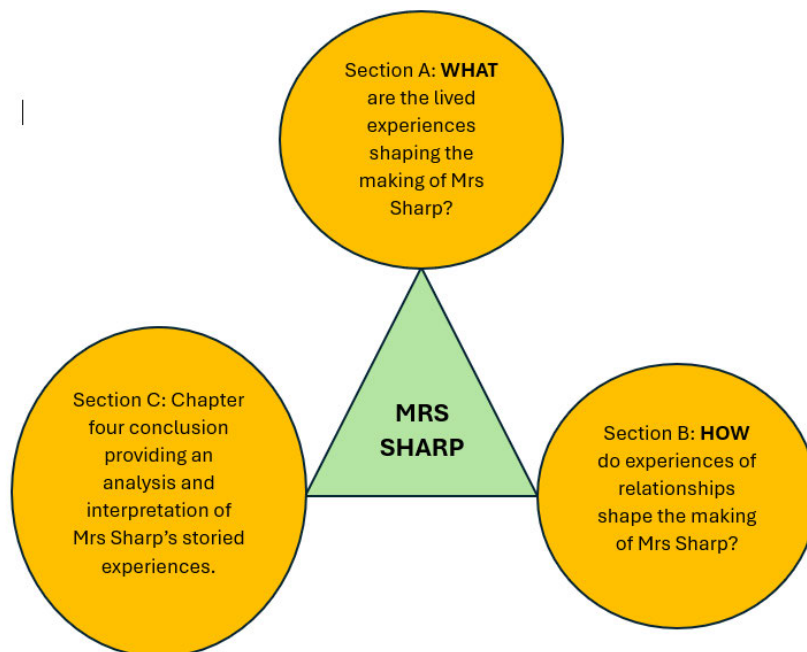


Figure 6.1: Diagrammatic summary of my analysis of Mrs Sharp's narrative

6.2 Section A: Mrs. Sharp's Experiences of Relationships

In this section, I present a reconstructed storied narrative of Mrs. Sharp's experiences in response to research question 1: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* The story was reconstructed after working with the raw data that had been

generated by means of Mrs. Sharp's self-box, memory drawing, and the unstructured interview I had conducted with her. My aim was to understand the complex experiences of relationships Mrs. Sharp had during her years of teaching. The following diagram was used to identify and arrange the critical plots and subplots in Mrs. Sharp's narrative that responded to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

My mum – my source of motivation My schooling years – becoming a mini teacher Learning the nitty – gritty of teacher things	Becoming a teacher The beginning of my career I wanted to give up Taking <u>advise</u> from my lecturer	Finding courage through supportive colleagues I'm glad I stayed New beginnings	Taking on big events and initiatives Community involvement – developing social awareness in young children	Learner Sentiments – making a great difference
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Table 6.2: Plots and critical experiences that impacted Mrs. Sharp's making

6.2.1 Mrs. Sharp's Story

Mrs. Sharp's background

I am a 57-year-old female teacher from Chatsworth, Durban. I live with my husband and mum. I have a 30-year-old daughter with whom I share a special bond. I come from a close-knit family which includes my 3 sisters, their husbands, and their children. I have been in the teaching profession for 37 years. I have taught in 4 different primary schools in the senior and intermediate phases. I currently teach maths in grade 7. I hold three degrees, namely a teaching degree, an Honours degree in teaching, and a BCom degree.

My mum – my source of motivation

Ever since I started school, my mum told me that one day I would become a teacher. "You were born to be a teacher", she would say. My mother has been a very strong influence in my life. It had always been a desire for my mother to become a teacher but unfortunately this could not happen. My mother wished for her children to become teachers. I was the first daughter to

become a teacher. I had a fire within me and I was filled with passion and drive. Amma [Mrs Sharp's mother] had been a great motivator, inspiration and the driving force behind my success. Amma had also been instrumental in pushing me to continue my studies and to never stop or settle for the bare minimum. She motivated me to continue studying and it is through her that I enrolled for my second degree which is a B. Com degree. I did one course at a time and eventually I completed my second degree.

Being a 'mini' teacher

In primary school, I was always the teacher's pet. Every teacher that taught me always had a special liking for me and showered me with gifts in the form of pencils, books, crayons, chalk, etc. I would bring these gifts home and gather all the neighbourhood children to teach them using the chalk and books that I would get from school. When my mother returned from work in the afternoons, she would ask me to bring my books and spelling words to test me. This led me to ensure that I always knew my work so that I could prove to my mother that I knew my work well enough in order to teach the neighbourhood children.

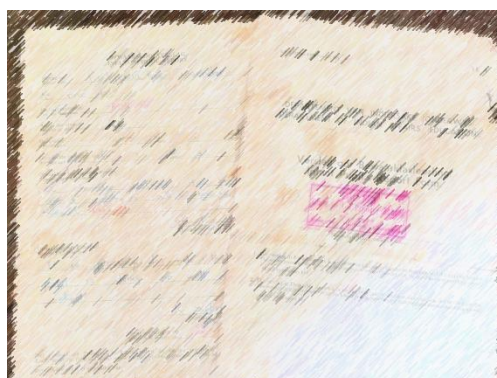


Figure 6.3: Mrs. Sharp's primary school report cards

Learning the nitty gritty of teaching

My high school days were the best days of my life and these were the days I learned the "nitty, gritty" of teacher things. I captured the hearts of all my teachers. I shared a very special bond with my Tamil language teacher and this teacher taught me how to keep records, mark the register, keep the cupboards clean etc. In Grade 10, my teacher was going on accouchement leave and she was very worried about leaving the class and her job behind. The substitute teacher arrived and seemed a bit lost. I was asked to step in and show her what needed to be done. I gathered all my teacher's files and workbooks and showed the substitute teacher how to mark registers, do journal entries, mark books, fill in testimonials etc. When I entered grade

11 and 12, all the teachers had already heard of me and what I was capable of doing as a student. I would take on tasks required to be done by a teacher as well as do my own class work. My teachers had confidence in me to know that I could balance my own work and help them as well.



Figure 6.4: Mrs. Sharp's high school tie and badge

Becoming a teacher

When I completed high school, there was no doubt in my mind about wanting to become a teacher. I enrolled at Springfield Training College to complete my teaching degree. When I graduated, I received an appointment letter to teach in Johannesburg. This came as a shock to me because I expected to receive a post in my hometown. I was determined to change this and therefore I took a bus into town and went to the Department of Education. I waited for hours until someone could assist me. Eventually I entered the building and “fought my case”. They decided to help me due to my commendable results. I was offered a new post in a primary school in the Gillitts area – a farm area. I was pleased to be appointed in a school only an hour away from home.



Figure 6.5: Mrs Sharps student card from Springfield College

The beginning of her career

My first HOD was a very strict and meticulous person. From the charts on our walls to the stitches in our needlework class, everything had to be perfect. She would look for the finer details in everything we did and her eye would not miss a thing. If she was unhappy with the

standard of our work, we would have to redo it and resubmit it. If the lines on our charts or boards were not straight, we would have to remove it and redo it. If the stitches on a piece of cloth were not straight, we would have to restart the entire process. Even our tests had to be drafted from scratch if it were not up to standard.

Wanting to give up

I had just come out of college and did not know much about being in the real world of teaching. In only my first term at this school, I wanted to quit. I could not handle it any longer. The demands from this HOD were too great for me as a first-time teacher.

Taking advice from her lecturer

At that time, even after graduating from college, our lecturers would still visit our schools to ensure we were doing our job appropriately. When my lecturer came to my school during the first term, I immediately told her that I was going to quit because I did not feel cut out for this profession. My lecturer told me to be patient and continue. She also advised me to give it a year more. If, after the year, my mind did not change then my lecturer would not stop me.

Finding courage in the presence of supportive colleagues

At my first school, I met my two 'sisters'. These were two slightly older teachers who took me under their wing and took care of me ever since I went to this school. They called me their baby sister. Because our HOD was so strict, there were times I would break down and cry. But they would offer me the comfort of big sisters and would always look out for me. At my lowest, they would reassure me that everything would be okay.

Perseverance

So, I took their advice and remained patient in every situation I faced. Eventually, as the terms went by, I got the hang of things and became someone who was refined in my teaching and looking back it was all thanks to my HOD. I appreciate everything that my HOD did for me. Everything she did was in the line of duty. As a young teacher, she built a foundation for me to become a good teacher. When we are young and new to the profession, we are naïve and immature and we do not take criticism well, but as the years go by and I reflect on them, I realise that those were the moments when the seeds were sown for my career.



Figure 6.6: Photographs from Mrs Sharp's memory box of her together with staff and learners

New beginnings

In February 1994, I moved to my next school which was in unit 11 just a few units away from my home, as I was pregnant and needed a convenient travelling route. In this new school my career simply flourished. I took my job very seriously. My principal saw that I had a lot of potential but only after working extremely hard to prove myself. When I first went to the school, he asked me which subjects I specialise in and I told him that it is maths. He told me that unfortunately he could not give me maths to teach because he already had his teachers who took the maths classes and did not want to interrupt them with any changes. He then placed me in an English class, no questions asked. As he watched me teach that year, he was very impressed with my teaching strategies and techniques so he moved me to a higher standard in the next year. Ever since then, I started teaching mathematics in grade 7. This also proved to my principal about my potential to teach and develop the learners in maths.

Taking on big events and initiatives

My new school was not like my first school as it was in a rural area and we were restricted in the types of activities we could do due to a lack of resources. In the new school we exposed our learners to a variety of events. Moving on to one of my biggest events that I organised, we had a 2010 World Cup soccer initiative at my school. I was the organiser of the entire function as well as the director of my own class item. In the picture, I present a few gifts that were given to the learners at this event. This event was a huge success and we even got the media involved. The community and parent component came on board and assisted us greatly with this event. They even came at night to assist us with decorations. I believe that these roles and tasks that were assigned to me has [sic] aided me to become a better leader. Given the opportunity to take charge in planning and executing big events has contributed towards me improving and becoming better.



Figure 6.7: Souvenirs from the 2010 world cup event planned and executed by Mrs Sharp

Developing social awareness in young children

I initiated many community projects whereby I formed groups of learners and we aimed to gather the elderly people and treat them to lunch, games, and craft activities such as making jewellery. We visited the Aryan Benevolent Home for the elderly. Our initiative created a sense of family for them. By us visiting them, they felt comfort and love. The warmth of the children made them feel at home. The family gaps that they were deprived of was [sic] fulfilled through our initiative. In this way I was able to instil good values and morals in the children which they could carry throughout their lives. It was a real eye opener for them as young children and they learnt so much about helping and caring for the elderly.

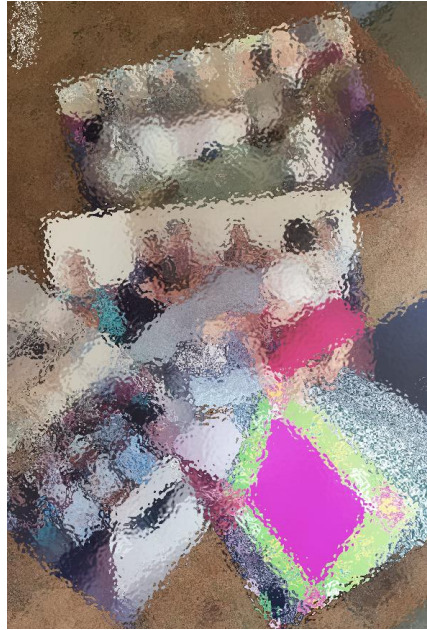


Figure 6.8: Photographs and art-work from the community project that Mrs Sharp initiated

Making a great difference

I have decided to add some sentimental objects which I received from my learners over my years of teaching. The first gift is a jewellery set consisting of a bracelet and earrings. This gift is very special to me because it also encompasses the holy cross which symbolises my belief and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The bracelet has words on the charms which read 'patience and kindness' and these symbolise my character towards my students. This learner gave me this gift when she was exiting grade 7 and to know that I made such a great difference to them. Today, many years later, this student is very successful in her career.



Figure 6.9: A special gift given to Mrs Sharp by a learner

I recently received a call from one of my ex-learners. When I picked up the phone, I couldn't quite remember who this learner was. But then he reminded me of a moment when I was extremely upset with him in our class and scolded him. This learner was from an underprivileged home and often acted out with bad behaviour at school. He called me after many years now that he was in matric. The reason behind his call was to thank me for all that I did for him when he was in primary school. Now that he is finishing matric, he wanted to show me that I was remembered and appreciated for the impact that I had on his life. This moment was one of the most fulfilling moments in my career. To know that a learner whom I taught many years ago, still remembered me even with the scolding I gave him. I knew that I was in the right profession, and I knew that through the little things I did for my learners, I was making a great difference in their lives. Below is a drawing of my happiest teaching memory.

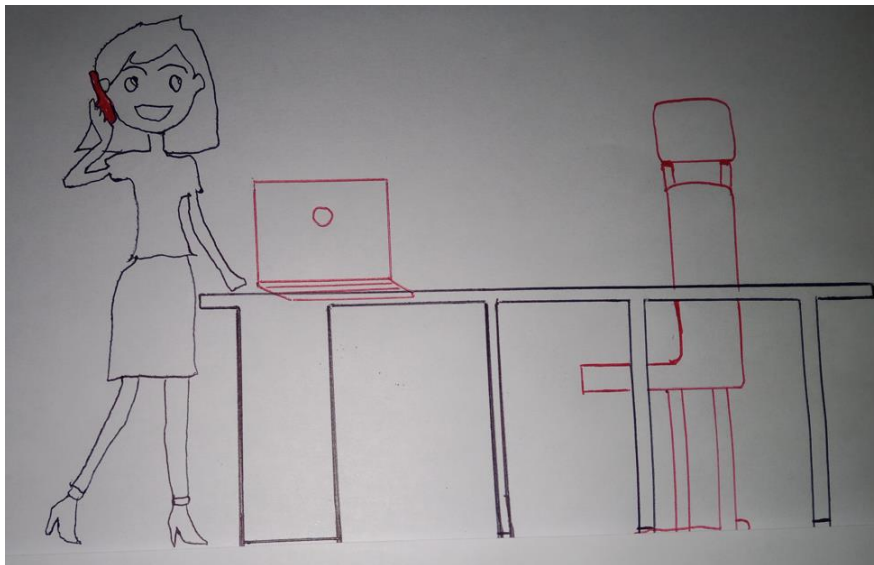


Figure 6.10: Mrs Sharp's memory drawing of her happiest teaching memory

6.2.2 Synthesis of Section A

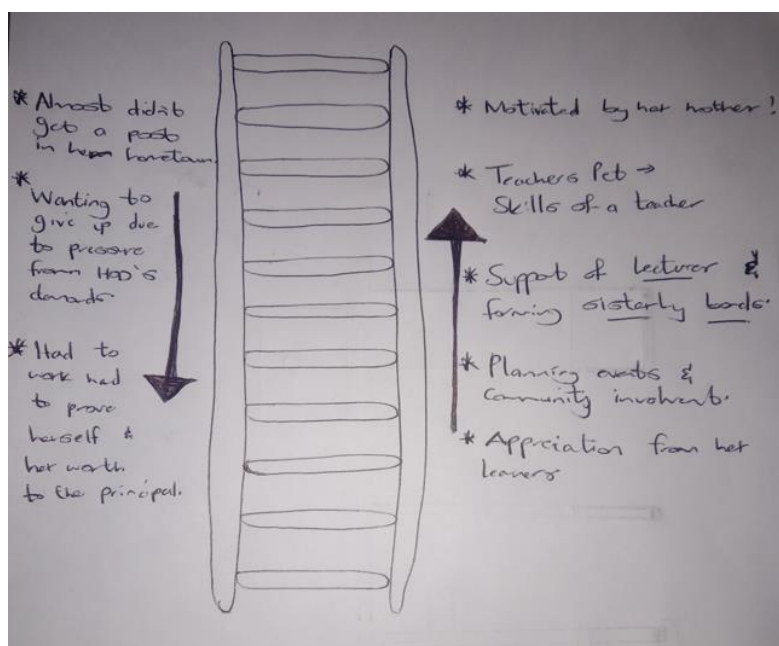


Figure 6.11: My synthesis drawing of Mrs Sharp's story

As I synthesised Mrs. Sharp's reconstructed story, I thought of a ladder. A ladder signifies a scaffolding that allows one to move up and down. In this narrative, the ladder signifies the growth that Mrs. Sharp experienced in her life and in her career. There are two arrows on either side of the ladder. The one pointing downwards shows the moments in which Mrs. Sharp faced challenges and wanted to give up on her teaching career. The arrow pointing upwards shows her transformation from calling herself a mini teacher to now being a real teacher who was willing to learn and grow regardless of the challenges she faced.

Mrs. Sharp's storied narrative foregrounded her school learner self and her multi-talented capacity as a girl child. Positive teacher-learner relationships of love enhanced her skills and care as she had been allowed to grow and execute many different duties. As a professional teacher, her experiences with significant others forged relationships of mutual respect and understanding as well as support and motivation.

6.3 Section B: Interpretation and analysis of Mrs Sharp's story

In this section, I analyse and interpret Mrs. Sharp's storied narrative. In this second level analysis I respond to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

A pantoum poem was used as a tool to assist me in unpacking this participant's experiences of relationships. It helped me pick out the most gripping phrases from Mrs. Sharp's narrative which stood out as key experiences. Following Furman's (2006) advice, I was able to read through Mrs. Sharp's reconstructed story and to highlight the key themes that emerged. By reflecting on these key themes in the repetitive structure of the pantoum poem, I could explore these themes in the different contexts of her life. Below is the pantoum poem I dedicate to Mrs Sharp:

Mum – the driving force behind my success
 Captured hearts became the teachers pet
 Balancing teacher work and school work
 Mini teacher turns real teacher

Captured hearts became the teachers pet
 Almost gave up because of the pressure
 Balancing teacher work and school work
 Found support and formed bonds

Almost gave up because of the pressure
 Seeds were sown for a bright teaching future
 Found support and formed bonds
 Event planning and community involvement

Seeds were sown for a bright teaching future
 Made a great difference in learners lives
 Event planning and community involvement
 Mum – the driving force behind my success

Figure 6.12: Pantoum poem dedicated to Mrs. Sharp: A mini teacher becoming a real teacher

To answer research question 2 (*How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*”), I first extracted data that spoke to significant personal and professional relationships from her story and then used these relationships in relation to the experiences the participant had recalled and shared. According to Igenlzi (2000), the concept of ‘making’ is used to describe the process through which people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and themselves.

I first worked with Mrs. Sharp's stories of personal relational experiences and with the concept of informal teacher leadership development. I was able to explain the meanings she attached to

‘self’ that had been formed in her everyday life. I analysed these meanings to understand the emotions of self-perception and how these had shaped certain behaviours and actions. I then present a synthesis to highlight the significant personal-professional relationships in Mrs. Sharp’s life that guided her making as a teacher leader.

I conclude this chapter by offering an interpretation of possible interconnections between her personal and professional lives and indicate the meanings of ‘self’ that she negotiated inside and outside the classroom and that which positioned her as a teacher leader.

6.4 Section C: Mrs. Sharp’s Personal and Professional Relationships

I first discuss the significant personal and professional relationships Mrs. Sharp forged, followed by the meanings she attached to these relationships. Evidence from her story is attached and supported with reference to the literature.

I then discuss the personal-professional interconnectedness that was foregrounded in Mrs. Sharp’s beliefs across her personal and professional relationships in the home and school environments. I finally refer to my learnings from the above to illuminate how Mrs. Sharp shifted her beliefs to position herself in the three stages of being a teacher leader (i.e., classroom, situational, and developing). My findings are supported by the characteristics of teacher leaders that are expounded in the literature review section.

6.4.1 Relationship with her mother

As a young child, Mrs. Sharp had high expectations of herself and wanted to make her mother proud. Her mother’s inspirational relationship with her as a child transformed her into an adult who always pushed herself to achieve her goals. This positive relationship with her mother motivated her to create her own dream.

My mother has been a very strong influence over my life. Amma [Mrs Sharp’s mother] has been a great motivator, inspiration, and the driving force behind my success. Amma had also been instrumental in pushing me to continue my studies and to never stop or settle for the bare minimum.

According to Prenskey (2006), children who receive emotional support from their mothers have better mental health, are more confident, and are more likely to succeed in life than those who

are distant from their mothers. To provide the right kind of emotional support for your child, Suminar (2018) avers that a mother needs to be attentive to her child's needs, be a good listener, and provide a safe and supportive environment where the child can express him-/herself freely.

6.4.2 Forming positive relationships with high school teachers

The teachers Mrs. Sharp had in her schooling days took a special interest in her as she was a very capable learner. They saw potential in her and started training her in the ways of a teacher. She happily chose to conduct teaching tasks while balancing her own school work. This willingness to learn channeled her way of thinking.

My high school days were the best days of my life and these were the days I learned the 'nitty, gritty' of teacher things. When I entered grade 11 and 12, all the teachers already knew me and what I was capable of doing as a student. I would take on tasks required to be done by a teacher as well as do my own class work. My teachers had confidence in me and knew that I could balance my own work and help them as well.

Broom (2013) states that teachers can believe in the ability of students to guide their own learning and their ability to do the work that has to be done. Teachers create trusting environments, build capabilities, and empower students to manage themselves by trusting their students. In such contexts, students can discover the potential in themselves that they did not know they had or they could build on an existing skill (Feiman, 2006).

6.4.3 Challenging relationship with an HOD

Mrs. Sharp faced a daunting challenge in her first year of teaching as an HOD who had high standards, which gave her a hard time. She eventually developed a love for teaching as she realised that the high demands of her HOD taught her to develop the skills that she could use for a lifetime. By choosing not to give up, she became a better teacher and also formed a healthy relationship with her HOD, with whom she is still in contact.

My first HOD was a very strict and meticulous person. She would look for the finer details in everything we did. I had just come out of college and did not know much about being in the real world of teaching. In only my first term at this school, I

wanted to quit. I could not handle it any longer. The demands from this HOD were too great for me as a first-time teacher. So, I took the advice and remained patient in every situation I faced. Looking back, I appreciate everything that my HOD did for me. Everything she did was in the line of duty. As a young teacher, she built a foundation for me to become a good teacher. When we are young and new to the profession, we are naïve and immature and we do not take criticism well, but as the years go by and I reflect, I realise that those were the moments where the seeds were sown for my career.

Scott (2015) states that novice teachers face leadership challenges in their first years of teaching, and Mrs. Sharp faces the demand of high expectations from a HOD. She believed that she would be able to cope with the pressure, but it became overwhelming. Supportive relationships with her colleagues and lecturer assisted her in changing her belief that she was incapable. England (2022) argues that HODs have a strong influence over new teachers in the profession. Senge (2017) asserts that difficult and demanding leaders influence employees to work hard and gain valuable skills, which is a notion that Mrs. Sharp's story corroborated.

6.4.4 Supportive relationship with a lecturer

Mrs. Sharp formed a positive relationship with a lecturer, and this helped her to recreate her outlook on teaching. She faced challenges, but her will to persevere was strong due to the support she received. She began to love teaching and became interested in learning more about the profession.

My lecturer told me to be patient and continue. She also advised me to give it a year more. If, after the year, my mind did not change then my lecturer would not stop me....At my first school, I met my two 'sisters'. They were two slightly older teachers who took me under their wing and took care of me ever since I went to this school. They called me their baby sister. Because our HOD was so strict, there were times I would break down and cry. But they would offer me the comfort of big sisters and would always look out for me. At my lowest, they would reassure me that everything would be okay.

Mrs. Sharp was lucky as she formed supportive relationships of care and trust with her colleagues when navigating various challenging situations in her first few years of teaching.

Helsen (2000) argues that the support of friends, colleagues, and family is important when obstacles or challenges have to be overcome.

6.4.5 Developing a relationship with the community

Mrs. Sharp grabbed every opportunity to extend her influence outside the classroom, and she involved herself and her learners in various events and initiatives to serve the community. By involving her learners in community initiatives, she instilled sound values and morals in them from a young age. Therefore, she enhanced her ability to become a teacher leader by taking charge of these events and adopting a strong and supportive demeanour.

In this way I was able to instil good values and morals in the children which they could carry throughout their lives. It was a real eye opener for them as young children and they learnt so much about helping and caring for the elderly.

I believe that these roles and tasks that were assigned to me has [sic] aided me to become a better leader. Given the opportunity to take charge in planning and executing big events has contributed towards me improving and becoming better.

By embracing opportunities to take charge of community initiatives, Mrs. Sharp learned that teaching should not only be about the curriculum but also about moral values and learner development. Cormack (2019) argues that teachers who take the initiative and who carry out tasks over and above the curriculum show true leadership qualities.

6.4.6 Long-lasting relationships with students

In her adult life, Mrs. Sharp was a strict but compassionate teacher who made a difference in the lives of her learners by teaching them values and morals that they could use in the future. Many years after leaving her classroom, a learner again contacted Mrs. Sharp to thank her for her influence in his life. This brought her much joy as she knew she had a lasting impact on her students. She felt appreciated and glad that her purpose as a teacher had been fulfilled in this young man's and in many of her learner's lives.

The reason behind his call was to thank me for all that I did for him when he was in primary school. Now that he was finishing matric, he wanted to show me that I was remembered and appreciated for the impact that I had on his life. I knew that I was in

the right profession, and I knew that through the little things I did for my learners, I was making a great difference in their lives.

According to Brophy (2008), showing appreciation and acknowledgment highlights a teacher's ability to change the lives of children and to transform their troubled situations into better ones. Mrs Sharp was indeed able to take a leader's stance to ensure that her learners became worthy individuals.

6.5 Section D: Mrs Sharp's Beliefs

6.5.1 Personal-professional interconnectedness of Mrs Sharp's beliefs

Personal: As a young girl, Mrs. Sharp believed that she needed to prove herself to her mother, whether it was by learning her spelling words or getting her homework done. She believed that, by doing many things at once, her mother would be impressed, and this would gain her love and acknowledgment. Mrs. Sharp transferred this belief to her school environment. She believed she needed to help her teachers and do her own work. As a learner, she believed that she would be liked and acknowledged by her peers and teachers for her ability to multi-task between her roles as a learner and a 'teacher's assistant'.

Professional: Mrs. Sharp believed that when she started teaching at her first school, she would find it easy because of her experiences of performing some teacher roles while she was at school. However, her HOD demanded high standards, and this created tension, and she needed to adapt to different demands in this environment as a qualified teacher. Her belief that she always needed to do many things at once made her think that this quality would assist her as a new teacher. Fortunately, the caring and supportive relationships she had forged with her lecturer and colleagues changed her thinking, and she decided to stay and learn from her HOD. Her resilience thus allowed her to change her perception of herself and of the way she viewed the HOD as a person. These changes in her thinking allowed her to become involved in many initiatives and events in her new school and to grow into a fully-fledged teacher.

Personal-professional interconnections: Mrs. Sharp believed that she needed to be good at multi-tasking and getting things done to prove herself to her mother, and she transferred this belief to her career and school, where she wanted to be recognised by her HOD for her hard work. However, she changed her thinking as she understood that she did not need to do so

many things at once to be recognised. She was then able to find the courage to stay in the profession and she acknowledged the supportive relationships that had guided her to make this decision. By positively navigating the tensions with her HOD, she was able to position herself in a place of learning rather than a place of knowing all. This shift allowed her to become more skilled in her practices at her new school.

I wanted to know how her relationships of support changed her beliefs. As I perused the data, I realised that her relationships with her lecturer and teacher colleagues changed her views and how she perceived herself. These supportive friends guided her to shift her thinking, and she no longer wanted to give up. The relationship with her HOD also supported her learning and growth as a teacher. The relationships she had forged influenced her positively and allowed her to make sound choices as a teacher. She was also able to develop a healthy relationship with her HOD, whose demands at first seemed daunting and challenging. She chose to become an inspirational teacher by helping her learners in their choices and decisions and adapt to society's demands. She became a teacher who made a difference by overcoming challenging situations and being willing to learn from her superiors.

6.5.2 Changed beliefs led to positive choices

As a narrative inquirer, I adopted a visual model to conceptualise the process of making oneself into a teacher leader. As a researcher, I posed various questions as I perused the data to channel my understanding. For instance, I wanted to know what made Mrs. Sharp different from other teachers, what kind of classroom teacher she was, and how she had come to be. I critically reflected on particular experiences, and I was able to foreground a range of relationships and experiences that were challenging for Mrs. Sharp. When I asked: *What is it that stands out in Mrs. Sharp's storied life about her self-perception and how did it shape her stance?* I wanted to understand what she thought, how she behaved, and what meanings she attached to classroom situations and what was happening around her. The answers to these questions revealed the inner tensions and conflicts she negotiated and that her emotions (both positive and negative ones) had influenced certain beliefs about herself and the personal and professional relationships she formed in the different environments of her life.

To answer question 2, I revisited her storied relationships once more. I searched for excerpts where Miss Sharp shared experiences of her engagement with her learners, and that showed

how her relationship with them changed both her way of thinking and made a positive difference in her life.

Mrs. Sharp's personal relationship with her mother made her feel the need to impress her with her success as a learner in order to receive her mother's love and acknowledgment. By forming supportive relationships with others, she was also inspired with courage, strength, and a strong belief in herself. Essentially, she was able to learn and grow because she found the motivation to do so within herself. In this way, her personal relationship with herself grew and she was able to find confidence in herself to overcome the challenges she faced in her professional life. Her relationships with her students filled her with joy as she knew she could make a difference in their lives. Also, taking a special interest in the values she instilled in her learners proved that she was worthy as she influenced their future lives.

6.5.2.1 Mrs Sharp as a Classroom Teacher Leader

Drawing on her experiences as a girl leader who involved herself in a range of activities at school, Mrs. Sharp displayed positive classroom leadership as she involved her learners in projects that went beyond the academic curriculum. She chose to involve her learners in community initiatives and this stirred their social awareness. She led her students with pride, knowing that she was instilling life-long values in them that would render them worthy adults and citizens. She took charge of her own and her learners' development and went the extra mile for her learners' present and future lives.

6.5.2.2 Mrs Sharp as a Situational Teacher Leader

As a leader, Mrs. Sharp made sound choices in difficult situations and uplifted herself as a teacher. She chose to learn more even when the odds were against her. By taking charge of her life and exercising agency over her career, she chose to believe in herself and aimed to grow personally and professionally. She formed new relationships and built on old ones. Walsh (2018) states that we learn from our existing relationships while forming new ones.

6.5.2.3 Mrs Sharp as a Developing Teacher Leader

Mrs. Sharp initiated school projects, and she took the lead by involving herself in decision-making processes and planning and preparing for these events. She developed by challenging herself and by constantly learning more as a teacher. Billett (2013) endorses the importance of using challenges to learn and improve.

6.5.2.4 Mrs. Sharp as a teacher leader

Mrs. Sharp took charge of her own life and responsibilities by guiding her learners on a fulfilling path and supporting the school's holistic development. According to the literature (Lumpkin, 2014), these characteristics showed that Mrs. Sharp had the qualities of a teacher leader, and she could thus be identified as one. For instance, she was resilient, caring, dedicated, driven, and task-oriented.

6.6 Conclusion: Mrs Sharp's Achievement of Growth and Development

In this chapter, I offered my analysis and interpretation of Mrs. Sharp's storied experiences of relationships as she developed into a teacher leader. Parts of her narrative were analysed in response to the two research questions: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* and *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

I focused on Mrs. Sharp's lived personal and professional experiences to understand how these had shaped her *making* as a teacher leader. My overall learnings revealed the beliefs that guided Mrs. Sharp's development. For instance, she believed that she had to be a multi-tasking child and learner to receive the recognition and love from her mother and teachers that she craved. In the teaching environment, supportive relationships helped her to navigate the challenges she encountered. She gained appreciation and love from her students because of the spaces she provided to guide their development as young adults. Mrs Sharp characterises as a teacher leader who is determined, motivated and action orientated. She offers constructive feedback to those around her and is always enthusiastic to make a difference.

In Chapter Seven, I present the storied narrative of my fourth and final participant, Miss Samuel, whom I refer to as Sam

CHAPTER SEVEN

MISS SAMUEL'S STORY – LEARNING TO BELIEVE IN HERSELF

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the third participant's story by reconstructing and deconstructing it to answer the two key research questions. My analysis and interpretation of Mrs. Sharp's story provided a deep understanding of her storied experiences of relationships that had shaped her making as a teacher leader. I particularly explored her personal and professional relationships and discovered how these relationships had shaped her making.

In this chapter, I explore the story of the fourth and final participant, Miss Samuel, whom I more informally refer to as Sam. The focus of this chapter is to present and analyse Sam's reconstructed story of her experiences of the personal and professional relationships that had influenced her making as a teacher leader. I reconstructed Sam's story using a range of data collection tools. I present this story from my personal experiences as a participant but analyse it from a researcher's perspective as it reflects my own self-study investigation of my development as a teacher and the lessons I learnt.

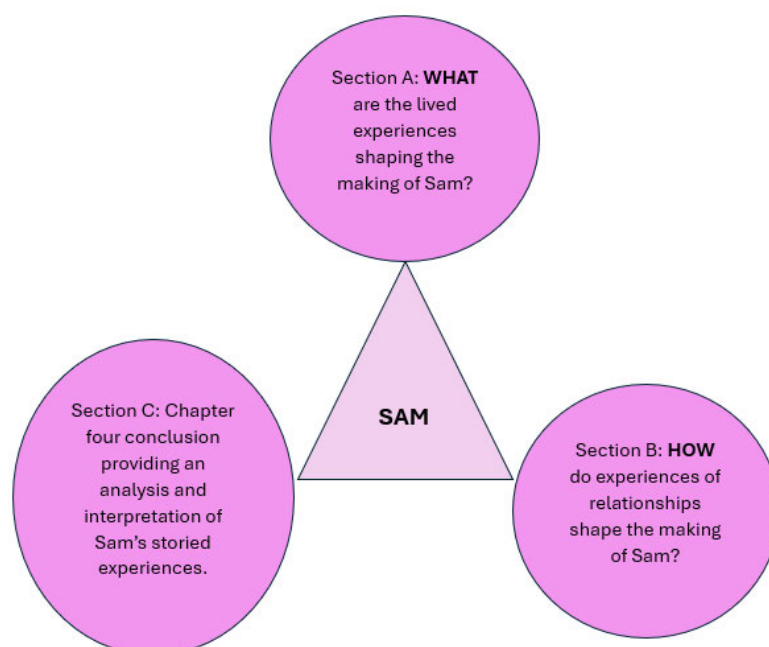


Figure 7.1: Diagrammatic summary of my analysis of Sam's narrative

7.2 Section A: Miss Samuels's (Sam's) experiences of Relationships

7.2.1 Sam's story

In this section, I present a reconstructed storied narrative of Sam's experiences of relationships in response to research question 1: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* The story was reconstructed after working with the raw data that had been generated by means of Sam's self-box, memory drawing, and the unstructured interview that I had conducted with her (i.e., with myself). My aim was to understand the complex experiences of relationships that Sam had forged over her years of teaching. The following diagram was used to identify and arrange the critical plots and subplots in Sam's narrative that responded to research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

Family support system	A special bond with a special teacher	Taking the next step	Realising my purpose
I am my grandfather's angel	The goodness of God	First school as a qualified teacher	Doubts turned to reassurance
	A passion for teaching		Finally believing in myself

Table 7.2: Plots and critical experiences that impacted Sam's making

Sam's background

I am a 27-year-old female from the small town of Chatsworth near in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. I am a teacher, but first I am a daughter, a sister, a friend, and more recently, a researcher. I live with my family which consists of my parents, younger brother, and myself. We follow the Hindu faith and put God first in everything. I have been in the teaching profession since 2018 and therefore this [2024] will be my 7th year as a fully qualified teacher. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Education specialising in Teacher Development Studies where I will be presenting my study titled Storied experiences of the personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader.

Family as Sam's support system

My family is very important to me and they have always been a system of support and courage in my life. On my worst days, my family are the people I turn to for comfort and reassurance

and I know that with them everything will be okay. I value my family and the time I spend with them. Family time is important to me even on the busiest days. It is a form of destress for me.



Figure 7.3: Sam's family photograph

Her grandfather's angel

My grandfather always referred to me as his angel. My grandfather played a pivotal role in my choice and execution of a career. As a young girl, he always encouraged and motivated me to do my best. When it was time to apply to universities, my grandfather would always check in on my application and feedback process. He was over the moon when I told him my career choice and from that day, he always told me that he could not wait to see me hold a briefcase in my hand and leaving to go school as a teacher. Over my years of studying, he continued to remind me of that wish of his and on the days that I felt overwhelmed and drained, I would use that reminder as motivation to persevere not only to make my dream come true, but to fulfil his wish as well. In my fourth year of studies, my grandfather's health began to deteriorate but thankfully he made it to my graduation photoshoot. He got to see his dream come true... his angel became a teacher.



Figure 7.4: Photo of Sam's tribute to her late grandfather

Forging a special bond with a teacher

My first primary school teacher was someone who made a difference in my life from a young age. As a young learner, I was not very confident and portrayed shyness in and out of the classroom. My teacher did not scold or reprimand me for these qualities; rather she created a classroom for positive sharing and engagement with the students. Through the activities she planned, I was able to slowly break out of my shell and build my confidence. Through her care and patience, I was able to enjoy school and looked forward to attending every day. My teacher would always centre our lessons around us the students and she always showed an interest in our likes, dislikes, and hobbies. At that time, I was attending dance classes due to the recommendation by this very teacher to my parents as an aid to help me gain confidence. Knowing this my teacher, back from her trip to India, brought me a beautiful bangle which she said I should wear in one of my dancing performances. This gift thrilled me as I always felt a special connection to her but by bringing me this gift it proved the type of teacher she was – someone who cared about her students and took a special interest in each of them.



Figure 7.5: A picture of the bangle that Sam's teacher gifted her

The goodness of God

The picture below is of a key chain with the image of a Hindu Goddess. I carried this key chain in my bag when I was in high school, throughout university, and now that I am a teacher. This key chain kept me going during my matric year and especially when I was awaiting my matric results. I would hold it in my hand and pray sincerely every time I was aiming to achieve something big in my life. This religious key chain has a picture of the Hindu Goddess Saraswathi whom we pray to for success in education. In its symbolic form, it helped me to

persevere and kept me strong when I felt overwhelmed and stressed during exams and my studies. I decided to add it into my memory box because I believe that God and prayer have contributed to my academic achievements along with hard work and sacrifice. This key chain symbolises my faith and belief in God.



Figure 7.6: The religious key chain from Sam's memory box

Developing a passion for teaching

In 2002, I participated in a Grade 1 debs [debutants] ball. We were asked to write a short biographical note about ourselves that would be read aloud while we walked down the aisle. As young as 5 years old, I added to my note that I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up. I always admired female teachers and the way they dressed, the loving and nurturing way they handled the learners, and their calm stature they had when they stood in front of a class to teach. My first teacher was a huge inspiration to me in primary school and in just a few months in her grade 1 class, I knew I wanted to be just like her one day.

Taking the next step

After completing Matric in 2013, I immediately applied to Embury Institute for Teacher Education to study teaching. This was a four-year journey for me and I enjoyed every moment of it. In 2017, I completed my studies and was finally a fully qualified teacher. I recall my first and second year of entering two schools respectively and meeting the teachers in the pictures. I remember feeling anxious, nervous, and slightly afraid of what to expect. However, these two mentors welcomed me with bright smiles and accepted me into their fold with a willingness to teach and they develop me as a novice teacher.



Figure 7.7: A picture of Sam's mentor teachers

First school as a qualified teacher

I began teaching as a qualified teacher in 2018 as a Governing Body (SGB) appointee. In this year, I was placed under the supervision of a dynamic HOD who made me realise that what we learnt as student teachers did not compare with what we actually faced when we were placed in a teaching position. My first year of teaching presented many challenges as I had to work extremely hard and dedicate long hours to mastering the ethics and values of my school. The HOD trained me in many aspects such as teaching in the classroom, supervising learners outside the classroom, filing, writing on the board, setting test papers, and even planning events such as reading evenings, library initiatives, sporting activities, etc. Under the supervision of this HOD, I learnt the skill of time management which is an important skill to possess, especially as a teacher. I learnt so much in my first year and impressed the senior management team that eventually, when another teacher was promoted to another school, I was offered the position in a permanent capacity. It was then that I received my appointment letter and I am now still teaching in the same school 6 years later. This appointment letter is a constant reminder of my own personal growth and I view it as my reward for my perseverance as a new teacher at the very beginning of my career.

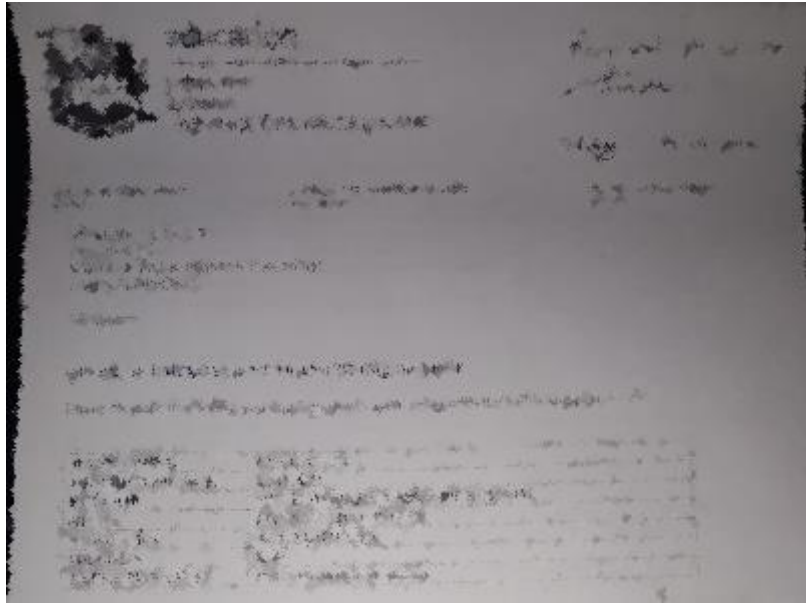


Figure 7.8: Sam's Appointment Letter

Realising my purpose in life

One bright and sunny day my learners were outside on the school grounds for a PE [physical education] lesson. A learner, whom I call Jack in this story, tripped and fell. Prior to this incident this learner had been very emotional and anxious as he had transferred to my school as a new learner a month before. He was in the adjusting phase and was still getting accustomed to the new procedures and unfamiliar faces around him. I had to work hard on my skill to be patient with him. It took a lot of gentle conversations to gain his trust and for him to allow himself to accept me as his new teacher. The day when he fell, I quickly ran to him and picked him up. I reassured him that everything would be okay. He began to cry when he saw the bloody wound on his knee. I went to get the first aid kit and feared that all the weeks of hard work to get him to adjust to his new school would be in vain in just a few seconds. When I returned to him, I treated his wound and gave him a hug while wiping away his tears and offering some words of comfort. After a while, he hugged me back and looked at me with a broad smile. He began to tell me how happy he was that I was there to help him when he fell. He continued to tell me that his fear had disappeared when I took his hand and helped him up. Jack then said that he had never felt as safe as he did in his new school and it was all thanks to his new teacher.

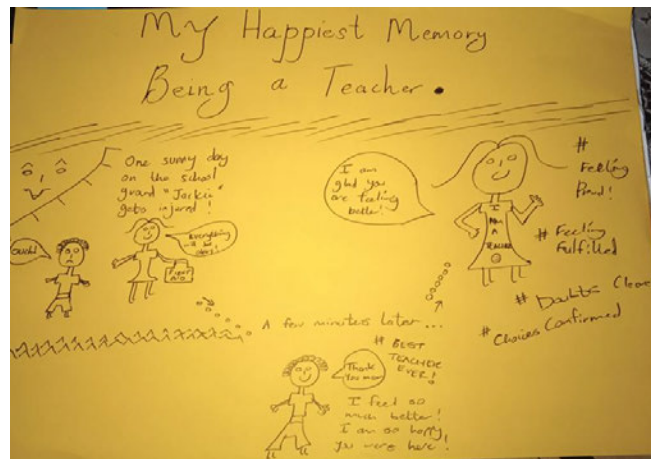


Figure 7.9: Sam's memory drawing of her happiest teaching memory

Turning doubt into reassurance

It was at that moment that I felt fulfilled as a teacher. Those words reassured me that I was in the right profession. I had often felt doubtful and questioned if I was following the right path. I felt proud that I could take a difficult situation and turn it into a positive experience for a child. Being a teacher, I always felt the need to impress everyone around me but it never occurred to me until that moment that the reason I chose to be a teacher was to make a difference in the lives of many children and that the people I really needed to impress were my learners.

7.2.2 Synthesis of Section A

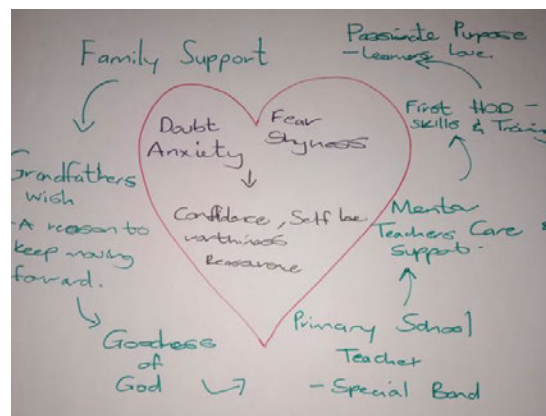


Figure 7.10: My synthesis drawing of Sam's story

As I synthesised Section A of Sam's reconstructed story, I developed the above drawing to capture some of my learnings from Sam's storied experiences of relationships. This is a drawing of a heart in which the outer heart symbolises all the love Sam received during her childhood and in her adult life. The inner heart reflects Sam's feelings about herself. She

acknowledged feelings of doubt as she doubted her ability to teach, her career choice, and also feared breaking out of her shell when she was a shy young girl in primary school.

Sam's narrative taught me that the relationships she had with her family, with God, with her primary school teacher, and with her HOD provided her with many memories to share. However, the relationship she had with herself was the one she had to work on hardest over the years. She came to understand that it was through the special people she had met and the experiences she had gained that she was able to build confidence in herself and learn to believe in herself and her capabilities as a teacher.

7.3 Section B: Interpretation and analysis of Sam's story

In this section, I analyse and interpret Sam's storied narrative as I respond to the research question 2: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

A pantoum poem was once again used as a tool to assist me in unpacking this participant's experiences of relationships. Composing the poem helped me to pick out the most gripping phrases from Sam's narrative which stood out among her experiences. According to Furman (2006), I could compose a pantoum poem as I read through a reconstructed story and highlighted the key themes that emerged. As I looked at these key themes in the repetitive structure of the pantoum poem, my view and understanding of these themes were enhanced as I explored them in the different contexts of the participant's life.

My family provided comfort and support
 Encouraged and motivated by my grandfather
 A teacher filled with care and patience
 Faith and belief on God

Encouraged and motivated by my grandfather
 Admiration for female teachers
 Faith and belief on God
 Finally a teacher myself

Admiration for female teachers
 Learnt important skills, ethics and values
 Finally a teacher myself
 Felt fulfilled and purposeful

Learnt important skills, ethics and values
 Special memories held close to my heart
 Felt fulfilled and purposeful
 My family provided comfort and support

Figure 7.11: Pantoum poem dedicated to Sam: Learning to believe in herself

7.4 Section C: Sam's Personal and Professional Relationships

To answer research question 2 (*How do experiences of relationships shape the making of teacher leader?*) I first extracted data that spoke to significant personal and professional relationships from Sam's story, and I then explored these relationships in relation to the experiences she had recalled and shared. I first worked with the stories of her personal relational experiences and with the concept of informal teacher leader, and I was able to explain the meanings she attached to 'self' that had been formed during her everyday life. I analysed these meanings to understand the emotions that drove her self-perception and to explore how these had shaped certain behaviours and actions she manifested. This discussion is followed by a synthesis to highlight the significant personal-professional relationships she had forged in the process of becoming (or making herself) a teacher leader. I conclude this chapter by offering my interpretations of the interconnectedness between her personal and professional relationship experiences and by explaining what meanings of 'self' she had negotiated inside and outside the classroom which positioned her as a teacher leader.

I commence by discussing the significant personal and professional relationships Sam had forged, followed by the meanings she connected to these relationships. Evidence from her story is attached and supported by the literature. I then offer my views on the personal-professional interconnectedness her story foregrounded and the beliefs Sam had adopted from her home and school environment.

I finally use my learnings to discuss the shifts that had occurred in Sam's beliefs that allowed her to position herself in the three stages of being a teacher leader (i.e., classroom, situational and developing). My view of her as a teacher leader is supported by evidence from the literature that expounds the characteristics of such a teacher.

7.4.1 Significant meanings Sam attached to her personal and professional relationships

7.4.1.1 Her grandfather

Sam had a supportive family, and knowing this allowed her to face difficult situations with confidence. She was able to deal with various challenges because she knew she was not alone. She said:

On my worst days, my family are the people I turn to for comfort and reassurance and I know that with them everything will be okay. My grandfather played a pivotal role in my choice and execution of a career. As a young girl, he always encouraged and motivated me to do my best.

Benson (2016) states that successful adult development is dependent on many factors, one of which is the support and love of a family. Shim (2009) argues that healthy family relations can lead to overall improvement of young adults' lives and give them a bright outlook for their future.

7.4.1.2 Her relationship with God

Sam's belief in God as her driving force helped her to instil an inner strength and to believe in herself. She was able to use this belief in God throughout her schooling and college years and this belief was also the source of her knowledge that her hopes and dreams would be fulfilled. Hanging on to this belief, she worked hard and made sacrifices to attain her goals. By believing in God and her family's support, she was strengthened and able to achieve her goals.

This key chain, in its symbolic form, helped me to persevere and kept me strong when I felt overwhelmed and stressed during exams and studies. This key chain is special to me and I have decided to place it in my memory box because I believe that God and prayer have contributed to my academic achievements along with hard work and sacrifice. This key chain symbolises my faith and belief in God.

According to Emmons (2000), motivation comes from forces that are either internal or external, and these inner qualities are virtues that fill humans with strength. Believing in something that instils a person with strength gives one the ability to achieve one's goals (Elsevier, 2003).

7.4.1.3 Sam's relationships with teachers

Sam's teachers helped her to step out of the box she had created for herself by being shy and afraid to share and speak in class. One teacher in particular provided the entire class with opportunities to express themselves in a safe and accepting space. This teacher's demeanour and behaviour in the presence of learners generally sparked admiration for her and Sam thus also wanted to become a teacher one day. Instead of remaining shy and scared, Sam chose to be brave and to reach her true potential as a student and novice teacher. Using what her teacher had taught her, she was also able to become a source of strength and comfort for her learners.

This teacher was someone who made a difference in my life from a young age. As a young learner, I was not very confident and portrayed shyness in and out of the classroom. My teacher did not scold or reprimand me for these qualities; rather, she created a classroom for positive sharing and engagement with the students. My teacher would always centre our lessons around us the students and she always showed an interest in our likes, dislikes, and hobbies.

Friedman (2011) states that teachers have the power to improve their learners' outcomes once they are adults. Rasanen (2020) adds that the type of work a teacher does and their influence guide their learners to develop into worthy adults. Cotnoir (2014) strongly believes that teachers leave a long-lasting influence on their students, especially on those who have become teachers themselves.

7.4.1.4 Sam's relationships with mentor teachers

Sam's experiences with her mentor teachers offered her a safe space to learn and grow as a novice teacher. Even though she felt anxious and nervous at the start of her teaching journey, being encouraged by her mentors gave her the strength she needed to learn as much as she could in order to become an effective teacher leader in the future. She was able to overcome her fear through the comforting demeanour of other teachers. Their warmth and care allowed her the freedom to learn as much as she could without feeling afraid and nervous, and she was able to become the best version of herself.

I remember feeling anxious, nervous and slightly afraid of what to expect. However, these two mentors welcomed me with bright smiles and accepted me into their fold with a willingness to teach and they develop me as a novice teacher.

Richter (2013) states that the quality of different mentoring approaches can lead to teacher efficacy, teacher enthusiasm, and teacher productivity. The role of mentors in supporting new teachers is important, especially in their first year of teaching (Strong, 2011).

7.4.1.5 An inspirational HOD promoted Sam's effectiveness as a teacher

Sam was placed under the supervision of an HOD who provided her with the necessary guidance and support to grow as a new teacher. She was able to learn the necessary skills and values early in her profession. Sam was faced with real-life teaching experiences and she was trained to effectively handle these experiences and make the best of every situation through the guidance of her HOD. At first, Sam felt overwhelmed, but the guidance of her HOD enabled her to position herself to work hard and she chose to put in extra hours to become the best teacher she could be.

In this one year, I was placed under the supervision of a dynamic HOD who made me realise that what we had learnt as student teachers did not compare to what we actually faced when we were placed in a teaching position. The HOD trained me in many aspects such as teaching in the classroom, supervising learners outside the classroom, filing, writing on the board, setting test papers, and even planning events such as reading evenings, library initiatives, sporting activities, etc. Under the supervision of this HOD, I learnt the skill of time management which is an important skill to possess, especially as a teacher.

Francis (2017) states that teachers' positive perceptions of the leadership behaviours of their HODs increase their motivation. Good leaders promote good impacts such as teacher morale and good performance (Stronge, 2018). The ultimate goals of mentorship are to improve teaching and learning and encourage and enhance teacher efficacy (Francis, 2017).

7.4.1.6 Learners can bring out the best in their teachers

Just as teachers can bring out the best in their learners, learners can also have a similar impact on their teachers. Sam was able to appreciate her purpose and value as a teacher through the relationships she forged with her learners, and this filled her with pride. Being a shy child herself, she was able to help a new child to break out of his shell and to become brave and confident in his new school. This behaviour was similar to that of a teacher who had given her opportunities to gain her confidence in primary school. The positive relationship she had forged with herself was evident because she was able to identify her strengths and start to believe in herself.

It was at that moment that I felt fulfilled as a teacher. Those words reassured me that I was in the right profession. I had often felt doubtful and questioned if I was following the right path. I felt proud that I could take a difficult situation and turn it into a positive experience for a child. Being a teacher, I always felt the need to impress everyone around me but it never occurred to me until that moment that the reason I chose to be a teacher was to make a difference in the lives of many children and that the people I really needed to impress were my learners.

Freeman (2015) states that we may rediscover ourselves and our teaching abilities through spending time with our learners both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers who are open to learning from their students will have a tremendous positive influence on the educational world (Blasé, 2006).

7.5 Section D: Sam's Beliefs

7.5.1 Personal and professional interconnectedness

Personal: Baker (2010) argues that young girls internalise the belief when they grow up that they need to be successful women. Sam believed that she needed to behave in a certain way as a girl child; hence, she was shy and conservative. She was afraid of being scolded by her mother if she got into trouble or didn't complete her chores. She believed that she needed to be 'prim

and proper' if she wanted to receive her mother's approval. When she was in the company of her grandfather, this belief changed. She was offered unconditional love and acceptance and his presence provided a space where she could break away from her shyness.

This belief that she had created at home shifted to the school environment where she encountered supportive relationships and an open space for sharing. She felt free to express herself because of the welcoming attitude of her teacher mentors. Moreover, when she entered the teaching profession, she believed that she was accepted unconditionally by her mentors without having to prove who she was to receive recognition.

Professional: In her teaching environment, Sam believed that she needed to be the perfect teacher in order to receive recognition from her seniors. By working under an HOD who provided her with support to learn and grow as a novice teacher, she was able to loosen the conservative reigns that bound her and to take risks inside and outside the classroom. This relationship encouraged her thinking that she could be who she wanted to be without fearing what others would say. She learnt to believe in herself and in her abilities as a teacher.

When I posed the question to discover how her relationships of support had helped her change her beliefs, my analysis revealed that what stood out was the weak self-relationship that she had experienced as a child and beginner teacher. However, the relationships that she had forged with family, mentors, seniors, and students enabled her to trust and believe in her abilities as a teacher. She was encouraged to face challenges knowing she would grow stronger. She was also able to help her students in difficult times.

7.5.2 Sam's changed beliefs

As a narrative inquirer, I adopted a visual model to conceptualise the process of making oneself into a teacher leader. As a researcher, I asked myself various questions to enlighten my understanding. For instance, I asked: *What makes Miss Samuel different from other teachers?* and *What kind of classroom teacher is she and how did she come to be this way?* I critically reflected on particular experiences and I was able to foreground a range of relationships and experiences that were challenging for Sam. When I asked myself: *What stands out in Miss Samuel's storied life about her self-perception and how did it shape her stance?* (i.e., I wanted to understand the way she thought, behaved, and made meaning of classroom situations and what was happening around her), the data revealed some inner

tensions and conflicts that she needed to negotiate and also exposed the emotions (positive and negative) that had influenced certain beliefs about herself and the personal and professional relationships she had formed in different life situations.

To answer question 2, I revisited her storied relationships once more and searched for excerpts where Miss Samuel shared experiences of her engagement with her learners and narrated how these had changed both her way of thinking and how she had made a positive difference in their lives. I also explored the characteristics Miss Samuel possessed as a teacher leader by associating her attributes to my findings in the literature review, and I could highlight what it was that foregrounded her experiences of personal and professional relationships. According to Brownlee (2018), teacher leaders take risks, have a love for learning and aim for empowerment. Miss Samuel took risks by stepping out of her comfort zone and learning new ways of being as a teacher. She tried new techniques when advised and was open to learning and new teaching experiences. Miss Samuel was empowered as a teacher as she wanted to improve her practices and relationships and sought opportunities for growth.

7.5.2.1 Sam as a classroom teacher leader

Sam was able to take control of situations in her classroom and she worked positively with the students in her care. She was able to guide her learners' emotions and understood the necessity to embrace a traumatised child to comfort him and to make him feel better.

7.5.2.2 Sam as a situational teacher leader

Sam showed leadership in difficult situations and aimed to find solutions rather than walking away from a problem. In conflict situations, Sam was able to find resilience and to become the best version of herself.

7.5.2.3 Sam as a developing teacher leader

Sam's story of how hard she worked, the long hours she put in, and wanting to learn and improve as a teacher showed her positive development. As she navigated the different roles she was required to fulfil as a teacher, she developed her relationships and skills both professionally and personally.

7.5.2.4 Sam as a teacher leader

Sam manifested the characteristics of a teacher leader because she was able to find her inner strength and courage by believing in herself and accepting her worth as a teacher. By acknowledging the power of the key relationships in her earlier life and profession, she was able to learn more about herself. As she continued to learn about herself, she also learnt valuable lessons about her career, and particularly how to be a teacher leader.

7.6 Conclusion: Sam as a Confident Teacher who Believed in Herself

In this chapter, I offered my analysis and interpretation of Sam's storied experiences of relationships that encouraged her making as a teacher leader. Parts of her narrative were analysed in response to the two research questions: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* and: *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

The purpose of this chapter was to present, analyse, and interpret Sam's lived personal and professional experiences that had shaped her making as a teacher leader. Based on my analyses as presented in Section A and B, it was evident that Sam's lived experiences that had shaped her making were embedded in the positive relationships she had forged since her childhood, and that these learnings had carried her through to adulthood.

It was noteworthy that the personal and professional interconnectedness experiences were created through positive meanings for and about Sam since childhood. Sam believed that she had to make herself a certain kind of girl in order to be accepted and recognised. Her supportive and unconditional loving and caring relationships with her grandfather and a special teacher enabled her to create spaces for receiving care, love and support as a child. As a teacher, she worked hard to prove herself to her seniors, and the support and guidance she received from her HOD enabled her to learn to believe in herself and her abilities. She chooses to open up her way of thinking and being in the world through formal study where she connects with peers and scholars and develops emotional and intellectual well-being to make herself to be what she wants to be and enhance her unique ways of being a teacher to her learners. Miss Samuel is a teacher leader who displays kindness and respect while creating a safe teaching and learning environment. She is determined and resilient. Her passion for education is evident in her eagerness to make a difference.

The next chapter concludes this dissertation, and I present my overall findings and conclusions to reveal my key learnings and understandings of how personal and professional relationships may cause the making of teacher leaders.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

In this narrative inquiry, I explored four teachers' stories of their personal and professional relationship experiences to develop my scholarly understanding of how their self-perceptions and stance had shaped who they were as classroom teachers and how they had navigated their everyday educational challenges to transform (or make) themselves into informal teacher leaders. The four teachers' reconstructed stories (i.e., those of Miss Spark, Mr. G, Mrs. Sharp, and Miss Samuels or Sam) were analysed in response to two research questions: *What are the lived experiences that shape the making of a teacher leader?* and *How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?*

In this chapter, I present a summarised reflective review of this thesis from Chapter one to Chapter eight. I also provide an overview of my personal and professional learnings in response to the different research processes that unfolded as I explored the stories of the four teacher participants. To conclude, I present some final reflections on this research journey with reference to the practical, research, and policy implications of this study.

This narrative inquiry zoomed into the storied experiences of four teacher participants from two different quintile schools in the Chatsworth and Shallcross areas. Their respective stories were emplotted to reveal significant personal and professional experiences in order to study the meanings of self that were constructed through these narratives. In essence, I wanted to discover who these teachers were as classroom teachers and to understand the processes and relationships that were instrumental in their personal and professional making as teacher leaders. To achieve this goal, I had to learn how their personal and professional relationships had shaped their stance as classroom teachers and how they thought and behaved as informal teacher leaders. I recruited both male and female research participants who had between 5 to 37 years of teaching experience. The study opened up spaces for different ways of understanding and learning for me as a researcher about personal and professional relationship experiences as critical spaces for shaping and reshaping the process of making oneself a teacher leader. I gained new learnings and understandings as a researcher as I

navigated the intricacies of my participants' personal and professional relationships and discovered how they had been influenced to take the stance of teacher leaders.

The diagram below offers a visual presentation of the layout of this chapter:

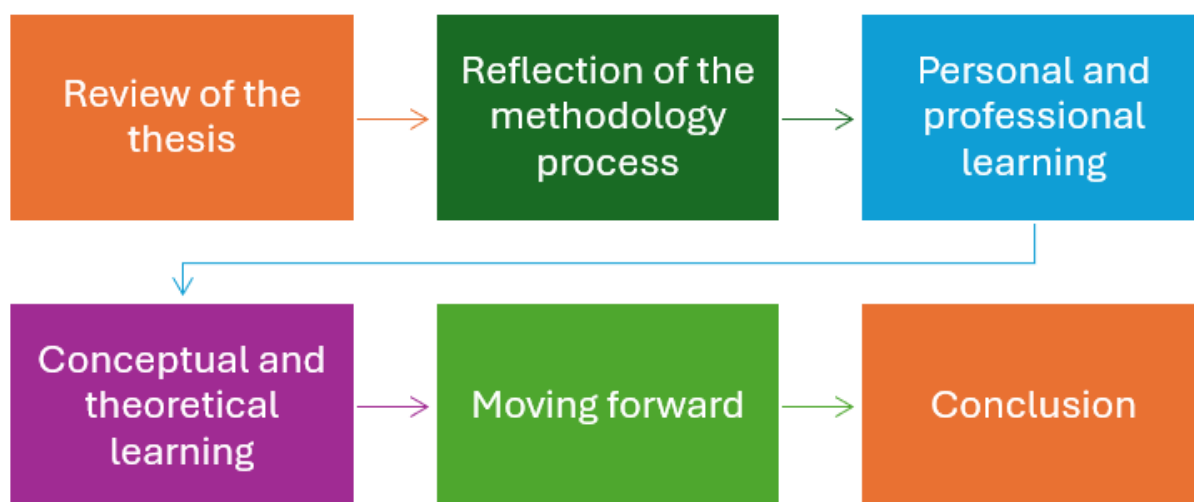


Figure 8.1: Visual representation of Chapter eight

8.2 Review of the Dissertation Chapters

In **Chapter One**, I highlighted the focus and purpose of this narrative research study and explained my interest in exploring the personal and professional relationships of my participants as instrumental in their making as teacher leaders. I explained that I was curious to understand what other researchers in the field understood about this topic and that I would utilise narratives to listen to the voices of the teacher participants in their stories of what had motivated them to choose to work, and continue to work, in education.

I explored the critical past and present relationship experiences the teachers recalled to understand their stance as classroom teachers and to unpack the meanings they generated that had shaped them to make themselves responsible, caring, and supportive classroom teacher leaders. This scholarly research learning experience elucidated the importance of significant relationships in teachers' personal and professional lives and how they can enhance or constrain the making of teachers (Cornu, 2013).

To better understand the role and functions of teachers, I referred to a guideline document for South African teachers that focuses on the norms and standards for and to underscore what

teachers' multiple responsibilities and roles are educators (Department of Basic Education, 2018). I also discussed my personal and professional rationale for conducting the study and presented the two research questions that directed this investigation. To conclude this chapter, I presented and discussed the conceptual mapping that I had used to frame the study.

In **Chapter Two**, I offered a review of related literature and explored scholarly works linked to the topic under investigation. I explored critical debates by scholars and particularly referred to Hunzicker (2017) who addresses the trend in education to move away from formal titles and positions and to embrace a more informal, integrated approach to understanding teacher leaders who have teaching responsibilities while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom. I also referred to authors such as Ignelzi (2000) who discusses the process of making or being made into a teacher leader and Poekert (2016) who discusses the progression from teacher to becoming a teacher leader. The discourse also referred to Bukor (2011) and Clarke (2002) whose works were a starting point for me to explore how stories of relationship experiences may offer different understandings of the making of teacher leaders. I presented a more detailed explanation of my conceptual framing of the study using Hunzicker's (2017) visual model to understand the role of teacher leaders. This framing elucidates three stages of teacher leadership, namely the classroom, situational, and developing stages. The conceptual categories I illuminated assisted my analyses that endeavoured to understand how the teacher participants shifted across different dimensions to position themselves in the everyday situations they encountered inside and outside the classroom.

In **Chapter Three**, I presented the methodology that I employed to execute this study. I adopted a narrative inquiry approach that was embedded within the interpretive paradigm. I was thus able to explore the lived experiences of teacher participants by understanding their personal and professional relationships. I explained that the stories I used generated data and that I had obtained these data through various methods namely memory drawings, artefact inquiry using a memory self-box, and unstructured interviews. This methodological approach generated thick data that enhanced my knowledge and sharpened my understandings of the significant relationships that were instrumental in the making of the teacher leaders. I also discussed the validity, reliability, and believability of the study that were achieved by using these multiple methods of data generation.

I described the research context, explained why and how I targeted the research participants, and provided a brief biographical description of each of them. The research plan was illuminated and I discussed the processes of narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives. I also discussed the ethical considerations I adhered to and acknowledged the limitations of the study.

Being a narrative inquirer, I needed to remember the three tenets of inquiry, namely temporarily, sociality, and place. Temporarily helped me to understand that my participants encountered past and present experiences which shaped them professionally. Sociality assisted me in understanding the significant role of relationships between participant and researcher to fully understand the depth of the stories they shared with me. Place allowed me to understand the importance of creating a warm, welcoming and comforting environment for my participants to feel free to share their emotionally connected stories without the fear of being judged. Narrative inquiry assisted me in accessing insightful information of the lived lives of my teacher participants and provided me with a deepened understanding of how relationships influence the positioning of teachers as teacher leaders through the beliefs they foreground.

In **Chapters four, five, six and seven** I presented, analysed, and evaluated the storied narratives of each of the four participants and offered well-constructed reasons why they were regarded as teacher leaders.

The current chapter, Chapter eight, summarises the key findings and offers recommendations for further research.

8.3 Reflections on the methodology process

Before conducting this research study, I believed that data generation meant sitting down and presenting a participant with critically formulated questions that required a straightforward answer. However, this view changed after I had been introduced to narrative inquiry as a methodology of gathering data through storied narratives. Using arts-based methods to conduct my research enabled me to view research in a whole new light. I learnt that, through creative art-based methods, my participants were able to openly share their stories in a free space using objects in their respective memory boxes and through drawing their happiest teaching memories. Sharing their stories through objects and drawings and not only words opened up a new world of sharing and understanding for my participants and myself as the researcher. They

were allowed to engage with objects and create links to significant relationships in their lives. They could also develop an understanding of how relationships with objects and nature could influence their lives in an enjoyable way. I learnt the importance of creating a safe and objective space that enabled me to connect in depth with my participants' stories, and I could thus reconstruct rich understandings of personal and professional relationships. I constantly prioritised my participants' emotions and feelings by remembering that unpleasant memories might be evoked and that I needed to be sensitive to my participants' emotional responses. As a narrative inquirer, I constantly questioned and acknowledged my beliefs, values, and perspectives as I remained aware of how they might influence the stories I constructed for each participant. Once the stories had been transcribed, each participant reviewed their story to confirm that it was authentic before I could move on to the next phases of analysis and interpretation.

8.4 Personal and Professional Learning

When I embarked on this research journey, I first scrutinised various articles and scholarly debates surrounding my research topic. I searched for answers without seeking to understand the process of finding these answers. Similarly, when I planned to meet with my participants, I aimed to find only the answers to the questions I had construed. However, as I engaged with my participants and formed a unique relationship with each of them, I understood that I could not expect to hear only the stories that I wanted to hear in the hope that they would answer my research questions. I learnt that I needed to approach my participants with an open heart and mind and enjoy the experience of every story that they chose to share with me. When constructing and reconstructing their stories, I understood how important it was for me to look out for the emotions behind the stories that were shared. Each story, no matter how insignificant it might have seemed at the time, revealed some influences that had impacted the participants' lives and teaching journeys, or they would not have chosen to share those memories with me. Focusing on relationships meant that I had to foreground the relationships my participants had forged with themselves and with others, and using arts-based methods helped me to explore these relational connections that my participants had made along their various life journeys.

Contrary to the traditional view of 'leader' that was used as a title related to the leadership and management roles played by promoted principals, deputy principals and HODs in a school, this study brought to the surface the lives of post level 1 teachers to discover how

they had transformed into ‘informal’ leaders in the classroom and in the school community. This study was thus conducted on the premise that ALL teachers can be leaders when they make the right choices and decisions that position them as leaders.

8.5 Key Findings that Overlapped in the Narratives of the Four Participants

8.5.1 Developing supportive relationships is key to development and growth

All four participants experienced supportive relationships either personally or professionally.

- **Miss Spark** lacked support at home but she was able to find support from her primary school teacher and friends which influenced her way of teaching and leading as a competent and characterful teacher in her adult life.
- **Mr G** lost the support of his late father but he found support in his pastor at church. Spiritual guidance thus allowed Mr G to find his passion for teaching and he led children at church as well as at school where he took various initiatives to assist underprivileged learners.
- **Mrs Sharp** felt overwhelmed and could not form a connection with her HOD when she was a novice teacher, but her supportive colleagues and lecturer enabled her to find her inner courage and she persevered and was able to form a healthy relationship with her HOD.
- **Miss Samuel (Sam)** lacked confidence in herself and did not believe that she had the capabilities to be who she wanted to be as a woman and as a teacher. Her relationship with her grandfather, her faith in God, and her trust in her primary school teacher affirmed her belief in herself and inspired her to seek out her potential as a young woman and a committed teacher despite her earlier experiences of alienation and isolation.

All of the above relationships that were formed with the people around them, had influenced the type of teacher the participants had become and further developed qualities of teacher leaders within them.

8.5.2 The pivotal role of the choices and meanings informal teacher leaders make

All four the participants experienced inner tensions at some time in their relationship experiences with significant others. These inner tensions that affected the values they held of

self and others provoked them to re-make choices and to position themselves in unique ways to negotiate their everyday lives in their respective classrooms and schools.

- **Miss Spark** experienced tension as a girl child in her home as she was forced to be a caregiver and take on domestic roles while she desired to play and be recognised as a child. She then formed a close relationship with a teacher and her peers at school where she could be a happy girl who could learn, play, and be free to share her experiences with others. As a teacher, she formed relationships of love and care with her learners and provided a safe space for them to learn and feel free to express themselves. She became an informal leader as her classroom became a safe and free space for her to create loving relationships with her learners.
- **Mr G** experienced tension as he did not have the support of his siblings after his father's passing, but he chose to take on the duties of 'the man of the house' to support his mother. He also guided children at church with his story and became a leader in a disadvantaged classroom by making his judgments about his learners and supporting them in every way he could.
- **Mrs Sharp** faced tension when she could not connect with her HOD due to her high demands, but she chose to overcome this challenge by working hard and learning as much as she could. The meanings she attached to her relationship with her HOD helped her along her journey of growth and she later confidently initiated projects and events.
- **Miss Samuel (Sam)** faced internal tension and conflict as she found it hard to believe in herself. However, she chose to believe in her passion as a teacher and researcher and to gain confidence in herself and her teaching.

The choices these teacher participants made to navigate their challenges were not to give up on new possibilities, to be open to different relationships that affirm new ideas and ways of thinking, and to tackle their tasks with courage. As informal teacher leaders, one can choose to remain in the classroom and create safe, creative, and supportive learning spaces for themselves, their learners, and possibly others they encounter in their lives.

8.5.3 Personal and professional learnings from supportive relationships

The figures below present my visual representation of the personal and professional beliefs of the four informal teacher leader participants based on the study of relationships and the tensions they negotiated personally and professionally at home and at school. The study highlighted

how limiting beliefs of self are open to change and relational to different social spaces and social relations where support, care, and openness to different ways of knowing and being self and as teacher. Significant relationships with school teachers, peers, community, grandparents, lecturers, mentors, learners, and colleagues influenced the way teachers think and know themselves as teachers and as people. Through productive personal and professional relationships, individuals can feel worthy, appreciated, acknowledged, and recognised for who they were and not for who they were expected to be fixed in the traditional and oppressive ‘roles’ they played in their personal and professional lives. By being open to changing their beliefs, the teacher participants were able to create new ways of thinking about the tensions that they faced and ethically respond to the position of teacher leaders in their classrooms, in adverse situations, and in spaces where they could develop optimally. As they took a new and alternate stance as teachers, they were able to foster relationships with their learners and expose them to constructive educational and social opportunities for development.



Figure 8.2 Diagrammatic representations of my learnings

The above were the key overall findings regarding the teacher participants’ learnings about relationships. I had to ask myself what I had learnt and understood about myself throughout

this research journey, and these lessons were profound. I was able to learn that one does not need a professional title to stand out as a leader. Teachers lead every day as they negotiate situations and make decisions that not only impact themselves, but their learners and the wider school community as well. As I analysed the stories and reviewed the literature, I became aware of the many tasks that I myself conducted that positioned me as a leader in my school context. I may not have a professional title, but according to the characteristics of a teacher leader my participants and I possess qualities that allow us to position ourselves as teacher leaders in different contexts and educational environments. I acknowledge humbly that this positioning has been shaped by the beliefs and understandings we gained through our experiences of personal and professional relationships with significant people in our lives.

8.6 Conceptual and Theoretical Learnings

One of the main challenges that I encountered when conducting this study was to develop a theoretical framework. Eventually, by thoroughly engaging with the literature and discussions with my supervisor, I decided to adopt Hunzicker's (2017) conceptual framework which makes use of a visual model. As I adopted a visual model rather than textual arguments, I needed to exhibit a clear understanding of my research topic and identify the key concepts and relationships among them to provide my visual representation of these relationships. By engaging with my understanding of Hunzicker's visual model, I identified with concepts such as experiences and emotions through which people build relationships. These are personal and professional relationship experiences that influence our stance, ways of thinking, and the meanings we make to position ourselves as teacher leaders.

The visual model allowed me to understand the opportunities for making oneself differently as teacher leader. I was also able to critically evaluate their characteristics by comparing theirs with those expounded in the literature according to the positions they adopted when negotiating everyday challenges. I was thus able to view my participants as classroom teachers as creative thinkers as well as situational and developing teacher leaders through the concepts offered by the visual model.

Moreover, the 'teacher leader making' concept allowed me to see how important emotional and intellectual and emotional aspects are in shaping teachers' thinking over and above their beliefs of self. Exploring relationships using the conceptual model thus helped me to understand the

meanings my participants created as they reflected on the influences their personal and professional experiences had on their making as teachers who could position themselves as teacher leaders.

8.7 Moving forward

This study focused on understanding the impact of personal and professional relationship experiences on the making of teacher leaders. The purpose was to understand how significant relationships influenced selected teachers' beliefs as they navigated situations of tension. Understanding the shifts that occurred in my participants' beliefs allowed me to explore their respective journeys of becoming teacher leaders.

This study was limited to teachers who were identified as teacher leaders, and it would be interesting to conduct a comparative study of informal teacher leaders and leaders with professional titles. Exploring the relationships that influenced acclaimed leaders in their choice to apply for promotion posts may be equally interesting, especially if the study investigates how significant relationships may have motivated these leaders to take on formal leadership roles.

Significant data may also be generated in the school context if formal leaders were requested to identify informal teacher leaders. In my view, giving post level 1 teachers more recognition and opportunities to grow their skills and talents as teacher leaders will prove beneficial to the entire school environment. For instance, teacher leaders could contribute significantly to student learning and the mentoring of first-year teachers (Hairon & Goh, 2015). Also, if teachers are provided with opportunities for professional development, their ability to carry out multiple roles as expounded in the DBE's Norms and Standards document will become far less challenging.

8.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a review of the entire thesis by highlighting the key aspects that were addressed in each chapter. I then reflected on the methodological processes I had followed to explore my personal and my participants' professional learning. I briefly outlined my conceptual, methodological, and theoretical learnings and offered recommendations for future research.

As this research study focused on teachers' relationships and the influence of these relationships on their lives, I wish to conclude this dissertation by highlighting one more significant relationship, which is the relationship I forged with myself *as a researcher*. Prior to this study, I was an ordinary teacher and when I embarked on it, I approached it from the perspective of a teacher. For teachers, everything is black or white and there is an answer for every question. An important lesson I learnt along this research journey was to step out of my teacher shoes and into my researcher shoes. In brief: I had to develop a relationship with my new persona of researcher. I had to constantly remind myself that I needed to view every narrative, every concept, and every piece of analysis through a researcher's lens and not through that of a teacher. This was not an easy journey as I had to navigate new experiences, insights, and roles, but I knew I needed to be passionate about the study. Eventually, I started to enjoy my new role as a researcher as I learnt that life takes us on a journey where new relationships will be encountered and old ones may be discarded or enriched. What is important is that one must acknowledge the ever-changing relationship one has with oneself as one adopts new roles and walks away from others. Forming new relationships engenders a new outlook on existing beliefs and, as was the case for my four participants, new ways of thinking will expose new spaces of learning and developing where 'ordinary' teachers can find their 'extraordinary' attributes and position themselves in making themselves informal teacher leaders.

I leave the reader with the following quote:

“Every great leader is a great teacher and the greatest leaders seize every opportunity to teach well.” -Albert Moheir-

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research Questions with Prompts – Data Generation Tools

RESEARCH TOPIC: Stories of personal and professional relationship experiences and meanings shaping the making of teacher leaders.

Research Instruments for Research Question 1

1. What are the lived experiences shaping the making of a teacher leader?

Artefact Inquiry – Creating a memory-self box

The participants will be provided with a briefing on this method prior to the meeting.

I will inform the participants prior to the date of this activity that they need to choose 5 objects that they feel have impacted them personally and professionally in their teaching journey. These 5 objects will be placed in a box. The participants will decorate the outside of the box to display their own outlook on themselves. The inside of the box will show the objects and how these objects that will prompt their inner speech. They will be informed that the 5 objects they choose need to have importance and value to their making of a teacher leader and at the end of creating their memory box they will need to give a short discussion of each object that they have chosen.

Some questions/ points that will be asked:

- Why have you chosen these objects?
- What strong impact did these objects have in your teaching journey?
- Are there others involved in this artefact memory? What role do they play? What is their influence on your thinking? Do they see things the way you do?
- Speak about the feelings and emotions that were invoked when you recalled the moment you engaged with this object.
- Express an emotion that this artefact brings forth for you. Describe where that emotion generates from and might extend to in your teaching. Be descriptive.

Research Instruments for Research Question 1

1. What are the lived experiences shaping the making of a teacher leader?

Memory Drawing

The participants will be provided with a briefing on this method prior to the meeting.

The participants will be required to recall and draw a happy memory/ the happiest memory from their teaching lives. The participants will then have to explain this memory whilst displaying their drawings.

Prompts when reflecting:

- Why is this memory considered the happiest time in your life as a teacher? How did it make you feel at that time? How do you feel about it now?
- During your teaching life, there must have been other happy memories, why did you choose to draw this one over the others? What stands out about this memory? Is it the people that were there, is it the environment?
- How do you connect with this drawing personally? How does this drawing allow you to explore personal memories of the experiences that shape you as a teacher?

Research Instruments for Research Question 2

2. How do experiences of relationships shape the making of a teacher leader?

Some points to prompt the participant:

- How did the relationships with the self, motivate you and compelled you to continue with your teaching career?
- How did the relationships with significant others in your professional teaching life encourage you to pursue your career and move forward onto greater heights in your teaching journey?

2.1. Unstructured interviews

The participants will be provided with a briefing on this method prior to the meeting.

The participants will be informed that this activity is open ended and they will be given the freedom to speak openly, express their feelings and emotions without the fear of being judged or questioned.

The participants will be prompted to speak about their overall experiences as teacher leaders:

- Explain how you feel these experiences have influenced you as a teacher leader?
- What would they have done differently today that they would never have thought of back then?
- Do you view the negative experiences the same way you viewed them years ago?

- Do you have any regrets about your profession today?
- How have you learnt more about yourself and the teacher you have become through conducting these activities?
- Do you feel better after being given the freedom to express yourself through these arts based approaches?
- What is the most special experience that you have relived through these activities?
- Name some aspects that you would change about your teaching or do better after critically reflecting on yourself?

Appendix B: Ethical Clearance Certificate



15 November 2023

Vomandhree Samantha Pillay (222049424)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear VS Pillay,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006344/2023

Project title: Storied experiences for understanding personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 23 October 2023 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

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

This approval is valid until 15 November 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix C: Permission from DBE



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Private Bag X9137, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3200
Anton Lembede Building, 247 Burger Street, Pietermaritzburg, 3201
Tel: 033 392 1051

Email: Buyi.ntuli@kzndoe.gov.za

Enquiries: Mrs B.T. Ntuli

Ref.:2/4/8/7596

Miss Vomandhree Samantha Pillay
185 Road 707
Montford
CHATSWORTH
4092

Dear Miss Pillay

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"STORIED EXPERIENCES FOR UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE MAKING OF A TEACHER LEADER:."**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from **05th of October 2023 to 31st December 2025**.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mrs Buyi Ntuli at the contact numbers above.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report/dissertation/thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.


Mr GN Ngcobo
Head of Department: Education
Date: 05 October 2023

GROWING KWAZULU-NATAL TOGETHER

Appendix D: Permission from schools – Gatekeepers’ letter

The Principal
***** Primary School
*** ***** Road

Durban
4142

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear _____

I trust you are well, My name is Vomandhree Samantha Pillay, I am currently pursuing my studies towards a Master's of Education Degree (Full Dissertation) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Education, Edgewood campus. My specialization is in Teacher Development Studies. As part of the requirements for the degree, I will be conducting a research study titled: **Storied experiences for understanding personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader.**

The aim and purpose of this research are to hear the voices of teacher leaders’ experiences in their teaching journey. This study will aim to highlight teacher leaders’ stories of relationships with themselves and others. Through exploring personal and professional experiences, I shall examine how these experiences and their encountered relationships with the self and others have influenced the making of the teacher leader they have become.

The questions I seek to answer are:

1.What are the lived experiences shaping the making of a teacher leader?

Teacher leaders experience many situations in their career on a daily basis (Harris & Jones, 2019). These experiences can be either positive or negative. This question seeks to understand the complexity of lived experiences shaping the making of the teacher leaders.

2.How do experiences of relationships (positive and negative) shape the making of a teacher leader?

Every teacher is different and has a different story to tell (Fan, 2021). Every story will be different based on the teachers own individual experiences and relationships. These experiences come from relationships they have with others and with themselves (Murray, 2021). This question will help me explore these stories which will tell us how teachers have used their relationships to make themselves into the teacher leaders they are today.

As this study is using narrative inquiry as a research method, I will be looking at past and present practices. I hereby request your approval to conduct a study with one teacher from your school as a participant in this study.

The data production process will involve the generation of the teacher's stories of personal experiences using memory self - box, memory drawings and conversational interviews. All data that will be collected will be used for my research project report. Permission is also requested from you for the publication of the findings in the form of research reports and publication in research journals. You will be informed if such publications take place.

Given that the study is drawing on the individual's memories of particular nodal moments and critical experiences of their professional experiences I assure you that the study will not compromise teaching and learning time as it will be conducted after school hours. Therefore, it will not interfere with the day-to-day activities of the school. The data collection and production will start from October — December 2023 and will take place at a time convenient to the Teacher as a participant.

The participant will be apprised of the research process, his/her participation and his/her rights in the research processes, through the informed consent form. His/her permission will be sought prior to his/her participation in the data collection process. The research is scheduled to take place once you have granted permission. Permission is also going to be sought from the Department of Education to conduct the study.

Please note that:

- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- The choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research is left on to the participant. He/she will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- All confidentiality will be guaranteed by using the pseudonyms to protect the school and the participant's anonymity.
- Any information given by the participant cannot be used against him/her, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- The participant's involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you require any information about this study upon its completion, I will be most willing to provide you with this at the end of my study.

For any enquiries regarding this study please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Professor Daisy Pillay. You may also contact me or the UKZN Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

- Supervisor Prof Daisy Pillay at *** ** *
- The researcher at *** ** * or email: *****@outlook.com
- or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Contact details are as follows: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION Tel: 27 31 2604557/ Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thanking you
Miss Vomandhree Samantha Pillay

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
PRINCIPAL DECLARATION OF CONSENT

The title of the research dissertation: **Storied experiences for understanding personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader.**

I, _____ (Full name of principal), have been informed about the study entitled **Storied experiences for understanding personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader** by Vomandhree Samantha Pillay. I hereby grant permission to the researcher to conduct research using a participant from my school. I understand that the participant has willingly agreed to participate in this research study and that she/he are at liberty to withdraw from the research study at any time, so should they desire. I also understand that the name of the school, name of the participant and their responses will be kept confidential. If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher or the supervisor. I am aware if I have any questions or concerns about my rights as the principal of study participant, or if I am concerned about any aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

- Supervisor Prof Daisy Pillay at *** ** *
- The researcher at ***** or email: *****@outlook.com
- or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Contact details are as follows: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION Tel: 27 31 2604557/ Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide/ do not provide consent to:
Miss Vomandhree Samantha Pillay

	Give consent	Do not give consent
To conduct research with a teacher participant from my school:		
To use photographs/ drawings or creations by the participant:		

Signature of the principal: _____

Date: _____

School Stamp:

Appendix E: Participant Consent Letter

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: _____

Dear: _____

My name is Vomandhree Samantha Pillay from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Humanities, School of Education; a master's student specializing in Teacher Development Studies under the supervision of Prof. Daisy Pillay. You are invited to consider participating in a study involving research on **Storied experiences for understanding personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader**.

The aim and purpose of this research are to hear the voices of teacher leaders' experiences in their teaching journey. This study will aim to highlight teacher leaders' stories of relationships with themselves and others. Through exploring personal and professional experiences, I shall examine how these experiences and their encountered relationships with the self and others have influenced the making of the teacher leader they have become.

The study is expected to enrol three teacher leaders in different schools in Chatsworth. It will involve the following procedures, a Narrative inquiry formed by memory-self box, memory drawing and unstructured interviews. The duration of your participation, if you choose to enrol and remain in the study, is expected to be approximately three months. The study is funded by myself.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: revisiting memories that may trigger some negative emotions. We hope the study will create the following benefits: empower and change teacher leaders immediate and future experiences, give voice to teacher leaders based on their personal and professional experience, and highlight the importance of experiences and relationships in the making of teacher leaders.

Should you require any emotional support due to any triggers from this study, you can get in touch with UKZN Councillor, Dr Angeline Stephens - 033 342 7779/ stephens@ukzn.ac.za

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions, you may contact:

- Supervisor Prof Daisy Pillay at *** ** *
- The researcher at ***** or email: *****@outlook.com
- or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Contact details are as follows: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION Tel: 27 31 2604557/ Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

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

Participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw participation at any point, and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation, you will not incur a penalty or loss of treatment or other benefits to which you are normally entitled. The potential consequences of your withdrawal include the exclusion of the data already gathered from you in the study and the final report. Should you wish to withdraw, the procedure

requires you to get in touch with the researcher so that the withdrawal paperwork can be filed. The researcher will terminate your participation if you do not actively cooperate or feel endangered during the study. The study will not incur any costs from you as a participant for participating in the study. There will be no incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study. For your confidentiality in this study, pseudo names can and will be used, and no personal/clinical information will be shared. The data collected in this study will be stored in a hard drive that only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to and the data will be stored for five years and destroyed after.

Yours Sincerely

Vomandhree Samantha Pillay (222049424) - UKZN Masters Student/Researcher

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____ have been informed about the study entitled **Storied experiences for understanding personal and professional relationships in the making of a teacher leader** by Vomandhree Samantha Pillay, the researcher and I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to. I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study, I understand that I may contact the researcher at ***** or email: *****@outlook.com

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

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

Additional consent, where applicable I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview

☐

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature of Witness _____ Date _____

Signature of Translator (Where applicable) _____ Date _____

Appendix F: Turnitin Originality Report (Chapter 1 to 8)

Turnitin Originality Report



Turnitin Originality Report

VOMANDHREE PILLAY MASTERS
TURNITIN.docx by Vomandhree Pillay
From Thesis Dissertation (MEd and PhD
Thesis)

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<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1169800.pdf>
- 7 < 1% match (Internet from 14-Apr-2024)
<https://dokumen.pub/learning-teaching-from-experience-multiple-perspectives-and-international-contexts-9781472512987-9781472593313-9781472509918.html>
- 8 < 1% match (Internet from 22-May-2024)
<https://dokumen.pub/approaches-to-qualitative-research-an-oxford-handbook-of-qualitative-research-in-american-music-education-volume-1-9780190920890-0190920890.html>
- 9 < 1% match (Yan Liu. "Contextual influence on formal and informal teacher leadership", International Journal of Educational Research Open, 2021)
[Yan Liu. "Contextual influence on formal and informal teacher leadership". International Journal](#)

Appendix G: Language Editing Certificate

		lindac@skytec.co.za 083 344 0706	
SARS Income Tax No. 9249355208; CC Founding Statement No. CK94/16841/23 SARS; Tax Clearance Certificate No. 1994/016841/23 SACE REGISTRATION NUMBER: N.D. COERTZE – 1082433 (2003)			
<u>DECLARATION OF PROOF-READING</u>			
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN			
I, Nicolina D. Coertze, declare that I meticulously perused the Master's dissertation referred to below for language editing and proof-reading purposes. I identified and corrected linguistic and stylistic inaccuracies to the best of my knowledge and ability. Using the <i>Word Tracking</i> system, I kept track of the changes that I made. I also offered additional annotations for consideration by the author should she deem it necessary to address areas that I considered might need attention. I declare that I adhered to the general principles that guide the work of a language editor and that I remained within my brief as had been agreed with the author of the manuscript.			
<u>Details</u>			
TITLE: Stories of personal and professional relationship experiences and meanings shaping the making of teacher leaders			
NAME OF CANDIDATE:		Vomandhree Samantha Pillay	
STUDENT NUMBER:		222049424	
SUPERVISOR:		Prof. Daisy Pillay	
QUALIFICATION:		Master of Education	
DEPARTMENT:		Teacher Development Studies, School of Education: College of Humanities	
TERTIARY INSTITUTION:		University of KwaZulu-Natal	
Respectfully submitted on: 17 July 2024			
			
(MRS) N.D. COERTZE LANGUAGE EDITOR			
<i>DISCLAIMER: The Language Editor was not responsible for the final formatting and presentation of this manuscript as it was the author's/supervisor's prerogative to format the manuscript and to make additional changes after editing without referring the document back to her.</i>			